




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

D-Day, 70th Anniversary

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (6.47 pm): 'Ok, we'll go.' With these words General Dwight D Eisenhower, the supreme allied commander, unleashed the largest, most complex seaborne invasion in the history of warfare and the most crucial day in the Allies' long and painful pursuit of victory in the Second World War. On the success of Operation Overlord rested the outcome of the Second World War, the swift liberation of Western Europe and the ending of tyranny that had menaced the civilised world for five long years.

Had the landings on those Normandy beaches failed 70 years ago today, Hitler would have unleashed even more long-range V2 rockets against Britain with lethal effect, the atomic bomb might well have been deployed in Europe and perhaps, most significantly, the Red Army could have advanced to the Rhine or beyond with incalculable consequences for the Western world when the war was over. Indeed, without a Western Front being established from D-day, the course of the modern world after the Second World War may have been vastly different, with many of the basic democratic freedoms that we take for granted today simply unattainable.

More than 3,000 Australians fought in the campaign with approximately 2,500 airmen and around 500 naval personnel involved. Some 18 Australian men were killed in action during D-day. I honour their sacrifice here today.

Many of us recall the harrowing opening scenes of the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. As realistic as this was with its gruesome portrayal of coming ashore, it was still a Hollywood movie and if it was not for the courage and sacrifice of the brave personnel involved on that overcast morning 70 years ago today the outcome of the battle may have turned out differently along with the fate of the Western world.

What makes a man continue to storm ashore or run out of a trench when sheer hell is breaking out all around him? I can never answer that question from actual military experience as the lives laid down that day allowed future generations such as mine the blessed ability to live our lives free from the tyranny of oppression and totalitarianism.

I was fortunate to visit the Normandy beach heads with my family a couple of years ago. It was a very sombre experience to visit the war cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer with the immaculately kept green lawns and headstones all gleaming in white and in perfect alignment. Before visiting this hallowed site, we walked along Omaha Beach, which was the site of the fiercest fighting on D-day. I confess that it was difficult to hold back tears when one stood in the footsteps of those brave fighting men who undertook this massive task 70 years ago today.

My ability to get up and deliver this address as a democratically elected representative, with all the associated freedoms that come with living in a democratic society, owes an enormous debt to the efforts that took place along that windswept Normandy coastline 70 years ago. There is an inscription in the US Military Cemetery at St Laurent Normandy which states, 'Think not only upon their passing; remember the glory of their spirit.' Lest we forget.