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Via email: [almuntada.ia@gmail.com](mailto:almuntada.ia@gmail.com)

**An open letter to:**

Tom Steinfort  
Reporter  
60 Minutes - Channel Nine  
1 Denison Street  
North Sydney NSW 2060

Via email: WITHHELD  
CC: [60Minutes@nine.com.au](mailto:60Minutes@nine.com.au)

Dear Tom

We respond to your story on Professor Munjed Al Muderis as the **Iraqi Australian Medical Graduates Forum Association**, an umbrella organisation covering several committees including the **Association of Iraqi Academics in Australia & NZ** and the **Iraqi Australasian Medical Association** and feel more than adequately qualified to make the following statements.

**We need to protect our assets**

As a migrant country, Australia has always relied on people born elsewhere to provide both unskilled and skilled labour to keep the country operational. Historically, these immigration policies have been widely criticized as racist, yet have evolved over time to become more inclusive. From a human perspective, this is the right thing to do, but given Australia's modern social and economic destiny is linked more to its geographic region than to its link to "old world" colonial connections, this makes economic sense too.

These assertions are supported by the [Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020](#) report outlining the increase from 10% at the end of WWII to 30% in 2019 and the [Australian Government Department of Home Affairs 2019](#) report showing the largest contribution to the 160,323 new permanent migrants were India (21%), China (15%) and UK (9%). And these statistics do not cover first and second-generation Australians.

What we're trying to say, Tom, is that an increasing percentage of our workforce is comprised of people not born in Australia or have parents and grandparents who weren't. The inference here is that most of these people are also not white.

Why then, was Professor Al Muderis the only person of colour represented in your promos of the segment you have put together on him? Why is your expert, your patient interviewees and indeed, the



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entire 60 Minutes team present on the day, all white? Where is the diversity? Where is the perspective brought by people of different races, religions, colour and creed? Where is the balance?

The brain drain is very real in Australia, and this was only intensified as COVID-19 struck and people wanted to move to less restrictive countries from where to work. Why would we not want to protect and nurture the brains we already have here? Why would we not recognise Professor Al Muderis, and others like him, as the asset they are to this country?

**We need to invest in these human assets and the (patient) outcomes they deliver**

Whether or not you or your team see the work Professor Al Muderis does with amputees as a ‘good’ thing – his patients clearly do. We’re sure you saw the tsunami of support for him when your promos went live. This kind of support is only garnered when a person does good in the world – repeatedly.

There is no denying in any surgery there are risks and that sometimes, patients won’t respond to the treatment as well as others in the same cohort. This is the fact of any surgery and one that we know Professor Al Muderis is committed to communicating to his patients. We ask you now, what purpose would it serve for him to misrepresent the potential complications or people not achieving the outcomes they might hope for? You know it’s not motivated by money (as there is very little in osseointegration for him, compared to his income generated by hip and knee surgeries). You must also know now it’s not ego, reputational or power– Munjed is a gifted surgeon and is successful – and he cares more than any other doctor we have met. There is no power in not doing the very best for your patients. In fact, it’s the opposite.

The reality is that Professor Al Muderis has been able to achieve at the level he has because commits to helping those patients others have said cannot be helped. He takes on the supremely complex cases with one aim in mind – to help by restoring mobility and hope for a better life.

This means the surgeries are more complicated and often, the outcomes more complex. This is true all the way from consultation to the surgical plan and patient preparation for that plan, to the surgery itself and rehabilitation. By virtue of being more complex so is the entire process and that does not exclude complications. In fact, the more complex the surgery, the more complicated the complications.

Professor Al Muderis publishes all his complications and keeps comprehensive data around all his osseointegration patients. This data not only helps support each individual patient but has also created a wealth of information from which other patients can be helped around the world. It also formed the basis of his thesis which earned him a doctorate in the osseointegration specialty.

The data and academic recognition support the anecdotal. This complex surgery does carry higher risks than others – as is well documented in peer review publications - but the benefits for committing to this treatment method and return for managing that risk is also much higher. This is an investment made by both parties – treating medical professionals and patients.



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We need to invest, support and celebrate rare talents such as Professor Al Muderis', not actively work to malign him. And based on what? An all-white panel of "experts"? Again, we ask, where is the balance?

### **Not all white people**

We are not saying that you are necessarily motivated by racism in the way you cover your stories, or the team around you supports you to do so. What we are saying is, that from what we've seen, you cannot claim for a moment that you have a balanced team make up and therefore ability to represent stories from a balanced perspective. We also ask, what is the racial make-up of the people we didn't see on screen? Your sources? Those closest to your sources?

### **A note on Iraq**

We also understand you were interested in the patient results for the surgeries Professor Al Muderis has performed in Iraq. We would be delighted to share these with you as they remain incredibly positive and reinforce, with data, what he recounted to you during your interview. They demonstrate high success with low complication rates achieved in a compromised health system in a war-torn country.

It is also worth noting that we have been told these results continue to position Professor Al Muderis as a real role model for his patients in Iraq and surgeons around the world.

Would you have this role model cut down for those who already know and admire him, as well as for those people who, the future, may look to him for inspiration as they travel through their own refugee journey? Their own journey to use their skills to make a real contribution to the world?

Professor Al Muderis is respected, admired, and looked up to for the RESULTS of his work – not a carefully crafted story around it. Again, it serves no purpose for any true professional to not be able to 'walk the talk'. Surely you see the power in this statement in more ways than one, considering the subject matter.

### **Formal acknowledgements of contribution**

Professor Al Muderis' achievements are not just his own. He shares in those of his patients who, as you've seen, overwhelmingly feel he is the reason they too can go on to achieve, despite horrific physical, emotional, and psychological trauma. He literally, metaphorically helps piece them back together... with his team.

This entire multi-disciplinary team work tirelessly for the betterment of the lives of their patients. He states as often as possible that without them, he could not do what he does. Nor would he want to.

His patients acknowledge the impact Professor Al Muderis' work has on their lives, and those of their loved ones in many ways. From cooking and sharing dishes from their homeland or ours, to pictures their children draw to nominations for some of this country's highest honours, the way people express their thanks to him for the hugely positive impact his work has is wide and varied, and deeply personal.



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Professor Al Muderis has been nominated four times for Australian of the Year, culminating in a win for the New South Wales honour in 2020 recognising him for his humanitarian work and contribution to medicine. He has been honoured by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II and her grandson, Prince Harry. Professor Al Muderis is acknowledged around the world personally by patients, families and those of significant public standing alike.

**Your opportunity to turn this around**

We acknowledge that as a part of the most privileged human cohort you may be oblivious in your daily experience. Many have the privilege of being able to tune in or out on these issues depending on what happens during our day, whether at work or in your personal life. Unbalanced reporting is just a symptom of these inequities.

When the colour of your skin correlates with your well-being and longevity and specifically in this case, how you'll be represented by the media, that is both a human and public health injustice that must be addressed.

Tom, you can be part of the solution. As with other issues, we must work together if we are to recover. It cannot be left solely to people of colour to address these issues. Those who may not be directly impacted by racism can do their part as well.

Do you have the courage to do your part, Tom? What will you do to right this incredible wrong?

We understand this letter is confronting but staying silent and doing nothing is not acceptable. We cannot sit by and watch you malign the character and work of one of Australia's most valuable assets.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you.

Yours sincerely

Ahmad Almusa  
On behalf of  
**Iraqi Australian Medical Graduates Forum Association**