

**THE HON. MALCOLM TURNBULL MP**

**PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT**

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**Speech at the Launch of the New Holocaust Exhibition**

**Sydney Jewish Museum, Sydney**

E&OE...

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you all, the Holocaust survivors here and the children and grandchildren who have been so courageous, so courageous in surviving and in creating this extraordinary museum.

John Saunders, the founder so many years ago, another survivor of the Holocaust, sought to ensure that the memory of those terrible crimes never faded from view. That the depths to which the most advanced, civilized, technologically sophisticated, artistically sophisticated nation in Europe, if not the world, the depths to which it sank would never be forgotten.

And you see in the gallery there today - just you can walk past it actually, just one panel – you should nod, you should stay and contemplate - it is the panel that refers to the Wannsee House.

Now the Wannsee House I have been to with Lucy. This is where they drew up the plans for the Final Solution.

Let me tell you about it. It tells you everything about the banality of evil that Hannah Arendt wrote about.

This house is a villa, it's on the lake. It could fit into a posh suburb in Sydney or Melbourne or any other part of the world - it is not a particularly remarkable house.

And around that table all those years ago sat not just slabbering fanatics but the leaders of the civil service, bureaucrats, who calmly and methodically worked out how best and most efficiently to kill six million people.

A reminder that we should not assume ever that the Holocaust was one break in reality, one act of insanity that could never be repeated again. The Holocaust revealed that the most advanced of us, the most sophisticated of us, the most technologically advanced of us can do the most horrendous things.

We are capable of the greatest love us - humans, people. We are. But we are capable of the most terrible crimes and that is why we must never forget the Holocaust.

We must always be vigilant and we must always say here in Australia, the nation which you have all helped build, the nation whose achievements would never have been possible without the contribution of the Jewish people.

We must always say here in our land that we are so proud of what we have done - us, the most successful multicultural society in the world.

And why is it so successful? How is it that we have people from every part of the world, every culture in the world, every religion in the world, every language in the world have come to Australia - and we live in the midst of an age of growing intolerance around the globe - we live here in remarkable harmony.

How do we do that? We do that because we have a strong commitment to mutual respect.

And as Gus said, mutual respect means two ways – we expect all Australians - and all who seek to be Australians - to respect their fellow Australians, to respect their neighbours.

We are utterly and totally committed to that foundation because believe me, that foundation of mutual respect is the building block, the bedrock, on which our nation is built.

And that is why this museum, this memorial is so important? Because it reminds us of what can happen when respect is gone, when hatred takes its place.

It reminds us of the depths to which people can sink. As I said, advanced societies, sophisticated societies, distinguished and experienced civil servants gathered around that table in 1942 on the Wannsee. That is how deep you can sink if you do not hold fast to that commitment, to mutual respect, the rule of law, democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of worship. These are not freedoms to take for granted.

We have defended them since our nation's foundation and before.

Generations of Australians have fought and died to keep us free. One of them is remembered in the entrance to the Museum, John Monash.

Now John Monash, if there was General that you could say won the First World War, it would be John Monash.

Montgomery, the man with a high opinion of himself as we know, General Montgomery, Field Marshal Montgomery described Monash as the finest General on the Western Front. That's what he said. High praise from a man who wasn't often giving away bouquets. That's how good he was. He is a Jewish man as you know, born from Polish parents who came to Australia, Polish Jewish immigrants to Melbourne.

And despite the anti-Semitism in the British Army he rose to the top through sheer talent and he served. And next year we will remember and honour those extraordinary battles in which he led Australians and Americans into battle for the first time and he turned the war, he turned the tide.

Now I spoke about this, about Monash when I was at Moriah, just fant so long ago, many of you were there I know. And certainly many of your grandchildren and children were there.

In fact, when we went in with Bibi Netanyahu and Sara, Lucy and I - Bibi and Sara had got there. Bibi said to me, he said: 'Are there any of these children's parents that you don't know?'

(Laughter)

I said: "There's a few, there's a few but I know their grandparents."

(Laughter)

Fair enough. But it was a very family occasion for the Member for Wentworth and Lucy.

But I referred to Monash and Bibi said to me, just before he got up, he said: 'Monash, I'm going to talk about him.' That's what he said.

And then he spoke - and if you didn't see the speech it is worth getting a video of it. And he talked about Monash and he said, he reminded those kids, he said in those days, Monash was remarkable because he was a soldier. There weren't many Jewish soldiers in those days. Because the Jewish people did not have a state, they did not have a country and Monash was an exception.

And then he talked about the Holocaust and how Jews were defenseless, did not have an army to defend them against this extraordinary campaign of extermination.

And he talked about how the State of Israel had changed all of that. And now the Jewish people had a home, a state, and an army and the ability to defend themselves.

It was the best speech he gave. Every speech he gave was good, I listened to almost all of them, but that was outstanding.

And it was a reminder too of the importance of Israel, and the importance of Israel in the context of what came before the Holocaust.

The Holocaust did not spring, as you know, out of thin air. It came out of a practice of anti-Semitism, Russian pogroms, the anti-Semitism of Karl Lueger in Vienna - all of those histories and threads you understand. And those stories are told upstairs.

Many of you have lived through and know all too well how it began.

And what was at the heart of that, or the object of that, was a desire to dehumanise Jews. And you see that in so much of the attacks on Israel today.

Now, it is not compulsory for anybody to agree with Mr Netanyahu's policies any more than it is to agree with mine. And indeed as Bibi would acknowledge himself, Israeli's have, there is numerous varieties of opinion as to his performance, many of them, as is always the case highly critical, with any politician. But when you see movements around the world today, such

as the BDS movement whose object is to delegitimise the state of Israel. And that is the new avenue of anti-Semitism. He's not saying Israel should do this or that, or its policy should be this or that – it is saying as the Iranians do that Israel does not have a right to exist. And once, just as if you delegitimise a state, then you are justified in attacking it - if you dehumanise a person, well then as we have seen upstairs, and as all of us remember, and you remember most of all, then the next step is extermination.

So the Holocaust is part of history never to be forgotten. But what led to it is still with us. Anti-Semitism is still with us.

Now here in Australia we have no tolerance for anti-Semitism, no tolerance for racism, no tolerance for anybody who seeks to demean or delegitimise or dehumanise somebody because of their race or their religion or their culture.

We stand on a foundation of proud, mutual respect. That is what makes us the great multicultural society that we are today - in my view undoubtedly the most successful in the world.

Can I indulge myself with a little memory of my own, if I may?

When I was a little boy I lived with my mother and father, then subsequently with my father in a flat in New South Head Road, 119 New South Head Road. It was a block of four apartments that were built, I imagine, just after the war. In the flat above lived a lady called Weil, that was her name, Jacquie Weil, Acki, as I used to call her with her husband Paul. And each of them had, both Jewish, had escaped the Holocaust in different ways and met in Australia and had married.

And Acki used to sit on her balcony in the blazing Sydney sun, a really hot day, and she would say to me that the rattle of the trams in New South Head Road reminded her of those trams on the Ringstrasse in Vienna.

And she spoke about the vanished worlds that you have so brilliantly recorded upstairs. Worlds, Jewish worlds, worlds of elegance, worlds of culture.

She used to teach me French in fact, but her first language was German. She used to insist that Shakespeare sounded better in German.

(Laughter)

And would then proceed to read me speeches from Shakespeare in German and insist: 'You see! You see Malcolm, I'm telling you its better, better in German!'

All of that snatched away, the vanished world. And you remember that here.

The sense I felt as I walked through the gallery today was an aching sense of loss only matched by a deep and visceral sense of injustice.

But as your Prime Minister I am determined to ensure that it never happens again. That the love, that the strength, that the mutual respect, the commitment and the solidarity that we have heard from the survivors here today and whom we all know, and they are after all, David and Pauly here today? There are so many friends here today, this is our parents' generation David isn't it. That's who we are talking about. And we, all of you, are determined to ensure that that foundation of mutual respect is maintained and strengthened. That is what makes Australia the great multicultural society that it is.

Now let me conclude finally with the words from Isaiah that inspired the name of the Holocaust Museum in Israel, the Yad Vashem, "Even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them and everlasting name that shall not be cut off."

In this house I know that you will always give those who perished and those who survived and those who witnessed an everlasting name but shall never ever be forgotten.

Thank you.

**[ENDS]**