

## Prakash guilty of terror in Turkey

ELLEN WHINNETT

AUSTRALIAN Neil Prakash has been found guilty of terror offences in Turkey and will serve at least another two years in jail.

Prakash, 27, was found guilty overnight in the Kilis Criminal Court of committing crimes against Turkey by being a member of Islamic State.

The former Melbourne schoolboy-turned IS terrorist was jailed for six years, with a 50 per cent loading for terror crimes — taking his total sentence to nine years.

Judge Ismail Deniz then discounted it to 7½ years on the basis Prakash had provided information about the Islamic State terror group he served in Syria for three years.

With good behaviour, he would serve between three and four years in total meaning that, with the time he has already spent behind bars, he would likely be released in two years, the judge said.

Prakash, who has been in jail in Turkey since October 2016, said “saol” — the Turkish word for “thanks” — as the judge finished. On video link from prison, Prakash showed no emotion as the judge handed down his sentence.

He asked to speak and, disregarding the interpreter, spoke in fluent Turkish as he admitted his membership of IS but said he regretted it.

“I am very regretful I have done these things. I did them with force (under duress),” he said. “They (Islamic State) forced me to do it. I didn’t do it under my own free will.”

His lawyer Resat Devran said Prakash — who has previously admitted learning to use a Kalashnikov and fighting on the front line for IS — “hasn’t taken any action against the Turkish state, Turkish citizens, or anything related to Turkey”.

Prakash went to Syria in 2013 and became a leading IS propagandist encouraging attacks on the west including in Australia. He was arrested sneaking back across the Syrian border into Turkey after the collapse of Islamic State.

Australia last year revoked his Australian citizenship.



Baby Willow Bonnici, at home in Yagoona, loves baby talk. Picture: Dylan Robinson



## BABY TALK IS NO DRIBBLE

MERCEDES MAGUIRE

IT'S often considered nonsense baby talk but the goo-goo, gah-gah a mother might coo at her baby could actually help build their vocabulary.

Researchers have found the exaggerated, high pitched sounds parents use to entertain their infants could actually help them communicate later in life.

And what's more it even works from the womb due to the fact the cochlear, or inner function of the ear, is intact by about 28 to 30 weeks gestation.

Christa Lam-Cassettari from Western Sydney University's BabyLab Infant Research Centre said it ultimately helped with language development.

“This hyper-articulation highlights the difference in

vowels which gives a baby a better opportunity to hear the difference in the words,” she said.

The importance of early communication is at the heart of a new podcast, called BabyLab, named after the WSU centre.

Yagoona mum Erin Bonnici said she enjoys trying to “communicate” and sing to her six-month-old baby Willow.

# NRL off to a fast start on the box

PHIL ROTHFIELD & NICK WALSHAW

RUGBY league is back — with the NRL season opener producing a record TV audience that eclipsed every regular round game last year.

Despite coming off an infamous summer of shame, the opening Thursday Night Football game between Melbourne and Brisbane produced an average TV audience across Fox Sports and Channel 9 of almost 1.2 million.

While Storm eventually got home 22-12, the night's most impressive performance belonged to the record number of fans who tuned in despite an off-season dominated by sex tapes, court appearances and the code's new hardline ‘No Fault’ stand down policy.

Despite the dramas engulfing league, around 850,000 viewers watched on Nine while another 334,000 also tuned in via Fox Sports. The record figure would also be higher had it included viewers on the new Kayo streaming app.

According to Fox officials, the outstanding numbers not only gave the station its highest rating regular season game ever, but also represented a staggering 27 per cent increase on the corresponding match last year between St George Illawarra and Brisbane.

Combined, the overall audience between the two networks was up 5 per cent on last year's record of 1.12 million.

NRL chief executive Todd

INSIDE TODAY  
**EXTENDED  
NRL RD 1  
COVERAGE**  
SPORT

Greenberg said the ratings were a great way to start the season.

“To attract such a big audience — bigger than any regular season match last year — is great news for the game,” Greenberg said.

“Clearly it's too early in the season to draw any conclusions. We still have nearly 200 games to go to the finals.

“But we are off to a strong start which confirms what we all suspected, that the fans could not wait for the football to begin.”

Privately, TV executives were concerned the high number of off-season scandals, which includes the ongoing suspension of Jack de Belin, Tyrone May and Dylan Walker, would have a significant impact on audience numbers.

Back in February, TV viewership for the NRL All Stars match was down 23 per cent on its most recent showing two years ago.

Yet on Thursday night, the NRL season opener became the highest rating regular season game ever simulcast on Fox Sports.

## FAMILIES ARE ALONE TOGETHER

CHILDREN are spending more time at home with their families than they did 20 years ago but still feel like they are home alone.

Devices have become so embedded in family life that researchers have found a rise in a new phenomenon called

“alone-together” time. Children are home but everyone is so glued to a screen kids do not feel connected to their parents.

Child psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg said it was a sad indication that loneliness is brewing deep in family life.

## PARK PROPERTY SECURED

A CONTROVERSIAL private property with one of the best views of Sydney Harbour Bridge will be bought by the state government.

No. 1 Henry Lawson Ave sits in the middle of a reserve at McMahons Point — and is the subject of a long-running battle to renovate it into a luxurious waterfront home.

The community wants the

old building removed to create a continuous foreshore.

North Shore MP Felicity Wilson yesterday announced the government had negotiated to acquire the site.

“I've been working within government to purchase this site for an expanded park for our community since early 2017 and am excited to have secured it,” Ms Wilson said.



Thursday's storm

## More 'fast and furious' storms ahead

MITCHELL VAN HOMRIGH

MORE rain is on the way for the weekend as emergency crews continue the clean-up operation after the city was battered by ferocious storms on Thursday night.

The State Emergency Service has warned of similar “really nasty short bursts of fast and furious weather” to come.

“We are stressing to people — with the likelihood of this rain pattern continuing and these bursts — please stay off the roads, adjust your travel pattern, and please do not drive through flooded roadways,” SES region controller Greg Murphy said yesterday.

During Thursday's storms Mona Vale recorded 120mm of rain in just two hours while Syd-

ney's northwest was battered by hailstones, some as big as golf balls.

Almost 20,000 lightning strikes were also recorded across the greater Sydney area.

“We are on alert as storms will continue into the weekend, it is difficult to predict when they would hit as they can be stirred up very quickly,” Mr Murphy said.