

## ADDRESS TO AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL SUMMIT TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM, SYDNEY

11 June 2015, Sydney, Prime Minister

E&OE

It's good to welcome you all to this important Summit.

I acknowledge the presence here today of the Premier of New South Wales, Mike Baird, and the Deputy Premier Troy Grant. My Cabinet colleagues the Attorney-General, George Brandis; the Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop; the Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton; along with Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells and Philip Ruddock who are currently leading a national consultation on Australian citizenship.

I acknowledge Dan Tehan, the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, and Anthony Byrne, the Deputy Chair.

I acknowledge the presence of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tanya Plibersek and her frontbench colleague Mark Dreyfus.

I also acknowledge the presence of the Member for Reid, Craig Laundy. I particularly acknowledge the community and non-government leaders here today who are working to keep our communities safe.

I welcome the distinguished representatives of over 30 nations from across our region and the wider world.

I note that this conference is a regional version of the White House summit on countering violent extremism held earlier this year. As everyone who has experienced the great city of Sydney knows, there is no more beautiful and easy-going large city anywhere on earth.

This country has not flourished because success was inevitable or ordained by God; this country has flourished because people from the four corners of the earth have come here to work hard, to respect each other, and to build a better life for their children and grandchildren.

This country of ours has an indigenous heritage, a British foundation and a multicultural character.

Yet the tentacles of the death cult have extended even here, as we discovered to our cost with the Martin Place siege last December. We have all seen on our screens the beheadings, the crucifixions, the mass executions and the sexual slavery that the Daesh death cult has inflicted, mostly on Muslims, in the Middle East.

That is what the death cult has in store for everyone if it has its way.

This is not terrorism for a local grievance; this is terrorism with global ambitions.

The death cult now holds sway over an area as large as Italy in eastern Syria and northern and western Iraq. Its affiliates control parts of Libya and Nigeria; it is active on the Horn of Africa and parts of the Arabian peninsula and it has ambitions to establish a far province in south east Asia.

Its senior members are routinely calling on sympathisers to kill un-believers wherever they find them, sometimes specifying Australians.

In the past year, Daesh and its imitators have carried out terrorist attacks here and in Melbourne, as well as in France, Belgium, Canada, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Nigeria, Jordan, Denmark, Kenya and the United States.

At successive conferences such as this, the list of atrocities gets longer and longer. Daesh is coming, if it can, for every person and for every government with a simple message: submit or die.

The declaration of a caliphate, preposterous though it seems, is a brazen claim to universal dominion.

You can't negotiate with an entity like this; you can only fight it.

So, what is the Australian government doing?

We've sent a strong military force to the Middle East to hit Daesh from the air and to train and assist the Iraqi army to retake their own country. We are talking with our friends and partners about how the air strikes might be more effective and how the Iraqi forces might be better helped.

American leadership is indispensable here as in all the world's trouble spots.

At home, we are trying to ensure that Australians don't leave this country to join the 15,000 foreign fighters already in Syria and Iraq. Counter-terrorist units from the Australian Border Force are now operational at all our international airports.

Hundreds of people have been questioned about their travel plans and well over 100 passports have been cancelled. We are trying to ensure that people who have been brutalised and militarised by fighting with the terrorist army cannot be at large on our streets.

The Government intends to strip citizenship from known terrorists who are dual nationals so that they can't return to Australia – and I am grateful for the Opposition's support on this.

As part of a broader discussion of the responsibilities of citizenship, the Government is looking at what can be done to deal with Australian citizens who have betrayed our country by fighting with terrorists, this modern form of treason.

Already, the Government – with the support of the Opposition – has imposed heavy punishment on people who travel to terrorist-controlled areas without good reason and has strengthened the powers of our police and security agencies to detain terror suspects.

In the end, though, the only really effective defence against terrorism is persuading people that it's pointless.

We have to convince people that God does not demand death to the infidel. Over time, we have to persuade people that error does have rights. We need everyone to understand that it is never right to kill people just because their beliefs are different from ours.

Above all, we need idealistic young people to appreciate that joining this death cult is an utterly misguided and wrong-headed way to express their desire to sacrifice.

How this is best done is of course the work of this conference. Our task is to share our challenges and our strategies; to discuss where we have failed and where we think we might have succeeded so that all of us can learn to be more effective in grappling with the biggest security challenge of our time.

I thank all our police, security agencies, agents and officials for their tireless work to keep us safe: I particularly acknowledge those working to prevent the on-line grooming of children and adolescents for terrorism.

I thank the hundreds of family members who have alerted our police and security agencies to potential problems in our midst. Many young people have been stopped from travelling overseas because a mother, brother or aunty has picked up the phone to contact authorities.

I thank all those Muslim community leaders who have opposed Australians becoming foreign fighters and have expressed their abhorrence of Daesh.

I admire the leadership shown to the world by Muslim statesmen such as Prime Minister Najib of Malaysia who has described Daesh as “against God, against Islam and against our common humanity”.

I salute Egypt's President al Sisi who recently told the imams of Al Azhar University in Cairo that Islam needed nothing less than a "religious revolution" to reverse centuries of false thinking.

As the world gets smaller, the challenge to find common ground, and to build upon it, becomes more and more urgent.

I thank God that more and more people are focussed on the things that unite us and invite everyone to join us in respect for the universal decencies of mankind.

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