Election 2016: Turnbull dad-in-law's sorry-not-sorry note to Abbott

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Tom Hughes when he was attorney-general.

by Fleur Anderson

Malcolm Turnbull's famous barrister father-in-law Tom Hughes QC, who earned the nickname "Frosty" for his courtroom demeanor, has apologised – sort of – to Tony Abbott for likening him to a lunatic.

In the time honoured tradition of the sorry-not-sorry apology, Malcolm Turnbull revealed on Friday that his father-in-law wrote to Mr Abbott apologise "if any offense" was caused by the publication of his letters in which he likened Mr Abbott's ascension to Liberal leader in 2009 to putting "the principal lunatic in charge of the asylum".

"Tom has great respect for Tony Abbott and the note that is referred to in his memoirs, of course, is some years old and I know that Tom has written a note to Tony to apologise if any offence is caused by that," Mr Turnbull said.

It is not known whether Mr Hughes has apologised for any offence to any principal lunatics for likening them to Mr Abbott, or to the Liberal partyroom for comparing it to an asylum.

Tony Abbott was described as "the principal lunatic in charge of the asylum" in a letter written by Tom Hughes.

After lavishing praise on the 93-years Mr Hughes for his Second World War record, his political career as Australia's Attorney-General and his long legal career, Mr Turnbull said many people will be inspired by his upcoming memoir to be published in June 2009.

Readers of the biography, *Tom Hughes QC: A Cab on the Rank*, will be able to read more of the December 2009 "lunatic" letter to his brother, famed art critic Robert Hughes, the publication of his more recent apology to Mr Abbott may have to wait to be included in any upcoming Abbott memoir.