Statement

by

Former Prime Ministers of Australia

All of us are former Prime Ministers of Australia.

Our multicultural nation's success is founded on the Australian values we all share and the respect we show for our fellow Australians' diversity of cultures and faiths.

Whatever is happening elsewhere in the world, there is no place in our country for racial or religious hatred.

And there is no more tenaciously evil race hatred than antisemitism.

Our Australian Jewish community, directly affected by the terrible crimes of Hamas, not only has to endure the loss and suffering of their families in Israel, but now sees these events being used by some to spread ancient hatreds which have inflicted so much suffering on the Jewish people for thousands of years.

No complaint or concern about international affairs justifies hate speech against any Australian, or any Australian community.

We believe we speak for the vast majority of Australians, of all faiths and of none, when we say we stand in solidarity with Jewish Australians at this time.

Likewise, we stand too with the Australian Palestinian community whose families are dying and suffering in this terrible conflict.

They too deserve our love and support.

Our nation's success depends on us not allowing conflict overseas to turn Australians against each other.

We condemn the cruel and murderous attack on Israeli families by Hamas on October 7. After raining thousands of rockets down on Israel, Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and kidnapped and murdered 1400 Israelis; young and old, women and men, children – not even babies were spared. It was the single largest massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust and its grotesque cruelty and violence was comparable to that of ISIS.

We call for the unconditional release of all the hostages taken by Hamas.

The Hamas terrorists sought to horrify and intimidate the people of Israel, shaking that nation's faith in its technology, its military, its government.

But they also sought to provoke Israel into a reaction that would kill countless innocent civilians in Gaza. The Hamas terrorists have no more interest in the safety of Palestinians than they do of Israelis.

They want Israel to invade and bomb Gaza. They want to be able to point to thousands of Palestinian casualties from Israeli military action.

Their mission is to promote hatred – hatred of Israelis, hatred of Jews, hatred of Palestinians, hatred of Muslims.

If our hearts are filled with hatred, then we will be doing the terrorists' work.

At home in Australia we must treat each other with love and with respect. We must support those who are grieving and distressed.

On the battlefield in Israel and Gaza we do not presume to give strategic advice to Israel. But the legitimate objective of defeating Hamas must be accompanied by support and protection for the civilian population of Gaza. Israel promises it will do all it can to avoid civilian casualties, we urge it to do so with all of its humanity and skill.

We call for sustained humanitarian access to ensure essential supplies can reach innocent Palestinians.

We are horrified by the thousands of deaths and injuries inflicted on innocent Palestinian civilians, including many, many Palestinian children.

We endorse, as we did in office, the Australian Government's enduring support for a twostate solution as the basis for long-term lasting peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

At this time, more than ever, we must in the words of the 34th Psalm "seek peace and pursue it". And here at home that is done by defending our Australian values, condemning hate speech and intolerance and respecting the people of Australia in all our diversity.

The Hon. John Howard OM AC The Hon. Dr Kevin Rudd AC The Hon. Julia Gillard AC The Hon. Tony Abbott AC The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull AC The Hon. Scott Morisson MP

30 October 2023