



Executive Council  
of Australian Jewry Inc.

## **STATEMENT**

### **15 December 2018**

#### **Australia recognises that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel**

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the peak representative body of the Australian Jewish community, has welcomed the Australian government's ground-breaking announcement that "Australia now recognises West Jerusalem, as the seat of the Knesset and many of the institutions of government, is the capital of Israel." Prime Minister Scott Morrison made the announcement at a speech at the Sydney Institute today.

In a joint statement made by ECAJ President Anton Block and CEOs, Peter Wertheim and Alex Ryvchin, the ECAJ praised the announcement as "a simple acknowledgement of a reality that has existed since 1950. The Prime Minister deserves credit for resisting pressure from many quarters against taking even this modest step".

"Recognising that Israel's seat of government is located in the western part of the city, which is incontestably sovereign Israeli territory, does not in any way impact upon or pre-judge the future status of the contested eastern and other parts of the city captured by Israel in 1967", they said.

"The Prime Minister noted that Jerusalem's ultimate status, including its borders and boundaries, is a final status issue to be resolved between the parties", they added. "This is a pointed rejection of the Palestinians' demand that their claim to the whole of eastern Jerusalem must be accepted up front, as was the Prime Minister's statement that Australia expects the capital of a future Palestinian state to be located 'in' east Jerusalem. This leaves open the possibility that the predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods located in east Jerusalem can become a part of Israel in any negotiated settlement".

"Australia is a respected regional power which has good relations with both Israel and the Palestinians", the ECAJ spokespeople said. "The Australian government's announcement sends a message to Palestinian leaders that their unilateralist approach, seeking to prise concessions out of Israel without any quid pro quo, through the UN and its agencies and via the BDS campaign, is rejected by reasonable people, and has had the opposite results to those the Palestinians had intended. It's a failed strategy, and the Palestinians need to return to the negotiating table. There is no other way to achieve a

Palestinian State that will be viable, and a just and lasting peace based on the principle of two States for two peoples”.

The ECAJ noted that the Australian government will delay moving its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem until the final status of the city is determined under a peace agreement, and that in the interim Australia will establish a defence and trade office in Jerusalem.

“We hope that this will be a first step only”, the ECAJ spokesperson said. ““We look forward to Australia moving its embassy in Israel to the government precinct in the western part of Jerusalem in due course. Moving Australia’s embassy there would be no more pre-emptive of the outcome of peace negotiations than recognising it as Israel’s capital”.

The ECAJ also welcomed the Prime Minister’s criticism of the “biased and unfair targeting of Israel” in the UN General Assembly, which he described as “deeply unhelpful to efforts to build peace and stability”, and his observation that “the UN General Assembly is now the place where Israel is bullied and where antisemitism is cloaked in language about human rights.”

The ECAJ spokesperson stated: “Nothing is more corrosive of the international rules-based order than this kind of bias and implicit racism within the UN’s culture. The Prime Minister’s criticisms of the UN are well-founded, and Australia’s recent rejection of biased resolutions against Israel is to be applauded”.

The ECAJ agreed with the Prime Minister’s observation that the Iran nuclear deal was not designed to address Iran’s destabilising activities in the Middle East region and beyond, its sponsorship of terrorism or its proliferation of ballistic missiles. “These are precisely the reasons why the deal should be reviewed, not affirmed”, the ECAJ spokesperson said. “We hope that the Australian government will come to the same conclusion in time, but in the meantime we appreciate the measures taken by the government to constrain the Iranian regime’s aggressive and destabilising actions”.

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