

Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum opening ceremony 16 March 2005

**Nick Warner, Deputy Secretary Australian Department of Affairs and Trade
representing the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP**

I speak on behalf of the Government and the people of Australia in recognising the enormous significance of Yad Vashem to Israel, to Jewish people around the world and, indeed, to all of us, wherever we come from.

The museum is a testament to the millions of men, women and children who lost their lives in the Holocaust and a solemn reminder of the devastating consequences of anti-Semitism, racial hatred and persecution.

Our sense of loss and sorrow is not only for the many who might have been with us today

- but also for the vitality and the talents that were lost to humanity as a whole - and forever.

The Holocaust showed the depths to which mankind can descend.

And it taught us that it is not enough to have justice on your side;

- we have to be strong enough to defend it.

We learnt that there is only one answer to the evils of dictatorship and tyranny

- and that is to meet those challenges head on.

This museum will serve to remind future generations of the tremendous hope and power of the human spirit to respond to the worst that can be done.

Australians all hope that this new museum will ensure that the voices and memories of those who perished are not lost.

Australians of all backgrounds know this legacy well.

After the Second World War, about 30,000 Holocaust survivors came to Australia.

Starting new lives based on the freedom, tolerance and democracy, which are cornerstones of Australian life, survivors and their families have been able to preserve their values and traditions.

Australian society now is so much richer and stronger for the significant contributions that survivors and their descendants have made

- not least in the professions, the arts, business and politics.
- I am pleased to see here today several prominent Australians who have been very generous in their support for Yad Vashem over the years

- and delighted that His Excellency President Katsav was able to meet so many of them during his successful visit to Australia just two weeks ago.

This new museum preserves survivors' memories and those of all who lost so much.

But it will also play a vital role for those of us who were not there.

Part of the museum's importance is in its statement of the lessons we have learned.

It not only deepens our memories and our humanity

- it also passes the lessons from generation to generation.

The evil of the Holocaust represented here is incontestable.

So the museum will keep our memories vivid and real, so that evil can be combated and contained and defeated.

To defend ourselves from such evil, we have not only to remember what has happened, but also to see clearly what is required of us in the future.

We have to find in our diversity what is common to us all and what binds us together, rather than separates and divides us.

We have to work to confirm our common values, even when we confront our worst disagreements.

This museum is a place of deep sadness, but it is also a place of bright hope.

Among the generations to come it will serve to educate against ignorance

- and to educate about evil.

It will touch the life of everyone who enters

- and leave them forever changed.