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PM hoses down another Abbott-related problem

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A missive labelling Tony Abbott a "lunatic" required Mr Turnbull's attention on Friday.

The PM has been busy mending political fences. *Photo: AAP*

Private correspondence revealing what Tom Hughes QC, the Prime Minister's father-in-law, really thought of ousted PM Tony Abbott has been dismissed by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull as outdated.

Malcolm Turnbull said on Friday Mr Hughes had written a private note to Mr Abbott apologising for any offence caused by his private views in the soon-to-be published biography of Tom Hughes, *A Cab on the Rank* by historian Ian Hancock.

Mr Hughes, the legendary Sydney barrister and former Commonwealth Attorney General, now 92, is the father of Lucy Turnbull, the PM's wife.

In 2009, after Mr Turnbull lost the leadership to Tony Abbott in a party room ballot, Mr Hughes sent a hand written note to Mr Turnbull describing Mr Abbott as a "lunatic".

"There is room only for improvement and the party's present folly will pass," the note said.

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The book also reveals Mr Hughes wrote in a letter to the late art critic Robert Hughes that the leadership change was "a potentially catastrophic decision".

Questioned about the correspondence on Friday Mr Turnbull indicated that Mr Hughes had sent a personal note to Mr Abbott.

"His memoir will be of great interest and inspiration to many people who read his life story. 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 just to apologise if any offence is caused by that".

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