



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Australia-Israel Relationship: 70th Anniversary

SPEECH

Wednesday, 20 February 2019

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 20 February 2019	Source House
Page 14216	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Dick, Milton, MP	Question No.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (12:00): I rise to speak on the 70th anniversary of Australia's formal diplomatic relationship with the State of Israel. I'm very honoured to be able to address the parliament in a very important discussion in this parliament, which is also a discussion which has been held with speakers from both sides of the parliament. I follow on from my friend the member for Calwell and her deep commitment to peace in that region, which is well known and recognised by many, not only in this country but right across that region as well. I'm following on also from the member for Eden-Monaro and the Treasurer of Australia, and from the statements in the House of Representatives from the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

Throughout the world, Australia is lucky to have many great nations as close friends and allies, but perhaps, of all of our wonderful partnerships, it is Israel that we share the most in common with. Today we recognise the 70th anniversary of the formal beginning of Australia's friendship with Israel. It was not long after David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, publicly read the declaration of independence of Israel on 14 May 1948 that Australia and Israel formalised our partnership together. When officially announcing in 1949 that Australia would recognise Israel as a state, Prime Minister Ben Chifley said Israel would be 'a force of special value in the world'. Since that time, it has proved to be so. In the 70 years since then, the friendship and mateship between our two countries have only grown closer.

Our support for Israel has been long and unwavering. It was only two years earlier, prior to our formal partnership, that Australia was the first country to vote yes to the 1947 United Nations partition plan that called for the establishment of a Jewish state. Of course, it was Australia's Minister for External Affairs from 1941 to 1949, the great Doc Evatt, who presided over the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, who also chaired the committee that recommended to the United Nations that Israel be welcomed into the international community of nations.

A few short months later, on 18 May 1949, Israel's UN representative, Abba Eban, wrote to Evatt thanking him for Australia's steadfast support of Israel:

We are deeply indebted to the Australian Delegation for its consistent and effective support of our cause in the Assembly and its organs through all the stages of the consideration of our problem by the United Nations.

We are grateful to you for the decisive part you played in the proceedings.

It was under your chairmanship and thanks in so large measure to your determined lead that Israel was admitted to the United Nations when barely a year old.

The manner in which you steered to a vote the second historic Resolution, representing as it does the culmination of the process initiated by the first, the warmth and eloquence with which you welcomed Israel into the family of nations, have earned for you the undying gratitude of our people.

This shows the depth of our two great countries' bonds with each other from the very start. Evatt would later write in his memoirs:

I regard the establishment of Israel as a great victory of the United Nations.

There is no doubt now that Israel is a progressive and forward-thinking state, and our two countries share not only many of the same values but also a close bond.

We've always had warm relations, with strong economic ties due to the close people-to-people links and our commercial relationship for many decades. The trade between our two nations, as we've heard today from the member for Wentworth, is about \$1.2 billion. We continue to explore partnerships to strengthen our economic ties to this day. We cooperate internationally with Israel in many fields, including international development

assistance. Importantly, this includes Australia's international development assistance in Gaza and the West Bank which supports human development, institution building and economic growth, which are so important for peace in that region.

I also rise today to place on record my strong support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so that we may see peace for all people of Israel and the region. I last had the privilege of visiting the region and Israel in 2017 as part of a delegation alongside new members of this place. I hope to visit again soon. It was an honour to visit and be guided by experts through a series of in-depth meetings alongside parliamentary colleagues, officials, academics, union and community leaders, and other Israeli representatives. The trip also coincided with the 100th anniversary of British politician Arthur Balfour, later Lord Balfour, presenting a declaration of the British government stating the case for the Jewish homeland.

That year was also the 90th anniversary of the Zionist Federation of Australia, and today I'd like to acknowledge the following: the current ZFA president, Jeremy Leibler; the immediate past president, Dr Danny Lamm; the treasurer, Mr Ben Simon; the secretary, Ms Rebecca Lacey Ehrlich; and the president of the State Zionist Council of Queensland, my good friend Tony Leverton. They are all hardworking and dedicated members of the federation. Whilst today we celebrate the 70th anniversary of our friendship with Israel, we also look to the future of our two great nations for what will no doubt be another 70 years of working closely side-by-side and peace in the region.