Malcolm Turnbull's father-in-law sent him a letter warning Tony Abbott was a 'lunatic' and if he became Liberal leader he would 'be like a bull in a china shop'

Malcolm Turnbull's father-in-law described Tony Abbott as a 'lunatic'
Tom Hughes, a former attorney-general, wrote this in a letter to his brother
He also described Mr Abbott as 'the bull in charge of the china shop'
Book 'Tom Hughes QC: A Cab on the Rank' is published later this month

By Australian Associated Press and John Carney for Daily Mail Australia

Published: 09:31 EST, 3 June 2016 | Updated: 10:05 EST, 3 June 2016

Malcolm Turnbull's father-in-law described Tony Abbott as a 'lunatic' in a letter he penned to his brother.

'To elect Abbott in his place is the equivalent of putting the bull in charge of the china shop or the principal lunatic in charge of the asylum,' Tom Hughes, a former attorney-general, wrote in 2009, according to a new biography.

In another letter - this time to Mr Turnbull - Mr Hughes urged him to stay in politics after losing the Liberal leadership, saying 'the party's present folly will pass'.

Former Attorney General Tom Hughes QC (pictured centre with son-in-law and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, and daughter Lucy Turnbull) was very critical of former Liberal leader Tony Abbott

The revelations will appear later this month in the former attorney-general's forthcoming book 'Tom Hughes QC: A Cab on the Rank', written by Liberal Party historian Ian Hancock.

The Australian also reports that the book republishes an angry letter from Mr Hughes to his brother, the late Robert Hughes - a well-respected art critic and historian - clearing criticising the decision to make Mr Abbott the Liberal leader.

'This is a potentially catastrophic decision,' he wrote. 'To elect Abbott in his place is the equivalent of putting the bull in charge of the china shop or the principal lunatic in charge of the asylum.

'Abbott's behaviour in relation to the risks of global warming may be compared to the oscillations of the weather vane.'

Mr Hughes urged Mr Turnbull to stay in politics after losing the Liberal leadership and called Mr Abbott a 'lunatic' in a letter he penned to his brother

Mr Turnbull was expected to launch the book but he has reportedly now pulled out of the role, with the former High Court chief justice Murray Gleeson doing the job instead.

Mr Hughes, 92, was Liberal MP for the NSW seats of Parkes and Berowra from 1963 to 1972. He was attorney-general from 1969 to 1971.

A famous figure in Sydney and Australian Bars for six decades, he first enlisted in the RAAF during World War II, and tried his hand at horse racing and farming in a colourful life.

Read more: Nocookies | The Australian