

# Remarks at the Ceremonial Welcome

## **PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you Prime Minister, Bibi, Sara – Lucy and I are so pleased to be here, so honoured to be here.

And you're right, you're right it is a long schlep. But let me say the welcome here in feeling at home, it feels like family. I do feel that we are part of the same mishpocha, as you said.

Indeed, the warmth of your visit in February was remarkable. It was, there was an enthusiasm, an energy that you brought with you and that excited everybody that you met.

You gave some very inspiring speeches. One at Moriah College and I remember very well, we were sitting there, just like this and I'd spoken about General John Monash and you were called to stand up and speak and you said to me as you got up, you said: "Monash, I'll work with that", and you gave such an inspiring speech to those kids and you talked to them about the courage of the Australians that had fought to defend the same values on which the state of Israel has been founded.

The same values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, the right to be able to live as you please and not be dictated to by others, the cause of freedom. And that is what Monash and the Australian Army fought for in the First World War.

That's what Australian troops fought for in the Second World War when they fought to defend Palestine from the Nazi invaders in North Africa.

As you've said – we discussed in Sydney when you were down in Australia in February – if the Germans had got to Palestine in the Second World War there would've been no Zionist Project.

We were there with you in that war, in the First World War and of course today, there are Australians serving in the UN operations on Israel's borders and of course, more broadly in the Middle East.

As you know and as we've discussed many times we are all fighting together against militant Islamist terrorism.

It is a threat to Israel, it is a threat to Australia, it is a threat to all who value and cherish freedom.

But, of course, this visit which you've welcomed us so warmly is to commemorate the Battle of Beersheba.

A moment in history of extraordinary significance. One of those turning points. One of those pivotal moments in history when Australians and New Zealanders, their Light Horse brigades swept through the Middle East and

liberated Palestine, and indeed Syria, all the way up to Damascus, Jerusalem and Damascus, from the Ottoman Empire, from the Turkish occupiers who as you said, Bibi, had been occupying this part of the world for 400 years.

And, of course, that was the year of the Balfour Declaration and so you can see how the courage of those Australian Horsemen who'd come many of them with their own horses from the hills of their own farms, young men, with their own horses had come to fight in a foreign land but yet one which was in many ways so familiar because they shared the Bible, every place was a household name.

It was a strange environment for them to be fighting in but also from a cultural point of view so familiar.

It was a great victory, a great charge. The last successful cavalry charge in military history and certainly one that rings through the ages. Profoundly Australian in every respect, deeply etched in our national psyche.

So, Lucy and I are so honoured to be here with you today. We have many things to discuss upstairs. More contemporary battles as well.

But above all, but above all the strength of this relationship between Australia and Israel getting stronger every year.

And in this year, 2017, you made the first visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to Australia and I am visiting you here now for the first time as a Prime Minister and the first visit of an Australian Prime Minister to Israel since John Howard visited in 2000.

Stronger and stronger grow our ties. Deeper and more profound than ever, our commitment to the values on which our nations, our societies are based – freedom, democracy, the rule of law. These are values we have always fought for and always will.

Thank you so much for your very warm welcome.

**[Ends]**

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## **State Visit to Australia by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany**

I am pleased to welcome His Excellency Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, and his wife, Ms Elke Büdenbender, to Australia from 3 to 5 November. This is the first visit by a German President to Australia since 2001.

Germany is one of our closest friends in Europe and a significant trading partner. Two way trade in 2016 reached \$20.2 billion. German companies are investing in projects across Australia including light rail infrastructure, insurance services and defence materiel.

People to people ties are strong and extend back to the earliest days of European settlement. Today more than 26,000 young Germans visit on working holidays each year. There are over 500 research agreements between Australian and German universities in areas as diverse as robotics and genetics.

I look forward to discussing with President Steinmeier how we can make the most of our strong ties and shared liberal democratic values at a time of global uncertainty. Germany is a key strategic partner for Australia, and President Steinmeier's visit is an opportunity to share perspectives on changing global strategic dynamics.

President Steinmeier and I will open the Australia Germany Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in Perth – an event focused on expanding trade and investment between Australia, Germany and the Asia Pacific region. The conference will be the largest bilateral business conference ever held between Germany and Australia and will forge important networks ahead of the start of free trade negotiations with the European Union.

President Steinmeier and Ms Büdenbender will travel to Perth and Sydney.

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## **Visit to Israel – Marking the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beersheba**

This week I will travel to Israel to attend the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beersheba.

On 31 October 1917 regiments of the Australian Light Horse Brigade captured the city of Beersheba. It was a momentous victory and one of the last great cavalry charges in history.

I am honoured to represent Australia at the 100th anniversary commemorations of this historic charge, where 31 Australians paid the ultimate sacrifice.

This visit will deepen and strengthen Australia's ties with Israel, and build on the bilateral relationship that our two nations share.

It is an opportunity to cement the commitments made during Prime Minister Netanyahu's historic visit to Australia in February.

I look forward to reinforcing our increasingly diverse relationship and discussing areas of mutual interest, including science and technology,

innovation, security and trade and investment.

Our defence ties have become a vital part of the relationship between Australia and Israel. As a result of this visit we aim to upgrade the cooperation on defence, national security, and the protection of crowded places.

Our nations can learn a great deal from each other in order to strengthen security and keep our citizens safe.

I will be accompanied on this visit by Minister for Veterans Affairs' and Cyber Security, Dan Tehan.

This year also marks the 70th anniversary of Australia's bilateral relationship with Sri Lanka, and I am delighted to be able to visit Sri Lanka on my return from Israel.

I had the pleasure of meeting President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe during their visits to Australia earlier this year.

I look forward to continuing our discussions on strengthening our economic links, defence engagement, and our work together to combat trans-national crime, particularly people-smuggling.

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## **Passing of the Right Honourable Sir Ninian Stephen KG AK GCMG GCVO KBE QC**

Australia has lost a great statesman; Sir Ninian Stephen has died, aged 94.

A former Governor-General, Justice of the High Court of Australia, and Australian infantryman, Sir Ninian's long and highly distinguished career was dedicated to the service of the Australian public.

Moving to Australia at age 17, he studied to become a lawyer at the University of Melbourne, before joining the Australian Imperial Force in the Second World War.

Sir Ninian served as Governor-General from 1982 to 1989, bringing a gentle dignity to the role and representing the very best of Australia while encouraging the very best from all Australians.

There are very few honours that Sir Ninian doesn't have to his name—he's been knighted five times, was a Justice of the High Court of Australia and Supreme Court of Victoria, member of the Privy Council and Australian Ambassador for the Environment.

Internationally, he will be remembered for his work on the Northern Ireland

peace talks and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, among other sensitive diplomatic and legal assignments.

Australia will remember Sir Ninian for his humility, his intellect, and his lifelong commitment to justice and the rule of law.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Australia, I send our heartfelt condolences to his wife Lady Stephen and their family at this sad time.

Sir Ninian's family has accepted my offer of a State Funeral.

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## Press Conference Sydney

**PRIME MINISTER:** Good afternoon.

I just concluded a meeting with the Cabinet and I want to confirm the ministerial arrangements that were made yesterday.

As you know, I will be asserting as in addition to Prime Minister, Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources.

Matt Canavan has been sworn in again as the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia.

And Fiona Nash's former portfolios will be undertaken by Darren Chester, the Infrastructure Minister, and in the case of regional communications, Mitch Fifield, the Communications Minister.

I will be travelling overseas to Israel on Monday to participate in the commemoration of the Battle of Beersheba.

This is, as all Australians who have seen that extraordinary 1940 movie by Charles Chauvel, would understand, it was one of the most dramatic victories undertaken by Australia in the First World War, historic battle, story of enormous courage and determination, one of the last cavalry charges in military history by the Australian Light Horse and its centenary will be celebrated next week in Israel and I'll be there to do that.

Julie Bishop will be Acting-Prime Minister while I am overseas, and as you know, Nigel Scullion has been appointed interim parliamentary leader of the National Party. Barnaby Joyce remains the Leader of the Federal Nationals but of course he is not currently in the Parliament and therefore the normal order of precedence in terms of Acting-Prime Minister falls to Julie Bishop as the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and Foreign Minister.

It's very important to recognise that contrary to some of the rather dramatic speculation in the media, that the government has a majority in the House of Representatives.

The government has, in the absence of Barnaby and there are 149 seats represented in the House, the government has 75 of them. That is a majority.

So we have a majority in the Parliament. We have the support of the crossbench on confidence and supply, and we will continue, as we have done, throughout all of the time since the last election, continue with getting on with the job, of delivering the outcomes.

The jobs and growth – 371,000 over the last year, new jobs, 85 per cent full time.

Delivering the leading energy policies that will bring down energy prices. Whether it's bringing down the price of gas, we've already seen that in wholesale prices. Whether it is delivering a National Energy Guarantee which will, as the Energy Security Board has said, reduce wholesale generation costs by 20 to 25 per cent, in the period up to 2030.

Or, indeed, securing the tax cuts for small and medium businesses that are enabling them to invest more and employ more.

Our pro-growth, pro-jobs policies are paying dividends.

We're seeing the jobs growth. Jobs and growth is not just a slogan, an election slogan – it is an outcome. And we're delivering and the employment results demonstrate that.

So I would be happy to take some questions.

**JOURNALIST:** Do you think the Nationals will feel a bit shafted by the fact that Julie Bishop is now Deputy Prime Minister?

**PRIME MINISTER:** On the contrary, Nigel and I discussed this at some length. He is absolutely in support of this arrangement that Julie will be Acting PM during this period.

We are talking about an interim period, you know, between now and the 2nd of December when the people of New England will have their say.

This is an interim arrangement and in the circumstances, Nigel agreed that the normal arrangements that have been set out in terms of precedents in Barnaby's absence, that Julie would act as PM.

**JOURNALIST:** Are you annoyed at the Nationals for the mess they have left you in?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I love the Coalition. The Nationals are great Coalition partners.

You know, let me be very, very frank with you – the Liberal-National Coalition has been the most successful political movement in Australian political history. And we work together. The Nationals have had some big knocks lately – there's no doubt about that – but when times get tough, that's when you put your arms around your mates, you look after them, you

support them, you stick together.

And government goes on, good government goes on.

And Nigel Scullion is a very good colleague. We work very closely together. The Nats have chosen him to be interim parliamentary leader. We'll obviously stay very closely in touch with Barnaby and look forward to campaigning with him up in the New England.

I was chatting to him a couple of times this morning. I see that he has already disclosed I was doing so well on my kayak, nonetheless, it was a good and tranquil environment to be discussing important political issues.

**JOURNALIST:** Prime Minister, do you think there should be some change to, I guess, the processes the Nationals have gone through? This saga hasn't involved the two major parties. Do you think they could do better when they're pre-selecting the candidates.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, look, I think the High Court's decision is one that everyone is going to have to take very careful account of.

It is a decision that is quite, it is a very strict decision.

What the Court has said is that knowledge is immaterial.

So they have said that if a person is, despite them having no knowledge of it, and perhaps no reason to even suspect that they might be a citizen of another country, they will still be disqualified.

I think, a lot of people would see that as being a very hard, very tough outcome.

But, that's the interpretation that they have given. That's their decision.

So what we need to do now is look at that very carefully, and in particular, we need to consider whether we should be recommending a Constitutional amendment to Section 44.

You've got to remember, we're are a big multicultural country. More than half of the people, of Australians, were either born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas. If you were to go back and say how many of us have a got grandparent who was born overseas, I think that would be a majority. I don't know whether we have statistics on that but common-sense would say that would be huge.

So this raises big issues for how we ensure that every Australian, in this, the most successful multicultural society in the world, is able, confidently, to stand for and get elected to and serve in Parliament.

So, there's a lot of issues to consider out of this.

And that's why I am referring the matter to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and this is something that, the analysis of the decision

and its implications for our democracy and the Parliament has to belong to the whole Parliament. And we need to look at this not in a partisan way or a political way, but just say, surely our objective is to ensure that Parliament is open to everybody, every Australian citizen – how do we deal with the issue of dual citizenship, how do we deal with it in a way that is fair and is going to promote certainty?

**JOURNALIST:** So could you just confirm or clarify the official Deputy PM role is going to stay vacant until the by-election?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Yes, there will be no Deputy Prime Minister sworn in. In fact, there's no appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister.

It's a position that hasn't always been, you know, established, if you like. There is an order of precedence in circumstances where the Prime Minister is unable to do his duties – if the Prime Minister was killed or if I was killed or if I was, you know, taken dreadfully ill and couldn't do my duties – then the traditional order of precedence is for the Coalition, is the Deputy Prime Minister, who is leader of the Nationals, and then the Deputy Leader of the Liberals and then the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

But as I said earlier, Nigel and I having thought about this and discussed this carefully and with our colleagues, we've agreed that in these special interim circumstances, Julie will be Acting PM while I'm away.

I should make this point too, just again out of clarification – when I'm overseas, I continue to discharge all of my duties as Prime Minister. All decisions that are taken by the Prime Minister are taken by me.

The Acting Prime Minister is a role that is really designed to cover circumstances where, for example, it was urgent for a document to be signed, with my consent, obviously, but I'm not in the country to sign it. Or, of course, in the event of some disaster occurring while I was travelling.

But it's not – we're not in Sir Robert Menzies days when Prime Ministers got on ocean liners going off to London and were out of touch for weeks at a time.

**JOURNALIST:** Prime Minister, Labor say they have legal advice that says that they could challenge some of the decisions that were made by Fiona Nash and Barnaby Joyce while they were in the Cabinet. Are you concerned about that and do you have any advice on this?

**PRIME MINISTER:** We're certainly carefully examining all of those decisions and if Labor wants to challenge some decisions, then they should identify what decisions they seek to challenge and on what basis.

But you've got to remember the vast majority of the government's decisions are taken by the Cabinet collectively. None of those decisions are affected by the Court's decisions with respect to Senator Nash and Barnaby, any more than votes in the House and the Senate are.

**JOURNALIST:** But doesn't your decision to allow them to remain on the



frontbench open you up to these sorts of challenges potentially?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, people are free to challenge whatever they like. It's a free country.

But the decision that I took, that we took collectively for them to continue to serve was based on our advice from the Solicitor-General.

Now, as it turned out, the court took a different course, as courts are entitled to do. A lot of people, a lot of law professors said we would lose the case over the postal survey, the marriage, same-sex marriage postal survey. We won that 7-nil.

But on this case with Fiona and Barnaby we were unsuccessful.

The Court has taken a very, very strict and literal interpretation of the section.

I won't rehash the arguments, you've covered them all. But obviously, we were disappointed by the decision, but the Constitution is for the High Court to interpret and nobody else.

**JOURNALIST:** Pending the outcome of the same-sex marriage survey, there was going to be a bill introduced at the end of the year. Is this going to hold any of that up now if you're not going to be introducing legislation?

**PRIME MINISTER:** No, no.

Look, the government – the Parliament, the government goes on.

I know it sells more newspapers and attracts more clicks to have dramatic headlines and all sorts of hare-um scare-um stuff in the media.

The reality is this, there are now 149 members of the House of Representatives – 75 of them are members of the Coalition. That is a majority.

As you know, we have the support on confidence and supply from the crossbench.

So, you know, there is no – the stories about threats to the government and so forth are, frankly, they are there to create, I assume, to create interest and clicks and a bit of drama. It's a bit dull to say, I guess, to say that good government is continuing, but that's the truth.

I mean, look what we have delivered just over the last few months.

The National Energy Guarantee has got near unanimous support. Only, frankly, our political opponents are still complaining about it. But it's been supported right across the energy sector from the clean energy side to the Minerals Council. We're taking the advice of the acknowledged experts. They're the ones that are saying it will bring down whole sale generation costs by 20 to 25 per cent. That is worth \$110 to \$115 a year on a household

bill.

Whereas Labor's approach was going to actually go in the other direction and add nearly \$200 to households bills.

So we are there doing everything we can to ensure there is more investment and more jobs and we're seeing the jobs. We're doing everything we can to ensure that energy prices come down. And that involves both short-term decisions, as with gas, having an immediate impact as with getting retailers to put people on the right plan, and of course, long-term decisions, like Snowy Hydro 2.0. That will take some years to build. That's going to make a big change.

A National Energy Guarantee is also looking forward to 2030.

So whether it is in the here in the right now, today, or whether it is looking forward to a decade or more, we are delivering the economic leadership that Australians, Australian families and businesses need.

**JOURNALIST:** So no changes to the legislative agenda?

**PRIME MINISTER:** No, the Parliament goes on. We have two more weeks to go for the year. Two more weeks of sittings.

The by-election will be on 2nd of December. We're all going to be working very hard to support Barnaby in the by-election.

He doesn't take the support of the people for New England for granted at all. He is approaching this campaign with humility, but with enthusiasm, to seek their endorsement again and their trust again as the man who's best able to represent them in the Federal Parliament.

I have no doubt that he is that man.

Thanks very much.