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Hits, near misses and lucky escapes

Damien Murphy, Dylan Welch and Paul Bibby
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DAVID GROSS, the boyfriend of former *Neighbours* actress Brooke Satchwell, was one of many Australians caught in the chaos.

Mr Gross was in the Cafe Leopold with a group of Australians when the terrorists burst in. He hid in an upstairs room at the cafe for four hours until they made a break for it as gunfire and grenade explosions grew closer.

"We started breaking the windows and ripped down curtains to make a rope ... people were sliding out ... it was a one-storey drop onto broken glass," Mr Gross told the *Herald*.

Earlier Satchwell, who was in Mumbai working on an American pay-tv program, had gone outside for a cigarette. When the terrorists struck she hid in a cupboard in a ground-floor lavatory for an hour before being escorted to safety by hotel security staff to be reunited with her boyfriend.

Mr Gross, the son of the Sydney QC Bernard Gross, said after fleeing the restaurant and holing up in another hotel, his group of nine did not know where to go because neither the Australian consulate in Mumbai nor the embassy in New Delhi were answering phones. They'd been told by locals they were "sitting ducks" if they went out.

Australians, in groups or alone, lay low throughout Mumbai yesterday as the city's police and the Indian army struggled to restore order.

Two Australians were treated for gunshot wounds. Most members of the NSW trade delegation were staying in the Oberoi and remained in hiding.

Debra Bayne spent more than 16 hours holed up in her Oberoi hotel room on the same floor the terrorists were holding hostages before making her way to safety last night.

She had kept in contact with her daughter, Deidre Wilcock, by SMS for fear any noise would reveal her location.

"Debra just rang 15 minutes ago and the police have got her out," said Ralph Wilcock, Ms Bayne's former husband and Deidre's father. "They had their room barricaded and they didn't know it was police trying to get in. Eventually the police threw in a device and smoked them out."

A Hunter winery executive, Garrick Harvison, managed to get to his 14th-floor Oberoi room, where he spent six hours holed up, only minutes before the carnage started in the foyer.

"They were shooting people. It was like a bad dream," he said.

It was not known whether another member of the trade mission had escaped his hotel room bathroom as of last night.

"When he saw the smoke he got into the bathroom and locked himself inside," a colleague, Neil Hansford, said.

A Sydney lawyer, Katie Anstee, 24, and her partner, David Coker, had just arrived in Mumbai at the beginning of an 11-week holiday to celebrate graduating from the Australian National University, and headed for the Cafe Leopold.

"They were having a cold drink when the men came in carrying sub-machine guns," Ms Anstee's mother, Candy, said.

"They opened fire. A bullet hit Katie, it went through her femur. She saw a person die [and] hit the ground in front of her."

Mr Coker, 23, suffered a flesh wound from a bullet or shrapnel.

Sarah Gillis, a member of the NSW trade delegation, was lucky. She thought her colleagues' hotel too expensive, so opted for a cheaper hotel nearby and watched in panic as explosions ripped through the Oberoi.

Fate intervened, too, for the northern beaches folk singer Charlton Hill and the filmmaker Peter Grasse who would have been in the Oberoi but for attending a function for local advertising awards, the Effies.

An Adelaide designer, Chloe Papazahariakis, 31, who moved to Mumbai to live with her partner, the Bollywood actor Puneet Vasistha, was caught in the incident. "They are on a rampage - it's full-on and they are not stopping ... I've moved to this city to marry my husband in four days and I've got 20 friends here in the middle of this chaos."

Isaac Zalme, from Melbourne, who travelled to India for the wedding, told reporters he had witnessed the attackers driving around in a police car shooting people. He said they were asking for passports.

Yun Chian, 23, borrowed a phone and rang his father, Jace Lai, in Sydney to reassure him he was safe. "I asked him whether they had any weapons to defend themselves and he said one of the men had a milk bottle. I don't know if he was joking," Mr Lai said.

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