

**SPEECH NOTES FOR PREMIER KRISTINA KENEALLY, MP  
ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY RECEPTION  
WEDNESDAY, 12 MAY 2010**

I begin by acknowledging the Gadigal Clan of the Eora people and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

This is my first opportunity as Premier to speak to you at this annual occasion, and it is an honour to do so on the 65th anniversary of the founding of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies - the oldest State-based cultural and religious representative peak body in Australia.

It is a remarkable fact that this annual observance has been attended by the Premier of NSW in every one of the past 31 years.

That in itself is testimony to the goodwill in which the NSW Jewish community is held by the entire NSW community.

Across NSW, and indeed across the world, we find Jews at the forefront of social progress and public endeavour.

The Jewish community have been active in Australian progress since the arrival of the first Europeans, and, in democratic spirit, always ready to reach out to those of other backgrounds.

In March this year I hosted the first Women's Interfaith Reception at Parliament House in which my good friend, Josie Lacey, plays a leadership role, bringing together women of the State's various faiths.

The Jewish community's leadership in inter-faith co-operation and community engagement has never been more important than it is today, as we contemplate a world riven by intolerance, fanaticism, racial hatred and terrorism in its many forms.

At that reception of the Women's Interfaith Network, I made brief mention of a student article I once published regarding the survival of Moses.

I documented how Moses' survival and therefore the entire fate of the Exodus rested in the hands of five brave women.

Each year at Passover the Jewish world celebrates the Exodus, its journey from slavery to freedom.

It is a journey that took the Jewish people to the land of Israel, the land to which, 62 years ago, they returned.

And it is that return and the founding of Israel as an independent State that we celebrate there this evening.

A nation of seven million lives in a country less than half the size of Tasmania, the one thriving democracy in her region; a nation that draws on an infinite combination of cultural and spiritual backgrounds; a nation of vast technological achievement; a leader in science, technology and the arts; a jewel that must be nurtured and preserved.

My Government remains not only a staunch supporter and friend of Israel, but an implacable enemy of any racial discrimination wherever it appears.

After all, NSW's diversity is one of its greatest strengths – culturally, socially, creatively, and economically.

It gives our communities a rich combination of thinking, of intellect, of understanding that fuels our prosperity, and allows a relatively small population to punch above its weight on the world stage.

The deeper we embrace that diversity, the more we learn from it, the stronger and richer our lives.

The commitment to diversity and pluralism is a founding principle of the State of Israel.

Australians take legitimate pride in the story of Israel's beginnings.

It was the work of an Australian Labor leader, Dr H.V. Evatt, that played a leading role in the founding of the State of Israel.

It was the beginning of a powerful bond between Israel and Australia at the highest level.

But while we celebrate 62 years of progress for Israel, her success as a functioning and prosperous democracy, the truth is that lasting peace still eludes the people of Israel and their neighbours.

We of course support Israel's right to peace and her defence.

We also support the right of Palestinians to self-determination – a two state solution.

This path to peace calls for honesty, goodwill and realism from all parties involved.

And while established as the Jewish state, Israel is also a home to Arabs, including Palestinians and those of other faiths.

Nearly 30 percent of Israel's population are not Jews.

That diversity is part of her strength, and gives added weight to her moral authority.

And it gives force to every plea that Israel has made, that it wants peace and wants it now.

That dream, that right, is what we honour and celebrate on the 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Israel's independence.

It is a celebration in which I am proud to participate.

I commend the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the State Zionist Council of NSW , and the co-hosts of this function – the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia for bringing us together.

On behalf of the people of NSW, I salute the free and democratic State of Israel.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you a toast to Israel.

*L'Chaim!*