

Remarks at the Eid event hosted by the Bachar Houli Cup and Leadership Program

PRIME MINISTER:

Well thank you very much, good afternoon, As-Salaam-Alaikum, peace be upon all of you.

I'm delighted to be here again at the front row, home of the Richmond Tigers and I want thank Bachar of course but Peggy O'Neal President, where's Peggy? There she is, President O'Neal thank you very much. And Brendon Gale CEO of the Club. I also thank Gillon McLachlan and he spoke so well as all the speakers have. Ali thank you very much for the work you do, the National Diversity Manager.

Rana, what a magnificent speech. You shouldn't have been intimidated about speaking before me I think after hearing you today anyone who speaks after you would feel they did [inaudible]. That was magnificent and it was eloquent, it was thoughtful and it was from the heart so thank you so much. Let's give her a round of applause.

[Applause]

Now as you know the Swans are my team and whilst an exciting match against Richmond at the MCG last week, but great wins for us both over the weekend. Swans by a point with the siren against Essendon and of course Richmond beat Carlton.

Now I'm delighted to be here to announce the government's continued support for the Bachar Houli Cup and Leadership Program. And I want to wish everyone here and all those in the wider Australian Muslim community a joyful Eid-al-Fitr.

Eid Mubarak!

Eid marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. It's a month of spiritual reflection, forgiveness and compassion. By fasting, through acts of charity, Muslims take time in Ramadan to remember those in our community who are less fortunate.

Celebrations like this one today and all those around the nation remind us of our success as a multicultural society.

Now let me, I want to stress this, we are the most successful multicultural society in the world. One of the important things is to turn your phone off. We are one of the most successful, I would say the most successful multicultural society in the world. And I'll tell you why we are. Because our Australian values are open to everybody. It doesn't matter what the

colour of your skin is, what your religion is, what your ethnic background is, our values are accessible to everyone. And so anyone, whatever their background, whatever their race, they've looked in the mirror and say "I look like an Australian".

So we do not define ourselves by reference to religion, or ethnicity or race as so many nations do. We are a remarkable nation. Our success as a multicultural society is built upon those values; freedom, democracy, rule of law, mutual respect. Mutual respect is so vitally important. It is of course connected to all the other values, the equality of men and women. It is a fundamental element in our society. And it's one of the things that has made us so successful. Now I was talking about these issues yesterday at the St Mark's Coptic Church in Sydney, Arncliffe, in Sydney.

The Copts you know have been attacked, persecuted by extremists, violent extremists who have, who are seeking to undermine Islam, destroy Islam from within and attack other faiths. And they spoke there about the support they have in Egypt, their community has in Egypt from the wide community, from the government, from the army, the support that they have, the solidarity across the religious faith and the difference between faiths, the solidarity which define and defeat those who seek to divide us.

Remember extremists seek to make us turn on each other and that is why this program and the work the AFL does and in particular that Bachar does here is so important. To those who seek to divide us we say we unite. To those who seek to create disunity and tension and conflict we say we come together in a strength of mutual respect and peace, as Rana said, in peace, in that harmony that makes us so successful as a multicultural society.

And it is harder, it is very hard to think of a better example of the strength and resilience of our great nation our great multicultural society than the work that Bachar does. Bachar's skills on the sporting field, though as Gillon said, he is human, are matched by his commitment to his community and building a stronger and more cohesive Australia.

As the AFL's Multicultural Ambassador, Bachar has introduced young people from diverse communities to the national game through the Bachar Houli Cup – an inter-Islamic schools football competition – and the Bachar Houli Academy, established as we know, to nurture aspiring young Muslim footballers. Bachar's mentoring program for Muslim youth demonstrates the power of sport to foster multicultural unity and develop teamwork and leadership skills.

As Rana said, in her life, being in an Indian-Muslim family, football has gone from being just something that happens in the cricket offseason, and become something that she and her friends are as passionately committed to. Or are you as to cricket? One would hope so. Anyway, equally. That's good. Equally committed.

[Laughter]

So participants in the Bachar Houli program undertake skill development sessions in communication, decision-making, resilience, identity and

community values. They are encouraged to engage with the local community and promote cultural and social inclusion. Thirty Islamic schools and organisations and more than 11,000 players are already taking part. It includes the Bachar Houli Employment program, which has provided full-time trainee positions to ten young Muslim men and women across Australia, who come from 13 different ethnic backgrounds.

So I want to congratulate the AFL, the Richmond Football Club, Ali Fahour, and Bachar Houli for building bridges of understanding, through the AFL, this national game and serving the community in such an inspiring way.

Thank you for helping so many young people. Let's give him a round of applause.

[Applause]

We'll be increasing our support of the Bachar Houli Program in 2017/18 with an additional grant, \$625,000, continuing our strong support. It will expand the Cup and leadership programs to include Muslim women and girls. That is of course consistent with the AFL's great leadership, the AFLW.

The AFL is really a role model of inclusion, reaching our right across the nation to build up the breadth of its adherence. So it's a great effort and we're delighted to be able to provide this continuing support. The Employment Program will be strengthened to develop traineeships and job ready programs for young Muslim women.

So it's been a pleasure to meet the young men and women here today who have participated in the Bachar Houli Program. I am confident that you will all be champions – every one of you, even the littlest ones among you – whether on or off the sporting field, helping us build a stronger and more vibrant multicultural Australia.

We can never be complacent about our success. We can only aspire to continue doing better. What we have created in Australia, all of us, 24 million Australians in our rich diversity, is a most remarkable nation. More remarkable today, perhaps than it ever has been. For around the world, there is so much more intolerance, so much more friction. That harmony is built on the values that you all embody, the peace that you're all committed to and the light that you're all showing for the great work of these young people. Bachar, what wonderful leadership you're showing here at your work here at Richmond, your work right across the community.

So I'm delighted to be here, I thank you all very much and I wish you all Eid Mubarak.

[ENDS]