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Howard Government Retrospective IV

"The Desire for Change: 2004–2007"

18-19 November 2019

National Press Club, Canberra



PUBLIC LEADERSHIP
RESEARCH GROUP

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The Howard Government Retrospective Conference Series

The Liberal-National Party Coalition led by John Howard won office on 2 March 1996 and continued to hold power until 3 December 2007 (after losing the election held on 24 November 2007). UNSW Canberra is hosting a series of retrospective conferences to assess the performance of the Howard Government. Each event provides the basis for collections of essays contributed by principal participants, key public servants, leading commentators and notable scholars drawing on documents in the John Howard Collection held at the Defence Force Academy Library and other papers managed by the Howard Library at Provisional (Old) Parliament House. This series has become the 'standard' treatment of the Howard years.



Contributors have been asked to focus critically on the Coalition's policies and performance to reveal the Government's shortcomings and failures. This commitment to a candid critique will attract the attention of the press and current-serving politicians, affording the volumes a substantial public profile at the time of their release. UNSW Press is the series publisher.

The first conference covered the 1996 election, the Coalition's readiness for office, the main policy decisions and practical challenges of the first year of the Howard Government, including gun control and ministerial responsibility.

The second conference dealt with the second and third years of the Coalition's first term in office (1997-98) and most of its second term (1998-2001). It canvasses the High Court's Wik decision and native title, the Patricks waterfront dispute, the constitutional convention, the Coalition's near defeat at the 1998 poll, the Government's response to post-independence violence in East Timor and the introduction of the GST.

The third conference focused on the controversial events leading to the 2001 election including the MV *Tampa* crisis, the collapse of Ansett Airlines, the '9/11' terrorist attacks and the invasion of Afghanistan. It looked at the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, the outbreak of the 'history wars', managing the environment and health care, the challenges faced by the Labor Opposition and the rise of Mark Latham.

The fourth conference is concerned with the period October 2004 to November 2007 and will examine the Coalition's control of the Senate, the advent of Work Choices, the progress of Indigenous Reconciliation and the Northern Territory intervention, and the election that saw the Coalition lose office and the Prime Minister his seat in parliament.

UNSW Press Howard Government Series Titles

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|-----|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| I | The Ascent to Power, 1996 | (released 2017) |
| II | Back from the Brink, 1997-2001 | (released 2018) |
| III | Trials and Transformations, 2001-2004 | (released 2019) |
| IV | The Desire for Change, 2004-2007 | (to be released 2020) |

Conference Welcome

Professor Tom Frame

Director, Public Leadership Research Group



UNSW Canberra is delighted to welcome you to the fourth Howard Government Retrospective Conference. For those who have travelled some distance to participate we are grateful that you have made the journey. We also extend a hand of friendship to those making contact with UNSW Canberra for the first time and hope you will take the time to become familiar with the full range of the University's activities in the National Capital. The conference is hosted by the University's Public Leadership Research Group (PLRG). Let me explain the origins and the remit of the PLRG.

Universities and leadership studies

There are few areas of human endeavour that have aroused more intellectual interest but produced less academic clarity than leadership. Scholars with very different experiences and expertise, such as behavioural scientists and analytical philosophers, have turned the explanatory power of their disciplines on the exercise of leadership in the search for clear and compelling definitions and to identify the essence of effective leadership. The existence of many competing accounts of leading and the proliferation of contrasting leadership theories reveals the highly complex and incredibly nuanced nature of the subject. Some writers have focussed on leaders and others on followers; some have concentrated on abiding principles and others on changing contexts. Consequently, the leadership training regimes offered by business schools are very different to the leadership education programs promoted by humanities departments. There is, however, general agreement on what constitutes a bad leader and poor leadership. If nothing else, scholars have contributed a 'don't' list for leadership even if the 'do' list is much shorter by comparison.

Why leadership?

UNSW aspires to be a leader within the higher educational sector and in the Australian community. Since its foundation in 1949 with a focus on science and technology for those pursuing professional careers, UNSW has expanded its programs and enhanced its reputation to become one of only three Australian universities ranked in the world's Top 50. The University's evolution has relied on firm leadership during critical moments when courage was needed to embrace new opportunities and when indecisiveness might have imperilled long-term investment. Leadership remains a key component of UNSW's future development. The 2025 Strategy highlights the pivotal role of leaders, leading and leadership in UNSW's teaching, research and engagement. The University does not want to be a follower, merely replicating initiatives and rebadging programs that others have devised and delivered. UNSW wants to move in new directions in tackling the persistent problems and perennial challenges facing individuals and institutions. This requires a strong culture of personal and professional leadership.

Why UNSW?

The UNSW 2025 Strategy explains that 'a great university ... is a global leader in discovery, innovation, impact, education and thought leadership'. Hence, leadership and the enabling of leaders is the focus of the strategy. The University aspires to be 'a leader in addressing the grand challenges facing society' becoming a 'primary point of reference for leaders and policy makers'. The strategy emphasises that UNSW 'will be a leader in talent and organisational development' and will 'tackle real-world problems, leading debate and policy formulation' while being 'Australia's leading university for international education'. The University will 'identify and develop high performing individuals as our future leaders' and promote 'top talent programs for researchers, teachers, administrators, managers and leaders' with investment in 'HR capability to better support leaders'.

As UNSW seeks to be a national leader it is conscious of the nation's continuing need for leadership at all levels and in all sectors. Hence, the need for fresh ideas and new initiatives in the education and training of leaders. UNSW Canberra has been working with Defence since 1967 and has been closely concerned with leadership since then. UNSW has partnered with Defence – both the ADF and the APS – to focus on aspects of leadership. Located in the national capital – the home of many national institutions – UNSW Canberra is ideally placed to make the most of its existing relationship with a number of public and private organisations.

To what end?

The PLRG reflects the commitment of UNSW as a public university to serve the public interest. The PLRG has three objectives:

- i) foster the study of the principles and practice of public leadership;

ii) focus attention on defining and describing the public interest; and

iii) explore the 'contest of ideas' and 'thought leadership' to public policy.

These objectives are partly met in an educational program consisting of two postgraduate programs: the Master of Public Leadership and Policy (MPLP) and the Doctorate in Public Leadership (DPL) which are described in more detail elsewhere in this booklet.

The PLRG also hosts the Howard Library which consists of the John Howard Collection, the Howard Government Collection, and exhibition-display items drawn from the period 1996–2007 that depict Australia's national life. The records being acquired by the Howard Library are intended to make it a critical resource for public leadership studies.

The Research Group's activities are shaped by three broad questions. First, what is public leadership and how is its practice enhanced? Second, how can UNSW promote public leadership through teaching and research? Third, where can UNSW Canberra enhance the practice of public leadership principles within the

Defence community? PLRG programs will enhance leadership practice through reflection on student leadership capacities; assessment of student leadership abilities; analysis of leadership requirements in the workplace/organisation; assessment of senior leadership team performance in the workplace/organisation; building an organisational culture welcoming of leadership, governance and leadership; discerning the difference between leadership and management; and, building a team, imparting a vision and leadership succession.

The PLRG is not aligned with any political party, think tank or government instrumentality. It does not receive funding from any political party or lobby group. It affirms the apolitical nature of the University and its commitment to independent and critical scholarship. Hence, the aim of this conference is to be critical rather than celebratory (although giving praise where it is due) – to create an atmosphere of open and balanced inquiry – including among those who contributed to the history we are assessing for their candid judgment – making the most of the passage of time. The University is honoured to be providing a context for such inquiry and we look forward to your contributions.



Howard Government Retrospective Conference IV

"The Desire for Change: 2004–2007"

Conference Program

Day 1 - Monday 18 November

1100 Welcome Professor Harvi Sidhu

1110 The Fourth Howard Government: setting the scene Professor Tom Frame AM

Session 1 Public opinion and the political mood

1130 Missing the wood for the trees, or did the 2004 campaign really matter? Emeritus Professor Murray Goot

1210 The Challenge of Opposition The Hon. Michael Danby

1250 Lunch

Session 2 Interacting with a changing world

1330 AT Kearney sponsor presentation

1340 The Howard Government: a pictorial review Ms Liz Luchetti and Mr David Foote

1410 The 'continuing work' of industrial relations Associate Professor Shaun Carney

1445 The challenge of restrained law-making in response to unrestrained terror Dr Nicola McGarrity

1505 Afternoon tea

Session 3 Institutional challenges

1540 Commonwealth-State relations Ms Kate Carnell AO

1615 Controlling the Senate Dr Scott Prasser

1700 Book Launch Emeritus Professor John Niland AC
Trials and Tribulations, Howard Government, Vol. 3, 2002-2004

Day 2 - Tuesday 19 November**Session 4 Portfolio matters**

0905	Indigenous affairs and the NT intervention	Emeritus Professor Tim Rowse
0940	Energy and Climate	Mr Roger Beale AO
1015	International affairs	The Hon. Alexander Downer AC

1055 Morning Tea**Session 5 New challenges**

1115	Warm hearts or soft heads? Social policy options	Mr Patrick McClure AO
1150	The rise of the Greens	Dr Zareh Ghazarian and Dr Nick Economou

1225 Lunch

1300	The Howard Years: A cartoonist's view	Mr Warren Brown
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Session 6 The beginning of the end

1325	Panel discussion: the view from the electorates	The Hon. Gary Nairn AO, Mr Phil Barresi, The Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson AO
1405	The succession that wasn't	Professor Tom Frame AM

1430 Afternoon Tea**Session 7 Legacies**

1445	John Howard: conservative or liberal?	Professor Gregory Melluish
1520	The Howard Government and its advisers	Dr Maria Maley
1555	Prepared for Opposition?	Dr Marija Taflaga

Session 8 Closing Reflections

1630	Managing the transition	The Hon. John Howard OM, AC
1650	Concluding remarks	Professor Tom Frame AM

Howard Government Retrospective IV: 2004 -2007

Bios

Phil Barresi

Phillip Barresi was a Liberal member of the Australian House of Representatives from March 1996 to November 2007 representing the Division of Deakin, Victoria. He was born in Patti, Sicily, and was educated at the Australian National University and Swinburne University (then the Swinburne Institute of Technology). He was a psychologist, training officer and consultant before entering politics. He was defeated by Mike Symon of the Labor party in the 2007 election. Barresi again contested Deakin for the Liberals at the 2010 election but was defeated in a rematch with Symon. He now is National Employment Relations Director for the Australian Retailers Association.

Roger Beale AO

Roger Beale is an artist, having painted for over 50 years. Previously, he was one of Australia's most senior public servants. He was appointed Secretary of the Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories in 1996 and remained head of the department when it was transitioned to Department of the Environment and later Department of the Environment and Heritage. In 2004, Roger retired from the Australian Public Service after 37 years of service. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to national economic reform in 1995, received the Centenary Medal and was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2006.

Andrew Blyth

Andrew Blyth is a senior member of staff at UNSW Canberra. Previously, Andrew was the former CEO of the ACT & Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a former chief of staff and senior adviser in the Howard Government. He holds an undergraduate degree in government and postgraduate qualifications in business and international relations. In 2012 he was awarded a Fulbright Professional Scholarship in Australia-US Alliance Studies that he used to conduct research at the University of Texas at Austin into off-grid energy solutions. He is a contributing author to *The Long Road: Australia's train, advise and assist missions* (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2017); *The Ascent to Power, 1996: The Howard Government, Volume I* (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2017), *Back from the Brink, 1997-2001: The Howard Government, Volume II* (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2018); and *Trials and Transformations, 2001-2004: The Howard Government, Volume III* (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2019). Andrew is currently researching the role and effectiveness of think tanks in the development of public policy through a professional doctorate at UNSW Canberra. Andrew has been admitted as a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Warren Brown

Influential contemporary Sydney newspaper cartoonist and historian. Brown began work as a copy boy at News Limited in 1982 before joining Wollongong's Illawarra Mercury in 1984 after convincing the editor of the need for a cartoonist. Since then he has gone on to win a Stanley Award and receive nominations for a Walkley.

Kate Carnell AO

Kate Carnell is the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. Kate brings extensive experience and knowledge to the role of ASBFEO, having run her own small businesses for 15 years before becoming ACT Chief Minister in 1995 for a five year period. Prior to her appointment as the ASBFEO, Kate held the position of CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), which represents more than 300,000 businesses across Australia. She has also served two years as CEO of Beyond Blue and four years as CEO of the Australian Food and Grocery Council. Kate is a pharmacist by profession and was the inaugural chair of the ACT Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the first female to become the National Vice-President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. Kate was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2006 for her services to the community through contributions to economic development and support for the business sector, knowledge industries, the medical sector and medical technology advances.

Associate Professor Shaun Carney

Shaun Carney has written extensively about leadership, politics and industrial relations since the Melbourne afternoon newspaper *The Herald* first sent him to work in the Canberra Press Gallery in 1979. Prior to joining the *Herald Sun* as a columnist in 2012, he was associate editor and national political columnist at *The Age*. He is the author of four books, including *The Change Makers – 25 Leaders in Their Own Words* (MUP, 2019) and a memoir, *Press Escape* (MUP, 2016). He is an adjunct associate professor at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNSW Canberra.

The Honourable Michael Danby

Michael Danby was an Australian Labor Party member of the House of Representatives from 1998 until 2019, representing the Division of Melbourne Ports, Victoria. Danby was briefly Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts, from March to September 2013. On 5 July 2018, Danby announced he would not contest the seat of Macnamara, which would replace Melbourne Ports at the 2019 federal election, thus ending a 20-year career in federal politics.

The Honourable Alexander Downer AC

Alexander Downer is Executive Chair of the International School for Government at King's College London. From 2014 to 2018, he was Australian High Commissioner to the UK. Prior to this, he was Australia's longest-serving Minister for Foreign Affairs, a role he held from 1996 to 2007. Alexander Downer also served as Opposition Leader and leader of the Australian Liberal Party from 1994 to 1995 and was Member of the Parliament for Mayo for over 20 years. In addition to a range of other political and diplomatic roles, he was Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce and the United Nations Secretary General's Special Adviser on Cyprus, in which he worked on peace talks between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. He is currently Chairman of the UK think tank Policy Exchange and a trustee of the International Crisis Group.



Dr Nick Economou

Nick Economou, a PhD graduate from the University of Melbourne, is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Political and Social Inquiry. Nick has been teaching Australian politics and governance at Monash since 1992, and, prior to this, taught at the then Swinburne Institute and the former Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education (now Monash Gippsland). In amongst all of this he was also the Sir Robert Menzies lecturer in Australian Studies at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (London University) in 1995 and 1996. His publications include *The Kennett Revolution* (co-edited with Brian Costar), *Media, Politics and Power in Australia* (co-authored with Stephen Tanner) and *Australian Politics for Dummies* (co-authored with Zareh Gazarian). There have also been numerous academic journal articles on subjects ranging from Australian state and federal and even local government elections through to analyses of environmental policy-making. He has also published on Australian political parties, with particular emphasis of the ALP and the Greens. Nick's research interests include Australian national and state governance, federal, state and local elections and electoral systems, and the role and behaviour of Australia's political parties.

Professor Tom Frame AM

Tom Frame joined the RAN College as a cadet midshipman in 1979 and served in the Navy for fifteen years. He has been a Visiting Fellow in the School of Astronomy and Astrophysics at ANU; Patron of the Armed Forces Federation of Australia; a Councillor of the Australian War Memorial and judged the inaugural Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History (2007). He is presently the Director of the UNSW Canberra Public Leadership Research Group and the Howard Library at Old Parliament House, and is the author or editor of over 45 books including *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, *Philip Ruddock and the Politics of Compassion* and *Gun Control: What Australia Got Right and Wrong*. Tom was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for "significant service to higher education, the Anglican Church and the community" in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

David Foote

For the last 27 years, David Foote has been the official photographer for Parliament House in Canberra. During that time, he has covered seven election campaigns and over 60 overseas visits following Prime Ministers Howard, Rudd, Gillard, Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison as their official photographer. He hasn't counted the Guests of Government, to Australia, that he has covered! David was in Washington DC on September 11 following Prime Minister Howard.

Dr Zareh Ghazarian

Zareh Ghazarian is a Lecturer in Politics and International Relations in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University. He is a leading commentator on politics and government and regularly contributes to the political debate by appearing on national and international media. He has published widely in academic journals and his teaching and research interests include political parties, elections and public policy. He was a Fellow in the Prime Ministers Centre at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House in 2015-16. His latest book is *The Making of a Party System: Minor Parties in the Australian Senate* (2015, Monash University Publishing).

Emeritus Professor Murray Goot

Murray Goot FASSA is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations at Macquarie University. His most recent book is *The Conscripted Conflict and the Great War* (2016), co-edited with Robin Archer, Joy Damousi and Sean Scalmer. He contributed to the first three volumes on The Howard Government, and is currently exploring the history of political campaigning in Australia and the history of opinion polling in Australia, Britain and the United States.

The Honourable John Howard OM, AC

John Howard was the twenty-fifth Prime Minister of Australia, leading the nation from March 1996 to December 2007. He was the federal member for Bennelong in the House of Representatives (1974-2007) and filled several ministerial and shadow ministerial posts prior to 1996. He was made a companion of the Order of Australia (AC) and a member of the Order of Merit (OM) in 2012. He is the second-longest serving Prime Minister of Australia.

Liz Luchetti

Liz Luchetti has over 25 years' experience working in libraries. She spent 12 years at the National Library of Australia before moving to the Department of Defence as Manager, Document Services. In 2011 she moved to the Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliamentary Library, as Director, Collection Management. Major initiatives introduced during this period include the introduction of e-books and other electronic resources, implementation of a web scale discovery service and the procurement of a new integrated library system. In 2013 Liz was promoted to Assistant Secretary, Library Collections and Databases Branch. In this role she has significantly increased the range of news and media services available to parliamentarians, enhanced the digital delivery of Library products and services and completed several large-scale digitisation projects that will ensure the Parliamentary Library's historic resources are preserved for long-term access. Apart from library management, Liz has significant experience in government procurement, project management and staff management. She is passionate about motivating, mentoring and developing staff and using new technologies to improve the delivery of library services. Liz has a Bachelor of Arts in Library and Information Studies and is currently completing her Masters in Information Leadership.

Dr Maria Maley

Dr Maria Maley is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations at the Australian National University, where she teaches public administration and public policy. Her research focuses on the work of political advisers; political-administrative relations; comparative advisory institutions; gender and political leadership; and the careers of ministers and political staff. Her Australian Research Council-funded research is about public servants who work as ministerial staff. Her work has appeared in *Public Administration*, *International Journal of Public Administration*, *Australian Journal of Political Science* and *Australian Journal of Politics and History*.

Patrick McClure AO

Patrick McClure was CEO of Mission Australia (1997-2006) when it evolved into an international charity with revenue of \$300 million and 3,000 staff providing employment, training, housing, youth and family services. He was also CEO of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (NSW/ACT) and CEO of The Retirement Villages Group. McClure chaired the Reference Group on Welfare Reform (1999 -2001). The final report "Participation Support for a More Equitable Society" was supported by all of the major parties. The Howard Government response, "Australians Working Together", committed \$1.7 billion to its implementation. He was a Member of the Prime Minister's Community-Business Partnership (1999-2007) and Commissioner of the Australian Fair Pay Commission (2006-9). He was also Chair of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform (2014-15) and Review of the ACNC (2017-18). He is an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) and was awarded an Australian Centennial Medal. He is an AFR True Leader (2005) and received the EQT CEO Award for 'Lifetime Achievement'.

Dr Nicola McGarrity

Dr Nicola McGarrity is a Senior Lecturer in Public and Criminal Law in the Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales, and the Director of the Terrorism Law Reform Project in the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law. She has published extensively on Australian and comparative anti-terrorism law and policy, with her most recent publications being *Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Anti-Terrorism Law* (2018, co-authored with Dr Jessie Blackburn and Ms Deniz Kayis) and *Inside Australia's Anti-Terrorism Laws and Trials* (2014, co-authored with Professors Andrew Lynch and George Williams). Nicola's particular area of expertise is in the prosecution of terrorist suspects; this has been developed not only through Nicola's research but also her experience as a barrister at the New South Wales and Victorian Bars. Most notably, Nicola spent the second half of 2010 appearing as defence counsel before the Victorian Supreme Court on behalf of one of five men accused of planning an attack on Holsworthy Army Barracks. Nicola has worked with a range of community and political organisations on advocacy campaigns relating to the reform of Australia's anti-terrorism laws and is often called upon to give background information and interviews for the hard copy and electronic media.

Professor Gregory Melleuish

Greg Melleuish is a Professor in the School of Humanities and Social Inquiry at the University of Wollongong where he teaches Australian politics, political theory and ancient history. He is currently a member of the Australian history and non-fiction judging panel for the Prime Minister's literary awards. He has written widely on Australian political ideas, including *Cultural Liberalism in Australia* (CUP 1995), *A Short History of Australian Liberalism* (CIS 2001) *Australian Intellectuals* (Connor Court 2013) and *Despotic State or Free Individual* (ASP 2014).

The Honourable Gary Nairn AO

After 25 years in the surveying and mapping profession, including his own business, Gary Nairn was elected the Federal Member for Eden-Monaro in 1996. His 12 year parliamentary career included Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister Howard with responsibility for water reform and Special Minister of State with responsibility for e-government, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and five government business enterprises. Post Parliament he operated his own spatial sciences consultancy, was the inaugural Chairman of the Northern Territory Planning Commission and Chairman of the Tasmanian Spatial Information Council. Gary is currently Chairman of The Mulloon Institute, Chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in Australia and is a Board Member of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust.

The Honourable Dr Brendan Nelson AO

Brendan Nelson has been the Director of the Australian War Memorial since 2012. Prior to this he was the Australian Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, the European Union and NATO (2010–12). He holds a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, and was a medical practitioner in Hobart from 1985 to 1995. From 1993 to 1995, he was the National President of the Australian Medical Association (AMA). In 1996, Brendan was elected to the Parliament of Australia, serving as Minister for Education, Science and Training, and then Minister for Defence. As leader of the Liberal Party of Australia, Brendan was Leader of the Opposition from November 2007 to September 2008. He holds many awards and honorary appointments, and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in January 2016 for his services to the community, the Parliament of Australia, diplomacy and cultural leadership. Brendan is a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at ANU; Member of the Australian Genome Project Advisory Board; Patron of Lifeline ACT; Patron of Trish MS Research Foundation; Patron of the Weary Dunlop Foundation; Patron of the NSW RSL and Services Clubs; Patron of the Commando Welfare Trust; Ambassador for Legacy Australia; Ambassador for the Invictus Games Sydney 2018; Ambassador for Soldier On and Ambassador for the Defence Reserve Forces Council.

Emeritus Professor John Niland AC

Over his career John Niland has alternated roles between scholarship, academic leadership, community boards and corporate activity. His public policy work has dealt with labour market reform, environmental regulation, university governance and internationalisation of higher education. Niland's policy work for the Greiner/Fahey Governments in NSW and the Hawke/Keating Governments federally led the transition to enterprise bargaining (for which he received an AO in 1992). He served 10 years as Vice-Chancellor of UNSW and held other leadership roles in the tertiary sector (for which he received an AC in 2001). After leaving UNSW in 2002 he became active in higher education in Asia, particularly Hong Kong and Singapore, and served 10 years on the Board of Macquarie Group.

Dr Scott Prasser

Scott Prasser has worked in senior policy and advisory positions across both state and federal governments including senior adviser to three federal cabinet ministers from 2013 until his retirement in July 2019. He also held academic positions, the last at professorial level. Scott's publications include: *Royal Commissions and Public Inquiries: Practice & Potential* (with Helen Tracey, 2014); *Audit Commissions* (with Kate Jones, 2013); and *Restraining Elective Dictatorship: The Upper House Solution?* (with Nicholas Aroney and JR Nethercote, 2008). Scott is a graduate of Queensland and Griffith universities. He is currently completing a book on recent Commonwealth attempts to reform school funding.

Emeritus Professor Tim Rowse

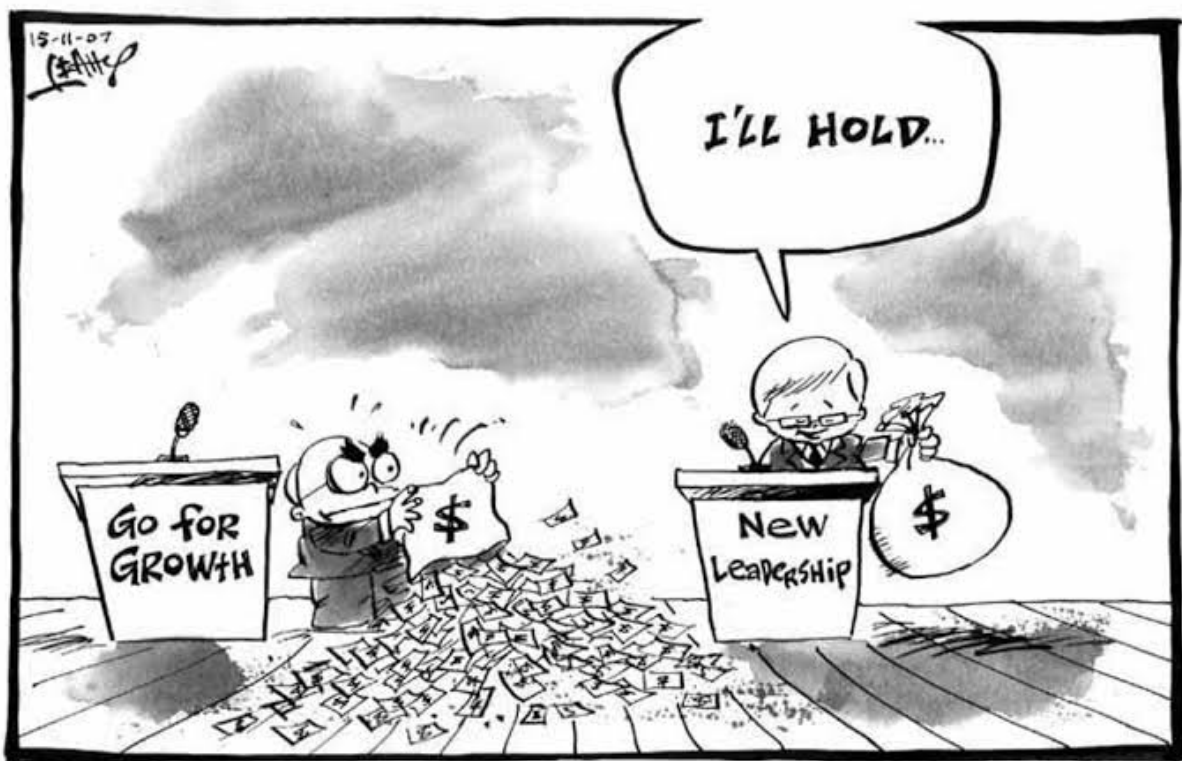
Tim Rowse is an historian of Australian affairs, with honorary appointments at Western Sydney University and the Australian National University. His publications include *Nugget: a reforming life* (2002), *Divided nation? Indigenous affairs and the imagined public* (with Murray Goot, 2007), and *Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians since 1901* (2017). With Laura Rademaker (ANU), he is editing a collection of essays about the history of Indigenous self-determination in Australia, to be published in 2020. His recent writings include studies of the violence of Australia's nineteenth frontiers and comment on the ways that scholarship on colonial violence troubles the Australia's military heritage.

Professor Harvinder Sidhu

Harvinder is the Deputy Rector of UNSW Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy. His qualifications include a Bachelor of Science (with First Class Honours and a University Medal) and a Doctor of Philosophy in Mathematics from the University of Queensland, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from the National Institute of Education in Singapore. Before becoming an Academic, Harvinder taught in a high school in Singapore. Harvinder's research expertise is in the area of Applied and Industrial Mathematics. He has authored over 190 research articles and has obtained numerous competitive grants. He has also received several awards for his excellence in research and teaching, including the J.H. Michell Medal from the Australian and New Zealand Industrial and Applied Mathematics division of the Australian Mathematical Society, and the UNSW Canberra Rector's Award for Teaching Excellence. His previous leadership roles at UNSW Canberra include Associate Dean (Education) and Deputy Head (Education) of the School of Science. Outside of work, Harvinder enjoys spending time with his wife, Leesa, and their son and daughter.

Dr Marija Taflaga

Marija Taflaga is a Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations at the Australian National University. She researches Australian politics in comparative context. Her research examines political parties' relationships with parliament and the executive. Marija also undertakes research in Australian political history. Recently she has begun researching in the area of the career paths of political elites. Marija has undertaken research fellowships at the Australian Parliamentary Library and the Australian Museum of Democracy, Old Parliament House. She has also worked in the Australian Parliamentary Press Gallery as a researcher at *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.



Howard Government Retrospective IV: 2004 -2007

A Bibliographic Survey

compiled by Trish Burgess (2004 - 2018)

Research Assistant, UNSW Canberra Howard Library

2004

Robert Garran, *True believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American alliance*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

When John Howard stood in a press conference at Washington's Willard Hotel just after the planes crashed into the Twin Towers on September 11, he knew exactly what to do: Australia would quickly pledge support for its great and powerful friend." "In True Believer, Robert Garran examines Howard's unswerving belief in the radical and dangerous doctrines of George W. Bush. Garran argues that in his eagerness to join Bush in his war in Iraq, Howard failed to comprehend the perils. More than that, Howard has hijacked Australia's national story with his conservative nationalism, and is now using that story to take Australia on a dangerous journey." "With debate on the US alliance set to continue and with many Australians seeking a strong alternative to Howard's risky position, *True Believer* is both timely and thought-provoking."--(Book Jacket).

2005

David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, *Dark Victory*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, two of the country's most accomplished investigative journalists, burrow deep into the ways of the Howard government. They reveal the secret history of the campaign against boat people that began with the Tampa and ended ten extraordinary weeks later with the Australian people giving John Howard his third, most daring election victory. *Dark Victory* is a thrilling and provocative account of events that shattered many of the myths Australia had about itself and changed profoundly how Australia is seen in the eyes of the world. It is also a potent reminder of the fleeting nature of truth in politics. (Publisher's website).

2007

Clive Hamilton and Sarah Maddison (eds), *Silencing Dissent*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

For over a decade, the Howard government has found ways to silence its critics, one by one. Like the proverbial frog in boiling water, Australians have become accustomed to repeated attacks on respected individuals and organisations. For a government which claims to support freedom of speech and freedom of choice, only certain kinds of speech and choices appear to be acceptable. *Silencing Dissent* uncovers the tactics used by John Howard and his colleagues to

undermine dissenting and independent opinion. Bullying, intimidation, public denigration, threats of withdrawal of funding, personal harassment, increased government red tape and manipulation of the rules are all tools of trade for a government that wants to keep a lid on public debate. The victims are charities, academics, researchers, journalists, judges, public sector organisations, even parliament itself. Deeply disturbing, *Silencing Dissent* raises serious questions about the state of democracy in Australia. (Publisher's website)

Judith Brett, *Exit right: the unravelling of John Howard*, Melbourne: Black Inc.

In *Exit Right*, Judith Brett explains why the tide turned on John Howard. This is an essay about leadership, in particular Howard's style of strong leadership which led him to dominate his party with such ultimately catastrophic results. In this definitive account, Brett discusses how age became Howard's Achilles heel, how he lost the youth vote, how he lost Bennelong, and how he waited too long to call the election. She looks at the government's core failings - the policy vacuum, the blindness to climate change, the disastrous misjudgement of WorkChoices - and shows how Howard and his team came more and more to insulate themselves from reality. With drama and insight, Judith Brett traces the key moments when John Howard stared defeat in the face, and explains why, after the Keating - Howard years, the ascendancy of Kevin Rudd marks a new phase in the nation's political life.

Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen, *John Winston Howard: the definitive biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

A portrait of one of Australia's longest-serving prime ministers, this biography goes behind the public image to find neither the strong-willed man of principle his supporters like to imagine nor the cunning opportunist painted by his foes. The discussion covers Howard's suburban middle-class upbringing and his success at implementing his policies, concluding that although the image of the ordinary bloke has helped his enduring popularity, he—like George Bush—possesses a number of uncommon strengths that have made him one of the most formidable leaders in Australian political history. (Amazon website)

2008

Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall (eds), *Howard's Fourth Government, Australian Commonwealth Administration 2004-2007*, Sydney: UNSW Press.

This book looks at the administrative and leadership style of former Prime Minister John Howard's fourth and final term in government (2004–2007). Organized into three sections, it begins with a group of essays that reflect on key governance issues such as privatization, the management of the Howard Government's Senate majority, and issues relating to accountability and ethics. The second section examines policy issues that dominated the fourth term, such as management of the economy, rural politics (particularly wheat and drought), industrial relations, indigenous policy and foreign affairs. The third section provides an overall assessment of Howard's leadership style during this period and finally concludes that Howard's faltering political skills on key issues may have ultimately secured his defeat. (Booktopia website)

Peter van Onselen and Philip Senior, *Howard's End: The Unravelling of a Government*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Peter van Onselen and Philip Senior piece together the events in the year leading up to the 2007 federal election, following the protracted downfall of Australia's second longest-serving Prime Minister and the unraveling of the government as it lurched from crisis to crisis. In the tradition of Pamela Williams' *The Victory*, *Howard's End* analyses and makes sense of the result and its far-reaching implications for the people of Australia. (Publisher's website)

2009

Peter Hartcher, *To the bitter end: the dramatic story behind the fall of John Howard and the rise of Kevin Rudd*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

2007 was a year to remember in Australian politics. It saw the dramatic fall of John Howard and the unexpected rise of Kevin Rudd. It saw the Liberal Party buckle under the inertia of incumbency and the Labor Party find new discipline and energy. It also saw the union movement at the centre of one of the most effective and powerful political campaign the country has ever seen. With unprecedented access to the key players and countless hours of confidential interviews, Peter Hartcher reveals how Kevin Rudd secretly forged his alliance with Julia Gillard to topple Kim Beazley. He exposes the way Labor's factions intimidated Rudd. He lays bare the raging, unending struggle between John Howard and Peter Costello for control of the national budget. And he explains why Peter Costello believes Howard's defeat was the greatest humiliation of any prime minister in Australia's history. *To the Bitter End* is a penetrating, riveting and above all revealing exploration of a year when the political stakes had never been higher. (Booktopia website)

2010

Caroline Fleay, *Australia and Human Rights: Situating the Howard Government*, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars.

The Howard government's term in office in Australia from 1996 to 2007 is often portrayed as one where Australia retreated from its international human rights obligations. Throughout this era a range of government policies attracted much criticism for downplaying or ignoring human rights. Less attention has been given to the human rights policies of previous Australian governments and the heritage they provided for the Howard government. Situating the policies of the Howard government within those of previous Australian governments provides a greater understanding of human rights in Australia. This book examines human rights policies in Australia in three key areas: human rights in Australia-China relations; responses to asylum seekers and refugees; and, engagement with human rights at the United Nations. These areas highlight where the Howard government clearly deviated from some of the more positive human rights policies of its predecessors. The book also challenges the perception that Australia has a proud history of human rights policy by revealing where the Howard government continued or revived policies of earlier Australian governments that were not consistent with international human rights standards. Such an understanding of human rights in Australian policy is imperative for informed analysis and debate on current and future policy trends. (Amazon website)

2011

Thosaphon Chieochampraphan, *Australian Foreign Policy Under the Howard Government*, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.

This thesis uses the concept of middle power to analyse foreign policy doctrine and practices of Australia under the Coalition government led by John Howard from 1996–2007. (Book Depository website).

2014

Stefano Gulmanelli, 'John Howard and the "Anglospherist" reshaping of Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science* vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 581–595.

2018

David Furse-Roberts, *Howard: Art of Persuasion, Selected Speeches 1995–2016*, Brisbane: Connor Court Publishing.

John Howard could convey more in a single speech than lesser politicians articulate in a lifetime. Through tragedy, discord and triumph, he addressed the mood of the nation with uncommon good sense. This selection is a reminder of the values and conviction that made our second longest serving prime minister such a persuasive orator. (Dymocks website)

The Howard Timeline

Objective

My task was to create an inventory of the main political events during 1996-2007 for the Howard Library website. This inventory would serve as a starting point for researchers exploring specific aspects of the Howard Government revealing its inner workings and major achievements. It was to be more than a list of the major statements and important speeches. It would include, where relevant, the activities of Coalition ministers and highlights from their portfolios. There would also be references to significant international and national events which had an impact on the government's plans or required a specific reaction or a particular response.

Method

In assembling this inventory I was fortunately not starting from scratch. Of considerable assistance was the timeline headed 'The Story So Far' appearing as an appendix in Nick Carter's collection of essays, *The Howard factor: a decade that changed the nation* (Melbourne University Publishing, Melbourne, 2006). This section 'chronicles the major milestones of the Howard years as a matter of record'. It was compiled by Rebecca Weisser who 'spent weeks in News Limited's basement library trawling through a decade of bound volumes of *The Australian* to chronicle the critical events and issues that have defined the Howard years'. For ease of manipulation, this timeline was converted to a spreadsheet with 806 rows, one for each event.

Invaluable as this was, Weisser's selection and depiction of these events and issues did not meet my objective. First, it was the work of one individual searching through issues of one newspaper with its own criteria for choosing stories and its own slant on their significance. It was possible that some events, which might have been considered worthy of inclusion by other editors and by rival newspapers, had been omitted from Weisser's timeline. Second, as Cater's book was being published in 2006 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Howard Government's election, Weisser's timeline spanned March 1996 to December 2005. It did not cover the final two years of the Howard government, 2006 and 2007. Third, on closer inspection the timeline contained factual errors and unsustainable interpretations.

With a working draft to hand, each entry was then judged against 'main event' criteria. If an event related to an action taken or proposed by the government, then account was taken of:

- its significance;
- its controversiality;
- the extent of public interest in the event;
- the relationship of an event to prior undertakings made by the government;
- the size of any expenditure or income arising from the event; and
- the extent of the population affected by the event.

If the event was not one of the government's making,

then its relevance to the government and the significance of the government's reaction were also considered.

Some events included by Weisser were easily discarded. The death of Princess Diana in 1997, for instance, while of great interest, required no response or comment from the government other than those offering due respect. This and similar events were deleted from the base timeline. Other events that were readily omitted included the emergence of Ian Thorpe as a swimming star, the likelihood of impeachment proceedings against US President Clinton and the admission by Australian cricketers that they sold information about weather and pitch conditions to an illegal Indian bookmaker.

Each remaining event needed to be investigated by identifying and locating documentation relating to the event so that its date and its substance could be verified, and its eligibility as a 'major event' further considered before being confirmed.

Because most events related to statements or actions involving John Howard, prime ministerial media releases, speeches, interviews and the like were the obvious primary sources that needed to be consulted. Thankfully, several sets of such documents exist, including those captured by the Prime Ministers' websites maintained by the National Library of Australia in its PANDORA Archive (<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/tep/10052>). Media releases from May 1997 to October 2007 were included in this collection. Lists of media releases, including hyperlinks to the original documents, were downloaded and fashioned into a spreadsheet which was initially sorted into chronological order.

As John Howard's media releases for the early part of his government (March 1996 to April 1997) were not available from the PANDORA Archive, they were located either on the PM Transcripts website (<https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/>) or in ParlInfo (<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/search.w3p>). The relevant data was then added to the spreadsheet.

Each event in the base timeline was then checked against the likely documents in the spreadsheet. Where the appropriate source document was identified, its suitability for inclusion as a 'main event' was confirmed. Information drawn from these sources was then used to elaborate, amplify or clarify the event description in the timeline. Concise but accurate wording was needed and, if at all possible, direct quotes from John Howard were used. Where and when it was deemed useful, I added a brief context to explain the origin or occasion of the document. For example: 'Addressing the Australian Industry Group Annual Dinner, Howard says ...' or 'Interviewed on *Sunday*, Howard remarked'.

Many potential timeline events did not relate to the statements or actions of John Howard but rather to those of a minister or to the Labor Opposition. In only a few of these instances was it possible to use a similar approach for these kinds of statements owing to the limited availability of preserved websites and/or the accessibility of documents on such websites. ParlInfo was heavily used to locate likely documents and to check their content. In some cases another step was necessary because the text of some documents, principally

newspaper items, was not available in ParllInfo. The Factiva database was used to reveal the text to be checked.

Enriching the timeline

The spreadsheet containing John Howard's media releases contained details of more than 6,000 items spanning the totality of his prime ministership. Only a few hundred had been identified for inclusion in the timeline using the processes outlined above. It was not feasible to read the remainder to identify the very small number that might contain evidence of a major event that was eligible for inclusion in the timeline. This action was limited to checking, for example, the text of major speeches. There was also benefit in checking media releases issued around the time of an event that was already included in the timeline. As newspaper reports are susceptible to human error, cross-checking with media releases would reveal if reporting of a prime ministerial statement was accurate or if an entry in the timeline could be improved by inclusion of a quote or close paraphrase.

As noted above, the Weisser timeline was compiled before the end of the Howard government and contained no entries for 2006 and 2007. Prime Ministerial media releases for these two years were retrieved in ParllInfo and selectively checked for possible inclusion in the timeline. This was also done for media releases issued during the caretaker periods, that is, between the issue of writs for an election and the declaration of the poll, when John Howard's media releases were not added to government websites.

One notable omission from the Weisser timeline was parliamentary proceedings. While the same issues covered in some of John Howard's speeches in the House of Representatives were also covered in his media releases, all of his speeches in the Parliament were retrieved in ParllInfo and checked for possible inclusion in the timeline. This brought to light remarkably few such statements of sufficient importance to be included in the timeline.

I also checked and included individual entries in a chain of events to give the full picture of an evolving issue or protracted event, for example, Australian involvement in East Timor's quest for independence, the children overboard affair, the waterfront dispute and the AWB oil-for-wheat scandal. In these cases, a series of developments before and after a major event were identified and added to the timeline.

Limited effort was made to locate documents containing statements made by government ministers possibly relating to major events. But as I mentioned earlier, this was not always straightforward and the point of diminishing returns was quickly reached.

Finally, additional entries were located by checking some of the various analyses of, and commentaries on, aspects of the Howard Government performance, for example *Howard's Fourth Government: Australian Commonwealth Administration 2004-2007*, edited by Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008) and by checking other timelines such as those

in Wikipedia (e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997_in_Australia) and australianpolitics.com (<https://australianpolitics.com/executive/pm/howard>). These volumes pointed to additional major events and affirmed judgements made on existing timeline entries.

As parts of the draft timeline neared completion, they were reviewed during a weekly meeting by the Howard Library team in an attempt to ensure consistency, relevance, interest and completeness.

Deficiencies

I recognise the timeline has limited coverage of events that did not involve John Howard. While it was relatively easy to track down statements made by the Treasurer (Peter Costello) and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Alexander Downer) for example, documents relating to the activities and portfolio responsibilities of many other ministers were more elusive. Plainly, not all issued frequent media releases and/or made them available on websites. Some ministerial websites were relatively primitive as the Internet was a novelty and often ministers did not preserve and present the statements made by their predecessors.

While the coverage of most of John Howard's radio and TV interviews was consistent and comprehensive, transcripts of the things said at some public and media events were not produced and issued by the Prime Minister's Office nor are they available in ParllInfo. The content of these interviews was unlikely to be covered in other sources. It is entirely possible that statements relating to major events might have been overlooked.

Also less well covered are one-on-one interviews with John Howard and his ministers that were published in the press. Such interviews, which may have contained statements relative to main events, would not necessarily have been reported elsewhere.

Conclusion

Allowing for individual opinion on what constitutes a major event and the despite the deficiencies in the process I employed, the outcome of this project – a timeline containing 983 entries – is a reliable representation of the main events relating to the Howard government and I hope a useful resource for scholars and researchers. As an electronic resource, the content is not fixed or permanent. The timeline will be expanded and enhanced by additional entries and the inclusion of links to primary sources as more and more paper documents are turned into searchable computer files.

Alan Wilson

Howard Library
Old Parliament House
26 August 2019

The Fourth Howard Government: Initial Appraisals and Assessments

Tom Frame

It was not until the second half of 2001, when it looked destined for a third election victory, that the Howard Government became the subject of more extended assessments by academics, journalists and commentators. Most were well beyond disapproving; they were hostile. Led by Robert Manne, the Coalition's critics attacked not only the Government's policies but its conduct of national affairs, alleging that it was mean-spirited and untrustworthy, indifferent to the demands of human dignity and disdainful of the conventions that had undergirded Australia's place in the world. The detractors, many of whom were labelled 'Howard haters', wrote articles and published books that dominated the reading lists of Australian political studies courses from 2001 to 2004. Most of these titles are canvassed within my introductory chapter to *Trials and Transformations, the Howard Government, Volume 3, 2001-2004*.¹

The Fourth Howard Government has not been subjected to close consideration other than in explanations of its defeat in November 2007. I have argued elsewhere that the four Howard Governments need to be considered separately. Each had a mood and a mindset of its own, professing different objectives and facing different opposition. Interpreting the election loss has tended to overshadow analyses of what was achieved in terms of public administration and national affairs in the period when John Howard became the second longest serving Australian prime minister. The following survey looks at what was written about the Howard Government during the latter part of its fourth term in office and in the aftermath of its defeat.

The first volume professing some sympathy, if not support, for the Howard Government appeared in March 2006 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Coalition's election victory. *The Howard Factor: A Decade that Transformed a Nation* consisted mainly of medium-length (4,000-word) essays written by journalists working at *The Australian*.² Edited by Nick Cater, the book was intended to address what was considered the biased political commentary of the previous decade. Unlike earlier works which were intended to hinder the re-election of the Coalition in 2001 and in 2004, *The Howard Factor* could claim to be more even-handed and less polemical. It was not published during an election campaign and included contributors who were not associated with the Coalition nor necessarily sympathetic to its policies.

Cater claimed that 'no newspaper is better equipped for the task of producing a work of this nature than *The Australian*'.³ The idea for the book originated with Dennis Shanahan, the newspaper's Canberra-based political editor, who 'persevered with his proposal until he got the answer he wanted, then he worked tirelessly to ensure that it became a reality'.⁴ The cover blurb explained that

John Howard's federal election victory over Paul Keating in 1996 was the start of a quiet revolution that changed Australia forever. His critics told us he was a white-picket-fence conservative, Little Johnnie, Lazarus with a triple bypass. Instead, Howard has driven a decade of reform, reinventing conservative politics and redefining the national debate. In this long-overdue assessment of the Howard years, some of *The Australian's* leading commentators chart the seismic shift in politics, society, workplaces, culture, the economy, trade and foreign affairs. They describe how Howard has redrawn the political map, turning the conservatives into reformers and forcing the progressives to defend the status quo.

Cater explained that 'apart from a few bilious tracts written by Howard's opponents, there has been only one attempt at a biography and that book, by David Barnett [and Pru Goward], hardly scratches the surface'.⁵ By way of contrast, he noted that 'four books have been written about Mark Latham and one on Kim Beazley, neither of whom has won an election'.⁶ In a combative preface, Cater was critical of Paul Keating's complacency as Prime Minister and asserted that the three Labor leaders who followed him (Beazley, Crean and Latham) were 'enemies of change'. He went even further in contending that 'the conservatives have stolen the mantle of reform and the progressives have become the new conservatives' largely because Howard 'has established a new political orthodoxy'.

This collection is laudatory in places. It marvels at Howard's personal resurgence after public rejection, and the ability of the Government to expose divisions and to exploit the fissures in the opposition parties. There are few direct criticisms of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The approach appears to preference observation over disapproval with comparisons and contrasts softening the assessments of most contributors. For instance, Mike Steketee thought that the Commonwealth Government's reach into the community increased rather than receded under the Coalition, particularly in the areas of welfare, family assistance and workforce participation where reform was inconsistent and achievements were modest. This theme continued in the chapter by George Megalogenis who believed the Howard Government had seriously under-performed on taxation reform (despite the introduction of 'A New Tax System' in 2000 which included a consumption tax) and that by Brad Norington who concluded that the Coalition's industrial relations program was a work-in-progress.

Essays on 'Hansonism', immigration and indigenous affairs managed to be neither critical nor complimentary, emphasising the pragmatism of the Howard Government's approach rather than offering a critique of its philosophy which often took a back seat. In defence, foreign affairs and security, this particular panel of writers was prepared to award points to the Howard Government before the effects of many policies were known or the consequences of some decisions could be adequately assessed, such as the decision to participate

in the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

In other areas of discussion, the contributors employed quotes from Labor figures to say things they seemed a little disinclined to say for themselves while noting that the Coalition was helped by Simon Crean's lack of appeal in the electorate at the beginning of his time as Opposition Leader and Mark Latham's lack of appeal at the end of his time as Opposition Leader. In essence, it was suggested (rather than argued), that the Coalition was given a good run because Labor was not an effective opposition. The most biting criticism was actually offered not by a journalist but by the controversial cartoonist Bill Leak who claimed that

Howard has reshaped Australia to conform to his own vision. We love the inflated feelings of international self-importance he has given us and we don't seem to care about all the things he has taken away. Happy to live in an economy instead of a society, we might as well also accept that we are all Little Johnnies now. Smaller, meaner and less attractive, we're looking more like monkeys every day.⁷

Perhaps the most enduringly helpful feature of the book was a 100-page inventory prepared by Cater's wife, Rebecca Weisser, of the major news stories relating to the Howard Government that appeared in *The Australian* from March 1996 to December 2005. It was followed by a series of tables measuring Australia's performance against key economic indicators compiled by George Megalogenis, who concluded:

The report card, while mixed, is generally very good. The Howard years have been recession-free, which is a boast no other long-term prime minister can make, not even Howard's hero Robert Menzies. But if you look closely enough, you can see the seeds for the next slow down. They are the imbalances in the household debt and the current account. Sooner or later, our borrowing binge will have to end, and with it the warm buzz of the nation's longest boom.⁸

Most notable of this more even-handed collection was that it took a decade to appear. The Government's polemical detractors were, by way of contrast, never idle.

The left-leaning Scribe published Russ Radcliffe's *Man of Steel: A Cartoon History of the Howard Years* in 2007.⁹ The 'curator' of this collection made no secret of his personal disdain for John Howard and most of his ministers. The introduction begins:

Man of steel or lying rodent? Among the playful metaphors employed by Australia's political cartoonists, variations on these two themes have come to define the parameters of popular opinion about John Howard. Take your pick. I'm sure that the latter is the more passionately held view for, despite his electoral success, Howard is not a politician who has inspired popular devotion – except perhaps among grateful backbenchers who owe him their political careers.¹⁰

According to Radcliffe, Howard is unworthy of any credit because, he claimed, 'domestically, he reaped the benefits that flowed from the Keating reforms; internationally, the war on terror allowed him to adopt a tough, statesman-like pose'. He accused Howard of 'presiding over a nation, that far from being relaxed and comfortable, has been divided and ill at ease'.¹¹ Radcliffe asserted that the 'most dubious legacy' of the Howard years was the 'decline and fall of notions of accountability and responsibility' with 'dishonesty and dissimulation' having no apparent political consequences. The Coalition won in 1996 because the electorate wanted a change; it won in 1998 because Kim Beazley's campaign was 'lacklustre'; it won in 2001 by 'beating up border protection and the 'threat' imposed by refugee boats', it won in 2004 'subliminally conflating international insecurity with domestic issues, particularly interest rates'.¹² The campaign theme – 'Trust' – that carried the Coalition to a fourth election victory was 'shameless' while the electorate was unwilling to gamble on the unpredictable Mark Latham. The electorate was manipulated, timid, anxious or uncaring when it voted for the Coalition. But with the rise of Kevin Rudd, Radcliffe thought 'Howard's final powerwalk into history, eyebrows to the breeze and bottom lip all aquiver, can't be far away'.¹³ Radcliffe was soon granted his wish.

The defeat of the Coalition at the November 2007 election promoted a number of works that were, perhaps inevitably, more descriptive than analytical. The *Quarterly Essay* commissioned Judith Brett's *Exit Right: The Unravelling of John Howard* in December 2007.¹⁴ In being drafted within days of the Coalition's defeat, it was a speculative assessment of events whose causes and consequences could not yet be even-handedly or even reasonably assessed given the political dust had not yet begun to settle. More substantial accounts were produced by Peter van Onselen and Philip Senior who published *Howard's End: The Unravelling of a Government* in August 2008 and Peter Hartcher whose *To The Bitter End: The Dramatic Story Behind The Fall Of John Howard And The Rise Of Kevin Rudd* appeared in May 2009.¹⁵ Both books were focused on the 2007 election campaign and its immediate aftermath. Neither book looked in depth at the Fourth Howard Government nor intended to provide an overall assessment of Coalition rule.

In addition to his collaborative work with Senior, van Onselen also edited a collection of essays, *Liberals and Power: the Road Ahead*, in November 2008.¹⁶ He promoted the view that the Liberal Party lacked vision because it was without values, and that prolonged estrangement from public office was likely. Van Onselen repeated what had become routine criticism that Howard 'did not prepare his party for life after his departure' leaving behind a political movement 'at its lowest ebb intellectually and competitively'. After allowing Robert Manne and Tony Abbott to present what were contrastingly critical and celebratory perspectives with conclusions that were not unexpected, George Brandis – never a close Howard supporter – offered a thoughtful and nuanced appraisal of his former leader's political philosophy. Although he treats the four Howard

Governments as a unity and notes that Howard was 'a bundle of contradictions' (implying that most people are not, when I would contend they are), Brandis thought that Howard was 'most disappointing when he allowed his social conservatism to get in the way of his Party's traditional commitment to individualism'.

¹⁷His final comment is heavily laden with contemporary significance: 'A great government though it was, the Howard Government would have been a greater government still if it had been more consistently true to the Liberal Party's liberal values'.¹⁸

Other works drew comparisons between the incoming Howard Government in 1996 and the newly elected Rudd Government in 2007. Norman Abjorensen claimed in 2008 that 'Rudd's first year could not have been more different from Howard's'.¹⁹

Generally, the Rudd government has been seen as sound, cautious and unspectacular (very much like the prime minister himself). Interestingly, this first detailed review of Rudd Labor comes as the Howard years are being put under the microscope on ABC television, which means that a useful comparison can be made of the first Howard government (1996–98) and Rudd's first year. Quite simply, Howard's government got off to a terrible start; Rudd's, by contrast, has so far been untroubled.²⁰

The principal deficiency in Abjorensen's account is not that he was too harsh on Howard but that he was too generous to Rudd.

The election of the Rudd Government did not prompt a substantial recasting of George Megalogenis' assessment of the Howard Government, *The Longest Decade*, between the publication of the first edition in May 2006 and the second in May 2008.²¹ Megalogenis explained his approach when introducing the revised edition:

This book looks at Keating and Howard together as part of a bigger Australian story, with a bias towards their terms in the Lodge ... I want to tell two intertwined stories, the political and cultural, and pose the question that taunts our age: how did the Keating-Howard economy take us from growth to greed?

He interviewed both Keating and Howard extensively and invited them to criticise one another. Megalogenis tried to be even-handed with the back-cover blurb asserting it was a 'non-partisan analysis of the forces shaping Australia today'. He claimed that: 'treasurer Keating cleaned up the mess that treasurer Howard had made of the economy at the start of the 1980s; Howard as prime minister was given a mandate to repair the society that had been divided by his predecessor, Keating, in the 1990s'. He also notes there was a good deal of consistency in their approach and that both 'changed Australia; yet, for each reform they imposed, the nation snapped back, forcing them to adapt before dismissing them both'.²² Although there is some merit in making Keating and Howard synonymous with the principal tensions that persist in Australian politics, his approach

draws attention away from the achievements of their governments. The preceding two decades certainly featured a battle of strong-willed men engaged in a vigorous struggle for supremacy but the focus was often on power and not on policy. Howard has been more willing to concede than Keating that there was substantial commonality in their visions for the nation's future.

With the end of the Rudd Government's political 'honeymoon', and it possibly lasted longer than most new governments enjoy owing to Rudd's initial popularity and the electorate's high hopes for his success, leading Coalition ministers offered their own treatment of the Howard years in the context of where and how they felt Labor was 'squandering' the Coalition's legacy. These treatments were highly generalised. In 2008, Peter Costello produced a memoir in collaboration with his father-in-law, Peter Coleman.²³ Its commentary transcended the Howard years, outlining the former Treasurer's views on a range of policies in addition to his views on the Liberal leadership and the succession that wasn't. *The Costello Memoirs* have not been widely quoted in general assessments of the Coalition's time in office.

In 2009 Tony Abbott published *Battlelines*. It was a snapshot of how the world looked to one former Howard Government minister prior to his elevation to the Opposition leadership in December of that year.²⁴ Much of his commentary on the Howard Government had appeared in van Onselen's edited collection the previous year. Abbott assessed 1996–2007 in the context of explaining what his party needed to become in seeking re-election which seemed a remote prospect when the book appeared. *Battlelines* moved from the past, to the present and the future – sometimes in the same sentence – with greater interest in the latter years of the Howard Government when Abbott served as a senior minister. He dealt with the entire period of the Howard Government from the vantage point of 2009 when claiming that the Labor Party was still mimicking the Coalition on many policy fronts. Keating had, of course, said the same thing of the first Howard Government. But Abbott was critical of the extant literature.

If Labor is mostly considered the 'sexy' side of politics, one reason is the overwhelming preponderance of books by Labor politicians or about them. In the eleven months he was opposition leader, there were two biographies of Kevin Rudd. By contrast, until the last year of his prime ministership, there was only one biography of John Howard. The relative scarcity of books about the conservative side of politics could prompt the conclusion that we have little worth saying. Most of the people describing conservative politics in Australia are unsympathetic to it – even the more perceptive academic writers, such as Judith Brett.²⁵

While this might have been a fair assessment of biographies, it was less true of general assessments of the previous 20 years. Indeed, by 2009, much more had been written of the Howard Government than of the Hawke and Keating Governments combined – an

observation that still stands.

To highlight the enduring differences between Labor and Coalition national governments, a triumvirate associated with *Quadrant* magazine, Keith Windschuttle, David Martin Jones and Ray Evans, edited a series of essays entitled *The Howard Era*.²⁶ Published in 2009 and acknowledging the wisdom of hindsight, the editors were candid about their intentions:

Given that the Labor party and its epigone treat Australian political history and foreign policy since Gough Whitlam's administration as their personal fiefdom, there is a pressing need for commentators of a realist or conservative disposition to define the enduring legacy of the Howard era, trace the evolution of the Howard government over time, its successes and failures, as well as identifying the principles that informed its practice.

The editors were concerned about the 'self-appointed academic guardians of Australia's progressive future' to explain away the philosophical credentials of the Howard Government, reducing these years 'to some temporary and inconvenient aberration on the road to a post-Western, multicultural utopia.' Windschuttle and his colleagues praise the Howard Government's achievements before claiming it

became complacent in power, lost sight of the principles that had ensured its early success and captured popular hearts and minds. As it tergiversated over policies as varied as emissions trading, workplace reform and the socialisation of the Australian mind, so it lost its authoritative voice.

This was also the first volume to canvass previous works on the Howard Government. It noted the emergence of commentaries from 'across a political spectrum from extreme loathing to measured admiration'. An example was Margo Kingston's two works, *Not Happy, John* and the follow-up, *Still Not Happy, John* which were published in 2004 and 2007.²⁷ They were described by David Martin Jones as 'little more than politically correct rants against both Howard and the nescient constituencies that returned him at successive elections.' He argued that 'such works evince the paranoia that embraces great swathes of the Australian commentariat rather than any attempt at informed insight or empirical assessment'. Jones thought that Manne's *The Howard Years* was 'equally acerbic but somewhat more measured'.²⁸ This was a curious summation. Was he implying the collection was polemically biased but not to an excessive or egregious degree? Or that it was damning but not did seek to demean its subjects?

The contributors listed the Coalition's successes and the failures, outlined any mitigating factors before concluding with a similar judgement: one balance the Coalition did reasonably well across most areas of public administration. The editors worked hard to ensure the authors avoided hubris or 'cheap shots' at commentators whose forecasts had proved to be inaccurate. There

were times, the contributors noted, when Howard personally or the Government collectively was weak or frightened, misguided or opportunistic, confused or conflicted. In some areas of policy, particularly those with well-defined measures of effectiveness, the Coalition deserved to be judged harshly for reckless action or fickle attitudes that hindered growth or squandered opportunities. On a few issues, the Government clearly failed to impress some of the more conservative commentators who are scathing of Howard and his ministers caving in either to sectional interests or special pleading.

Although this collection also lacks a closing summary that might have provided a balance sheet of the Howard Government's performance, there is nothing to suggest the contributors felt the need to redress an imbalance in the extant scholarship by veering deliberately in the opposite direction. These chapters are critical and, in some respects, condemnatory. But they attempt to give credit where it is due and, in this sense, they are responding to earlier works that found nothing of merit in anything the Howard Government did or tried to do.

There were no further substantial assessments of the Howard Government until *The Reith Papers* were published in 2015.²⁹ This book was significant in that it provided a contemporaneous commentary on the first five years of Coalition rule with reflections written more than a decade after the events covered in the papers. The diaries were actually notebooks (that numbered more than 120) in which Reith recorded the proceedings of the meetings he attended, drafted preparatory notes for coming meetings, weighed the pros and cons of any proposed policy or action, reflected on people he met and places he visited, and outlined his evolving views on a range of subjects. He kept these notes thinking 'one day I might write a regular column', which he later did. He did not plan to 'publish my journal entries in memoir form' but was encouraged by former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, to publish 'on the grounds that Coalition MPs don't write enough about what really happened on the inside during those years'. Faced with the quandary of what to include from the notebooks more than a decade after they were produced, Reith explained:

At times, I was surprised by my comments and I have wrestled with the issue of making public some personal comments. But in the end I decided I couldn't write a memoir based on diary entries if I excised the bits that some people may not appreciate.³⁰

The Reith notebooks and diaries have since been donated to the Howard Library at UNSW Canberra. They are a treasure trove of insights into Australian political life between 1996 and 2001.

Most assessments of the Fourth Howard Government published between 2006 and 2009 dwell on two things. First, the Coalition's final term in office was neither better nor worse than the second or third terms. It was certainly

better than the first if measured in political leadership and policy competence. It was not a bad government. In fact, it was an effective one in many areas of public administration. Although there are very few treatments of the Fourth Howard Government that are not at least tinged by interpretations of the November 2007 election result, none of the more moderate commentators thought its performance justified its removal from office.

Second, these same commentators thought the Coalition's final term in office also revealed that the government was losing touch with the electorate and lacked the capacity for internal renewal. The Labor Party, once Kevin Rudd replaced Kim Beazley as leader, looked and sounded more caring and compassionate while professing a resolute commitment to preserving the rate of economic growth and providing the kind of political stability that had made the Howard Government appealing to voters. Put simply, the electorate had had enough of the Coalition by 2007 and voters were clearly in the mood for change. Nothing the Howard Government had done in 2006 or was doing in 2007 was working in terms of opinion polls. It is doubtful that a late change to Peter Costello as prime minister would have changed the electorate's mind. Kevin Rudd, the self-professed fiscal conservative, would combine sensible management

of the economy with socially progressive policies. He promised a number of symbolic gestures, such as ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on the environment and offering a national apology to the 'Stolen Generation', that were designed to make the Coalition look reactionary and the Prime Minister heartless.

Published accounts of the Fourth Howard Government all come to a very similar conclusion. When campaigning began in October 2007, time was up for the Coalition. It could not rely on the electorate's enduring antipathy to Paul Keating nor on its residual fears of what Labor might do to the economy. The voters had simply stopped listening to John Howard. They knew he would not see out a fifth term, anyway. There were, many thought, few apparent risks in giving the other side an opportunity to run the country. Whether the Coalition's alleged inability to expose and exploit the fatal flaws in Kevin Rudd's character that led his own colleagues to turn against him in June 2010, and its failure to display genuine interest in organisational renewal after John Howard rebuffed Peter Costello's invitations to retire, ought to be considered criticisms specifically of the Fourth Howard Government are questions this conference might consider.

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2007: a view from the electorate of Forde

Kay Elson

As a proud member of the 'Class of 96', I was privileged to serve throughout the duration of the Howard Government. The people of my working-class electorate of Forde epitomised the 'Howard battlers' – from the struggling but aspiring suburbs in Logan City to the regional townships on the outskirts of the Scenic Rim with farms and ageing communities facing real and protracted economic challenges. Nearly a year before the 2007 election I made the personal decision that I would not be seeking another term. This meant that I had both an insider's perspective on the way our government operated in its final term and, by working closely with my local Liberal candidate, an observer's perspective on how the 2007 campaign was conducted.

While there was an 'it's time' element within the electorate, I believe it is fair to say that the roots of our demise in 2007 were actually sown in our somewhat unexpected 2004 victory. First, Labor learnt the lesson of courting defeat with an inexperienced and erratic leader (Mark Latham) who made the electorate feel less than 'relaxed and comfortable'. So much so that by 2007 they packaged Kevin Rudd as John Howard 2.0 – a younger, cooler version but still 'an economic conservative'. Second, having won a third 'unexpected' victory we complacently went in to the 2007 election recycling the same prototype campaign that had previously produced results. It was apparent at the time that 2007 called for a much more creative and innovative approach. Third, gaining a majority in the Senate in 2004 meant that as a government we no longer had the pressing political imperative of winning our policy arguments with the weight of public opinion. We 'had the numbers' and it fundamentally changed how the government had operated since 1996.

I will address each consideration in more detail but a few points need to be made clear. The public were not 'waiting with a baseball bat' for John Howard, as they had been for Keating, but rather, they were waiting sheepishly to hand him the proverbial gold watch and send him into the retirement they had heard so much speculation about in the media. The 2007 election was not about voting out a government that had not performed or delivered. On the contrary, John Howard had been such an exemplary leader and delivered so much that he had made government seem almost easy. Debt paid back, tick. Budget in surplus, tick. Borders controlled, tick. Too easy. Anyone could do it. In fact, there is an argument to be made that the apparent ease with which John Howard had carried the Prime Ministership and the overall success of our government was a catalyst for the revolving door of PMs that was to come: when each successive PM could not deliver similar (or even close) results, it was characterised as a personal failing, rather than a case of unrealistic expectations. I am not arguing for a minute that there were not personal failings aplenty in those PMs who followed! But I think the public have now been shocked straight that government, and

especially economic management, is not simple and easy. It is a testament to John Howard, Peter Costello and the wider Howard Government that the Australia people ever believed it was.

Pre-2004 the Howard Government had a history of seemingly impossible policy achievement, despite (or perhaps because of) not having control in the Senate. Privatising Telstra, reforming the tax system and introducing the GST, legislating Work for the Dole, stricter gun laws, offshore processing of illegal boat arrivals, tougher national security in the wake of 9/11, and IR reform of the waterfront. All achieved by, as was often described by the Prime Minister, 'bringing the Australian people along'. Explaining why change was needed, building our case, selling our positive message and making the point at every opportunity. Winning public sentiment was crucial to applying the pressure to get the votes from either Labor or the cross bench in the Senate.

After 2004 that political imperative no longer existed. Whether consciously or not, the way we had conducted government shifted. Public consensus was nice, but no longer imperative. We stopped bringing people along – and it was reflected in internal processes and attitudes as well.

WorkChoices was a case in point. Despite a massive media advertising campaign, it was staggering how little material was produced for MPs to distribute in early 2007 to counter the Union campaign. While local MPs were hearing angry words in their electorates, the central campaign provided very little to help rebut the scare campaign, creating a vacuum that Labor happily filled. Instead, so many MPs were told that 'WorkChoices isn't an issue'. In 1998, by contrast, local MPs were listened to and consulted about the problems on the ground surrounding the selling of the GST. In the many months leading up to the 2007 election there was very little urgency or sense that we needed to 'bring people along'.

I will not argue the policy merits – they are either sound or 'over-reach' depending on your point of view. But our political approach to this important reform was indulgent and arrogant. And I do not believe we would have found ourselves in that position if we had needed to convince the Senate, via the public, to legislate crucial industrial relations reform. We would have had to argue our case and ultimately the legislation itself would have been tempered. The public did not understand WorkChoices and, from the outset and in the subsequent early 2007 vacuum, Labor and the unions were the only ones 'explaining it' to them. In my working-class electorate people could not comprehend that the same PM who had been the battlers' champion now wanted to cut their wages. To them, it was proof that the government had lost touch and had been in office too long.

In Canberra, there was also a perceptible shift in the emphasis that the Prime Minister and ministry placed on actively consulting with the backbench. Since 1996, it had been a hallmark of our government and regularly included intimate dinners with backbenchers to sound out the mood in the electorates. The discussions were respectful and robust and were focussed on how to tackle issues that were biting outside Canberra. Those

dinners became fewer and far between. It was harder to meet with ministers and the Prime Minister – minders now took their place as go-betweens. Our government became one further step removed from the Australian people. Of course, it's human nature that complacency creeps in with time – in jobs, relationships and in governments. Our numbers in the Senate just made it worse.

At the same time, in the public arena, there was an apparent crumbling of two of our key strengths – leadership stability and keeping interest rates low. Speculation about a 'succession' was clumsily fed and fuelled by our own MPs in the media. It became a spectacular own goal and undermined the strength and certainty the Prime Minister had always represented, especially post 2001. And, despite exceptional economic management, continuing balanced budgets and the establishment of the Future Fund, the increases in interest rates (six times in two years) put a question mark over our economic management credentials, meaning that our massive poll advantage over Labor on this key issue narrowed dramatically. Leadership uncertainty, interest rate rises and WorkChoices all raised anxiety in the electorate. Australians were no longer as 'relaxed and comfortable'. Of course, in hindsight, it's all relative, given the destructive chaos that was to ensue in the coming decade.

Having the high-profile journalist and television presenter Maxine McKew contesting the Prime Minister in his own seat added to the perception of erosion. This was gleefully reported by an increasingly hostile media that had become bored and had shifted their focus to climate change and more activist issues. The perception of a dying government was not helped by the number of MPs choosing to retire - 12 in the House of Reps and 5 in the Senate (myself included, so I put up my hand for that one). Labor capitalised by portraying Kevin Rudd as a safe pair of hands, capable of doing exactly what John Howard had done for so many years - but with a more caring emphasis on health, education and the environment. How wrong that proved to be! I am still amazed that the 'BS-meter' of the Australian people never clicked in before the election. That it took his own party to turf him out for people to see the real Kevin Rudd remains surprising to this day.

At an organisational level, our federal campaign did not do enough to point out the risk of turning to Labor. In fact, we did the opposite. I believe our campaign slogan, 'Go for Growth' displayed a terrible tin ear. What did that mean to people in my electorate who were worried about their jobs and rising interest rates? Their translation was 'Helping big business cut your pay so they can make bigger profits'. It provided further 'evidence' that our focus wasn't on them, but on money. This actually fed into Labor's WorkChoices scare and their overall narrative. How did that slogan in any way explain the economic risks to a whole generation of young voters with no adult knowledge of how bad the economy was under Keating? 'Go for growth' was incomprehensible at best to

Howard's battlers and elitist and uncaring to those who worried about health, education and the environment. It was a further sign that we were out of touch and it was time to be moved on.

Even putting aside the worst possible positive slogan choice, I believe our 2007 campaign was not nimble, creative or forceful enough to counter the flash of 'Kevin 07' and the cash of the union's scare (by most estimates well over \$30 million). As someone looking in – not a candidate – I saw a rehash of old methodology, old graphics, old campaign tools and old approaches. It looked tired. We looked tired.

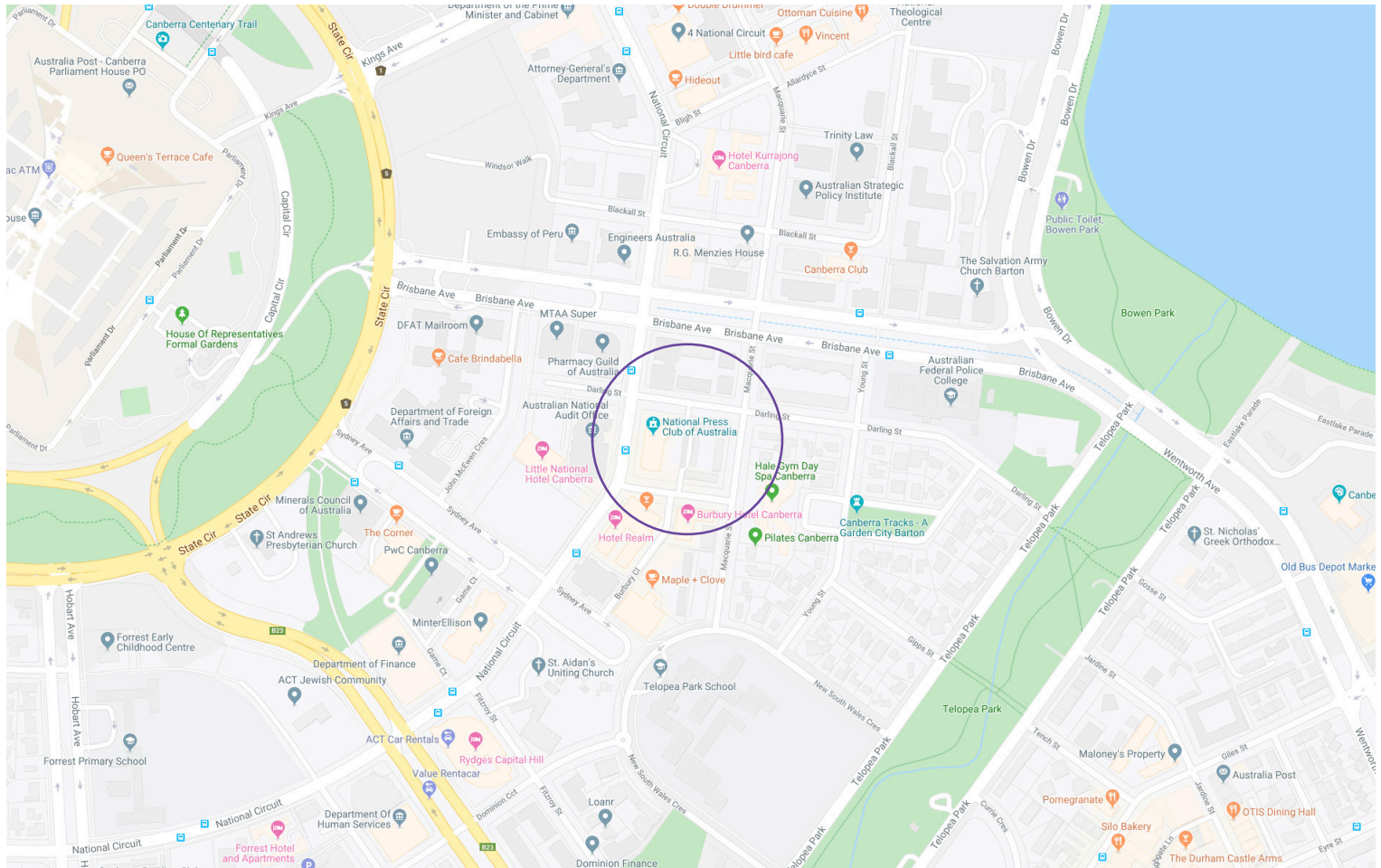
In contrast, Kevin Rudd harnessed the beginnings of a new wave of interest in social media activism. The youthful and positive image of young Australians in their 'Kevin 07' t-shirts being engaged and interested was a positive balance to the Unions scare campaign about the real and personal impact of an 'out of touch and out of date' government. Hindsight always provides greater clarity - and history has certainly shown that the vast majority of Australian people now regard Prime Minister Howard and his Government very highly. I am still stopped regularly in local shopping centres by those who recount the Howard years with much admiration. We achieved some tremendous things for our country. In the post Menzies era, there has only been one four-term Government with the same Prime Minister throughout. It is a testament to John Howard's character and political skills that he was able to work so successfully, and also so closely with our National Party colleagues, to keep a steady leadership team in place through some very turbulent times, to introduce tough and necessary policy, and to peak at the right time for four successive elections, if not a fifth.

Some have said that many factors in the 2007 election delivered a perfect storm that helped sweep Kevin Rudd to power. But quite a few of those factors were of our own complacent making. We certainly didn't even attempt a modern and creative re-telling of our successful and inclusive 'For all of us' campaign that helped bring the Australian people along with us for so many years. And the fact the electorate wasn't waiting with baseball bats suggests that, as a party and a government, we could and should have done more. People tend to forget that Labor's victory in 2007 was not the landslide that 1996 was for the Coalition. That said, it felt like it in Queensland where 10 percent swings in some booths were common.

Looking back, there were measures we could have taken as a party organisation and a government to ensure that the Prime Minister was able to decide the timing and circumstances in which his stellar political career came to a close. As a proud member of the 'Class of 96', the 2007 election was a sad final epitaph for what was undoubtedly a strong, caring, inclusive, diverse and productive government that always had the national interest at the front of its mind.

Howard Government Retrospective IV: 2004-2007

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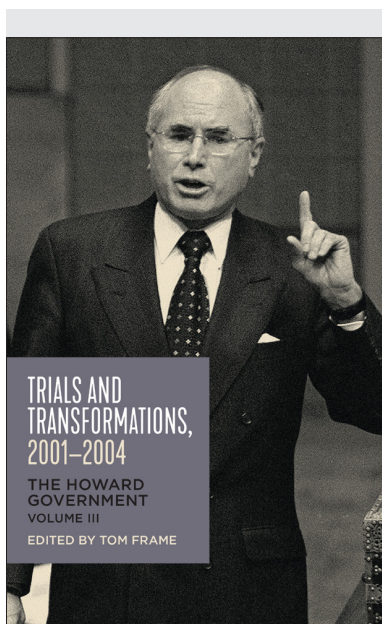


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Trials and Transformations, 2001–2004

The Howard Government, Volume III

Edited by Tom Frame



Classification | Politics |
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Few periods in Australian political history have generated more controversy than 2001–2004.

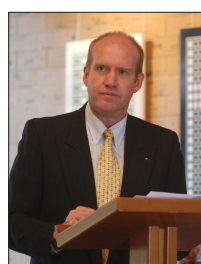
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'John Howard ... could not prevent the Australian people from being nervous and agitated in the second half of 2001. Existential angst was everywhere. Crises at home and catastrophes abroad were about to unsettle the nation.'

— TOM FRAME

About the Editor



TOM FRAME has been a naval officer, Anglican Bishop to the Defence Force, a member of the Australian War Memorial Council, a theological college principal and a cattle farmer. He is a graduate of UNSW with an Honours degree and a doctorate in history. He became Professor of History at UNSW Canberra in 2014 and was appointed Director of the Public Leadership Research Group in 2017 with responsibility for the establishment of the Howard Library at Old Parliament House. He is the author

or editor of more than 45 books.

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Trials and Transformations, 2001–2004

The Howard Government, Volume III

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Edited by Tom Frame

CONTENTS

Contributors

Preface — *Tom Frame*

1 Setting the scene — *Tom Frame*

PART I: THE TAMPA CONTROVERSY

2 The editorial view — *Andrew Blyth*

3 An alternate crew — *Mike Deeks*

4 A uniformed legal perspective — *Michael Smith*

5 A commander's perspective — *Bob Morrison*

PART II: THE 2001 ELECTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

6 Turning around the votes – the 2001 election — *Murray Goot*

7 The challenge of opposition — *Simon Crean*

8 A certain political scandal — *Tom Frame*

9 The conduct of public inquiries — *Scott Prasser*

10 The Latham factor — *Frank Bongiorno*

PART III: INTERACTING WITH A CHANGING WORLD

11 Immigration and public opinion — *Philip Ruddock*

12 Trade and economic growth — *Mark Vaile*

PART IV: CONFLICT AND CONTROVERSY

13 Afghanistan – a war without end — *William Maley*

14 Iraq and the politics of alliance relationships — *Albert Palazzo*

PART V: THE POLEMICS OF THE PAST

15 The history wars — *Zareh Ghazarian* and *Jacqueline Laughland-Booij*

16 National identity as a political tool — *Kim Murray*

PART VI: PORTFOLIO MATTERS

17 Economics and the environment — *Aynsley Kellow*

18 Transport in the post-Ansett age — *David Hodgkinson*

19 The politics of health — *James Gillespie*

PART VII: CLOSING REFLECTIONS

20 'You knew what he stood for' — *Fiona Wade*

21 The view from Kirribilli — *John Howard*

22 Postscript: appraisals and assessments — *Tom Frame*

Appendices

I The Third Howard Cabinet and Ministry — *Darren Aguis*

II Public inquiries appointed by the Howard governments, 1996–2007 — *Scott Prasser*

Notes

Acknowledgments

Index



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