

Speech given on September 4th 2013 at Lancaster EE138 crash site Stadil, Denmark by:

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Australian Embassy in Copenhagen

Thank you very much, Distinguished guests family members of the crew of Lancaster EE138, ladies and gentlemen my name is Damien Miller and I have the great privilege of being Australia's ambassador to Denmark and I am absolutely delighted to be here with you this afternoon. We are here on very special and sacred ground and this is a unique ceremony that I am pleased to be involved in, and here we are going to mark and acknowledge the service and sacrifice of a unique British and Australian crew, who lost their lives in 1943 while returning from a mission over Berlin. In honouring the crew today we also pause to reflect on the contribution of the service men and woman of Australia, Denmark and Great Britain who have fought and fallen to preserve the peace and freedoms we enjoy today.

Today we also remember the loved ones who farewelled them, who worried for them, who welcomed them back home or to have often lost them on foreign fields far away from their homes. The loss of promising young lives in large numbers during war time is devastating for families and communities, it is important that we continue to pay tribute and to remember those who didn't return. It is of comfort to family members to know where their loved ones are laid to rest and to know that these places are cared for and I must say as an Australian it is a great comfort to me and other Australians that our compatriots rest here on Danish soil in a country that upholds values and freedoms for which our country men and woman fought.

I am very proud of the contribution that Australia has made to service over many years and our work throughout the last 100 years in particular to uphold our values often in conflicts taking place far from our own shores. From the first Anzacs who faced the horrors of war in the trenches of the Gallipoli peninsula to our service people in Afghanistan dealing with the complex threats of terrorism and insurgency, Australians have served and sacrificed with great distinction.

I would now like to make some remarks about Flying Officer Sidney Forrester and we are delighted and honoured that some of his family members are here today along with other family members of the crew. Sidney Forrester was an extremely talented and smart young man who lost his life here at 22 years of age, he was a promising student and sportsman, he joined the Australian Air Force very early in life at the age of 20. He got his wings at Point Cook in Victoria the same year and he graduated as a pilot officer in 1942 before being posted to the United Kingdom to pilot and crew Wellington and Lancaster aircraft, coincidentally Ewin Carthew the navigator on EE138 and Sidney were old school mates they both attended Unley High School in South Australia and played in the same football and cricket teams. During their training in the United Kingdom Sidney Forrester and his young crews high level of skills and abilities were soon recognised, they completed many raids and operations into Europe before being posted as a Lancaster crew to the Royal Australian Air Force squadron 460 in Lincolnshire, sadly the Berlin raid in September 1943 their first in a Lancaster was to be their last.

So today we award medals posthumously to Sidney Forrester in recognition of his service to his country for which he paid the highest price. We also reflect on the character and the values of these young airmen represented their valour in good cause, enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity and comradeship.

The Australian Government wants to thank all of you for being here today and the many people and organisations who were involved in the project to return the Lancaster blade and also in establishing this unique memorial, including the

Ringkøbing and Skjern council and the Stadil and nearby communities, we also thank the Australian Defence Force the Australian Department of Veteran Affairs and the Office of Australian War Graves as well as the British Defence Ministry and the Royal Air Force for their role in today's medal ceremony but we also have to thank in particular the Danish Government Defence Force and the people of this local community who have made this unique and moving memorial, and permanent memorial so that future generations of Danes, Brits and Australians will be able to visit. So may this memorial stand as a tribute and a site of reflection for all families of air force personnel and service people who did not return from conflicts abroad. It will also be a permanent marker of the continued solidarity and bonds of friendship between the people of Australia, Denmark and the United Kingdom who have fought together over many years throughout the world to promote international peace and security and our shared values and these are bonds that won't be lost.

Lest we forget.