



PRIME MINISTER

17 July 2015

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MP
ADDRESS TO THE MH17 NATIONAL MEMORIAL SERVICE
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA**

E&OE.....

Today we remember the 298 passengers and crew of flight MH17 lost a year ago this day.

At this service, we honour all who perished but especially the men, women and children who called Australia home.

They were innocent people living their lives to the full, advancing careers, celebrating birthdays, visiting family, enjoying retirement or taking the holiday of a lifetime.

They deserved to be welcomed home not shot out of the sky in a war of aggression by one country against its smaller neighbour.

Their passing leaves a void that can never be filled and a pain that still throbs.

Nothing that's said or done can bring them back.

Little can ease the grief that all who knew them still feel.

Still this national acknowledgment of that grief may be of some comfort to all who mourn.

Today our nation pauses to remember the bereaved of MH17 and to will you the grace and strength to cope.

Those of us who have not been so tested and who pray that we never will be stand in awe of those who have and who have kept going through suffering that's almost unimaginable.

Invariably the families of the victims have been as concerned for others as for themselves.

In the worst of times, you have displayed the strength of giants and the grace of angels and I am humbled by your example.

In the very worst of times there have indeed been many Australians who were at their very best.

One bereaved family told me that but for the words and deeds of the consular service they are not sure they could have survived.

So today, we comfort those who grieve and we honour those who serve.

Within a few hours of the atrocity, consular staff were talking to victims' families. Within a day officials had been dispatched to Europe and within a week Australians were on the ground in Ukraine as part of Operation Bring Them Home.

We salute the officials who worked around the clock with families here in Canberra and all over Australia.

We salute the police, soldiers and forensic experts on the ground in Ukraine within range of Russian guns.

We thank Sir Angus Houston who coordinated the Australian recovery effort in Kiev and Julie Bishop who masterminded the UN Security Council resolution in New York along with her Dutch counterpart.

So now we owe it to the dead to bring the guilty to justice.

So now we owe it to the living to work for a more just and humane world, a world where people can turn their faces to the sun with the shadows behind them like the sun flowers blooming again in the fields where MH17 came down.

As the Maslin family so beautifully put it, love conquers hate.

May it be so – yesterday, today and always.

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