

# JOHN HOWARD

## PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

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# POLICY PERSPECTIVES

**The Art of Crisis Management:**

**The Howard Government Experience, 1996–2007**

**23–24 JUNE 2022**

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**PAPER No. 5** *Crisis in remote Indigenous Australia.*

**MAL BROUGH**

**MINISTER FOR FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS  
AFFAIRS, 2006–07.**



**UNSW**  
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**John Howard Prime  
Ministerial Library**

## THE JOHN HOWARD PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

The Howard Library was established by UNSW Canberra in 2018. It works to improve public leadership and policy in Australia by:

- preserving and making accessible the papers of and the papers of Howard Government ministers;
- advancing research in, and informing debate about, public leadership and policy;
- curating exhibitions that introduce Australians to leadership and policy challenges in a balanced and non-partisan way through the experiences of the Howard Government (1996–2007); and
- contributing to the civic education of all Australians.

The Howard Library curates a permanent Exhibition at Old Parliament House in Canberra, and has a Reading Room at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) Library.

## POLICY PERSPECTIVES

*Policy Perspectives* is a series of occasional papers published by the Howard Library which aims to reflect critically on policy decisions of the Howard Government in order to provide context and perspective for contemporary policy debates, and facilitate discussion among the policy community and the broader Australian public.

## DISCLAIMER

The opinions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Howard Library or the institutions to which the authors are attached.

## EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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The Howard Government faced several crises in its eleven years in office, from the beginning of the 'war on terror', through the (almost simultaneous) collapse of Australia's second airline, Ansett, to the scandal of the Australian Wheat Board's dealings with Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein and the water-front struggles of Australia's stevedoring companies against union control.

How did the Howard Government respond to the crises it encountered; how did it 'frame' these crises for public understanding and support; what role did the media play in explaining particular crises and critiquing Government's

responses; how were the Government's responses evaluated – by it and its critics – after each crisis had passed; was there a pattern from which we can learn to better inform contemporary government responses to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and those that lie in wait?

These questions were the focus of the presentations and discussion at the John Howard Prime Ministerial Library's 2022 annual conference.

Speakers included former Howard Government ministers, academics, media commentators and crisis management experts.



**The Honourable Mal Brough** was raised in the small semi-rural community of Slacks Creek in South-East Queensland. His family owned and operated the local community store. At 17 he joined the regular army and in December 1981 graduated from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea. He served with the infantry corps for 8 years. He entered parliament in 1996 and held various ministerial posts including Revenue Minister, Assistant Defence Minister, Employment Services Minister and Minister for Families, Communities and Indigenous Affairs. Mal was defeated in 2007 and returned to parliament as the member for the Sunshine Coast seat of Fisher for one term in 2013. Mal is married to Sue and has 3 children and 3 grandchildren.

# THE CRISIS IN REMOTE INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA

Mal Brough

IT WAS JUST BEFORE TWO O’CLOCK ON THE AFTERNOON OF MONDAY 18 JUNE 2007. My colleagues were making their way into the House of Representatives chamber for Question Time. I arrived early and had taken my seat on the front bench. Shortly after, the Prime Minister arrived. His usual practice was to head straight for his chair at the dispatch box, however, on this occasion he stopped in front of me to utter a few words. He said something like ‘we need to ban the booze’. There was no other detail. No context. I was startled, to say the least. I tried to clarify with the Prime Minister what he had just said, but he pivoted in his chair to take his first question from the Opposition.

I sent a message to my office requesting they urgently speak with the Prime Minister’s office. The message came back: in response to a question from radio announcer, John Laws relating to the recently released ‘Little Children are Sacred’ report from the Northern Territory (NT) government into child abuse, the Prime Minister said he would consider ‘banning alcohol in these communities’. I was gob-smacked. This was no small gesture. The findings of child sexual abuse throughout remote NT communities were shocking and the Prime Minister clearly wanted to act. I was in full agreement.

Addressing the devastating issue of child abuse in remote communities had been a priority from my earliest days in the Indigenous Affairs portfolio. I needed to share my thoughts with the Prime Minister at the earliest opportunity. At the conclusion of Question Time, I accompanied him back to his office. It was a short conversation. I felt we needed to do more than just ‘ban the booze’. I proposed an action agenda to be considered by Cabinet. He agreed. Thirty minutes later he addressed his colleagues at our regular cabinet meeting. Howard spoke of his shock at the findings of the report and had asked me to develop a plan. My colleagues were in full agreement.

The far reaching and unprecedented response announced on 21 June 2007 ensured the media was forced to focus on the true extent of abuse and neglect being perpetrated on children in isolated communities across the Northern Territory. Senior members of the Canberra press gallery shared with me later they had no idea why the Prime

Minister had called a major press conference at that time. Aboriginal child abuse was clearly not on their radar. Not even the release of a report with the first recommendation stating clearly, ‘The Aboriginal child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory be designated as an issue of urgent national significance by both the Australia and Northern Territory governments’ had elicited interest among mainstream media. What was more needed to gain the attention of the Canberra press gallery? Without the urgent response from the Howard government the disturbing findings of this report – and the plight of these children – may not have entered the consciousness of the general population. Notably, the Northern Territory government received the final report in January 2007, almost six months before making it public and failed to provide a copy to the Commonwealth Government. A breakdown in Commonwealth-State relations.

I will cover in more detail how we arrived at the specific measures contained in the National Emergency Response later in this paper and the collective media response, but first I think it is worth reviewing the Coalition’s approach to Indigenous Affairs that led to this point.

## Time to step up

I was appointed to this portfolio in January 2006, following Liberal Senator Honourable Amanda Vanstone (2003–2006), the Honourable Philip Ruddock (2001–2003) and Liberal Senator Honourable Dr John Herron (1996–2001) respectively. ATSIC, which had been formed in 1990 by the Hawke government was responsible for the development and delivery of most federally funded programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, Labor Minister Carmen Lawrence had concluded that ATSIC had been under-resourcing health programs and had restored the funding responsibility to the Health Department in 1995 and labour market programs were maintained by Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The legislation governing ATSIC limited the scope and capacity for the Minister to develop or implement programs and initiatives within the portfolio. This would remain the case until ATSIC was abolished in 2005.

In a clear demonstration of the Howard Government's policy priorities, Senator Herron, a trained surgeon, introduced the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance program – which continues to this day. This practical program delivers targeted and measurable results in health, housing, and infrastructure to remote communities.

In 1997 the 'Bringing Them Home' report relating to the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was tabled in the House of Representatives. The Howard Government again responded with practical assistance, initiating family reunion and counselling services, but it did not offer any apology.

In March the \$27 million 'Indigenous National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy' was launched. At the launch the Prime Minister declared the strategy was 'very much an exercise in practical reconciliation' – a hallmark of the Howard Government's approach. The Coalition's approach to Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation at this time is best summed up by the words expressed by the Prime Minister when speaking to a motion on Aboriginal Reconciliation in the House of Representatives in May 1997:

In the remarks that I made to the Reconciliation Convention yesterday, I deliberately said, and I repeat it in the House today, that we believe that the essence of reconciliation lies not in symbolic gestures—although some of them are important; this motion in a sense is a symbolic gesture. It is important on these issues that the parliament, as far as possible, speak with one voice—not in overblown rhetoric but in a practical determination to address the areas of disadvantage that indigenous people suffer.

Further, on 26 August 1999, after the election of Democrat Senator Aden Ridgeway (New South Wales) – the second person of Aboriginal descent to be elected to the Senate after Neville Bonner (Queensland) – the Prime Minister co-sponsored with Senator Ridgeway a motion of Reconciliation stating

[d]eep and sincere regret that indigenous Australians suffered injustices under the practices of past generations, and for the hurt and trauma that many indigenous people continue to feel as a consequence of those practices.

The motion was passed without the support of the Australian Labor Party.

In 2000, Prime Minister Howard announced 'Reconciliation Square' would be constructed in the national capital along with the granting of \$5.6 million to establish Reconciliation Australia. This not-for-profit foundation (established in January 2001) works to continue the 'people's movement' for reconciliation and provides tax deductibility status for donations to the organisation. My colleagues, Philip Ruddock and Senator Amanda Vanstone continued this theme of practical reconciliation.

With the abolition of ATSIC in 2005, government departments and their officials were again responsible for delivery of programs, services, and policies to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities throughout Australia. Accompanying these changes was the commencement of Council of Australian Governments (CoAG) trials of a whole-of-government approach. Initiatives such as 'No school, no pool' were introduced along with Shared Responsibility Agreements and Regional Partnership agreements. This period saw policies directed at freeing up land tenure possibilities on communal land, encouraging private home ownership and providing employment and training opportunities in lieu of Community Development Employment Projects along with the passage of the *Native Title Amendment Act 1997* in response to the High Court's Wik decision. Practical action being the driver of change.

It is clear from this abbreviated history of the period that while the Howard Government priority was to achieve tangible 'practical' outcomes it had envisaged benefiting indigenous families and communities it was not at the expense of making appropriate and measured symbolic gestures. It is also clear that many within the 'established' Aboriginal leadership and media would never be satisfied with the actions of the Howard Government in relation to Reconciliation as their views and prejudice were too deep seated. Any attempt to 'win' them over would be a waste of time.

By January 2006 the situation was very different to that experienced by my predecessors: ATSIC was no more, native title was off the agenda, the government was in a very strong financial position, and I had responsibility for a department with a significant budget. Howard's instructions outlined in my charter letter (a letter provided to incoming ministers) were clear: address passive welfare in indigenous communities, provide ongoing leadership and guidance (as Chairman of the Ministerial Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs), develop shared responsibility agreements, and promote indigenous home ownership on communal land. These priorities, directed at regional

and remote communities, were to be the sole focus of my attention and determination.

## Town camps

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My first trip to remote communities was to Galiwin'ku, Groote Island and Nhulunbuy, all on the west coast of The Gulf of Carpentaria. We flew into Darwin and met with Claire Martin, then Northern Territory Chief Minister. Martin had been an advocate for 99-year leases and private home ownership on communal land. Beyond introducing myself, the meeting was planned to be a discussion on progressing these initiatives on Galiwin'ku. The Chief Minister appeared shocked and denied having any prior knowledge of my intentions. She backed away with haste from any commitment to leases and countered that her number one priority was addressing social disfunction and the poor physical state of 'town camps' in Alice Springs. Sensing a shift in the sands, I immediately agreed to visit and would seek to work cooperatively with her to find practical solutions. I learnt a valuable lesson in politics that day.

The town camps are small suburbs of Alice Springs operated and managed by an indigenous organisation, Tangentyere Council, an organisation independent of the Alice Springs local government. Tangentyere Council receives funding for a multitude of functions including youth programs, municipal services, housing and security. Like many indigenous communities, town camps were hampered by land tenure issues. It was this very issue we sought to address and in doing so aim to lift the infrastructure to the same standards applied to the remainder of Alice Springs.

I visited the town camps by day *and* night for obvious reasons. A visit by day was standard fair whereby a Minister would be shown around a quiet clean environment by polite locals. Returning to the same place at night as part of 'Night Patrol', was another story. Alcohol, abuse, and fighting was the norm. The goal of 'Night Patrol' was to keep the peace, ferry intoxicated persons to the hospital or 'dry out' clinics, and support police. I was confident no other federal minister had ever seen this side of these communities. No child should be exposed to this environment *and* no child could be expected to flourish from this mayhem. I was determined to make a difference for these children.

I returned to the town camps on numerous occasions searching for an agreeable way forward and each time my

efforts were thwarted by those who controlled Tangentyere Council. Over the next 12 months, I travelled extensively visiting remote communities from Cape York in Queensland to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, Kalumbura in the far north of Western Australia, and Wadeye in the Northern Territory. It is worth recounting an experience in Wadeye encompassing the disconnect between what was occurring on the ground *and* what the media thought newsworthy.

## Wadeye

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Wadeye is a home to a floating population of around two thousand people drawn from several language groups. The township is cut off by monsoonal rains for many months each year and only accessible by barge and plane. My visit was planned to be the typical four-to-six-hour ministerial sideshow. These are well rehearsed events that generally include visiting an arts centre, viewing a work program and chatting with leaders of the community – basically, being shown what the community leaders want you to see, not what you need to see or hear. On this occasion, local events made this impossible.

Before I arrived there had been a riot resulting in some 25 houses being destroyed, with one person receiving a spear wound to the leg. The one shop, the health clinic and local school were closed due to community safety concerns. The NT Police Force 'riot squad' was enroute from Darwin arriving the next day. There is much more to this story however the point I make is that if it were not for a journalist from the now defunct *The Bulletin* magazine covering this story, no person outside of this community or representatives of the Northern Territory government would have known this had happened. Imagine if a similar event occurred in Melbourne. There would no doubt be wall to wall coverage, a major enquiry into how and why it happened, and remedial action put in place. Sadly, not in Wadeye.

It was also during this visit a plea from a grandmother came asking to reduce the supply of cash in the township. Her story was simple: when she was called on to take responsibility to feed and care for her grandchildren when the parents either could not or would not it would mean her needing to access cash from an automatic teller machine to withdraw cash to buy food for her grandchildren. Too often she would be forced to give that money over to older relatives for 'Gunga' (drugs). She made it clear that preventing this from happening was her biggest

priority. Sadly, her story was not unique: it was typical of most townships.

On 21 June 2007, I announced the Howard Government would

[r]educe discretionary disposable income by quarantining 50 per cent of all Australian Government income support and family assistance payments, and CDEP wages, for an initial period of twelve months, for people who have been, or become, in receipt of payment for two years or longer for residents in prescribed [Northern Territory] communities, with those outside of these communities decided on a case by case basis by Centrelink.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of the 'BasicsCard' to ensure monies were spent on the welfare of children (food, clothing and health) commenced three months later.

## Misinformation

Social justice, treaties, constitutional recognition, modes of representation and land rights have been the dominate indigenous affairs debates in recent times. They are all significant issues deserving of consideration. However, the issues and policies that have resulted in poor health, lower educational outcomes, high unemployment, high incarceration rates, violence, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect are largely ignored. This is perplexing. These are difficult issues, they are confronting, and they should be discussed. Indigenous children have a right to a better future. It appears that only when the focus and attention is on these issues for prolonged periods of time that governments act. This is a failure of leadership.

Housing shortages, deaths in custody and alcohol abuse are in the media spotlight from time-to-time, but not for long. Generally, the facts presented are incorrect. When misinformation seeps into the nation's conscience and accepted as fact, this creates an environment to find answers and solutions to the wrong questions. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (reported in 1991) found '[I]ndigenous people were no more likely than non-Indigenous people to die in custody but were considerably more likely to be arrested and imprisoned'. To many, this statement would come as a surprise given the continual media portrayal to the contrary. Not only is it true but this fact was known to the Commission within weeks of commencing. Rather than request a change of reference to embrace the universal blight of

deaths in custody, as would have been appropriate, the commission continued for years leaving most Australians under the misapprehension that indigenous Australian's die at the hands of the police far more than the general prison population. This is important because as it shapes the debate and public opinion and may result in policy responses that are inconsistent with the facts. At best this is unsatisfactory and at worst dangerous or destructive. The same can be said for the 'aboriginal housing crises'.

## Housing

A consistent theme throughout the townships is there being too few houses. This results in overcrowding leading to health and domestic violence consequences. The logical conclusion to this reporting is that insufficient housing has been provided by government and that if only more money was spent, we would prevent overcrowding and associated consequences. I am going to dig into this proposition as a way of explaining my approach to the portfolio within the framework of the Government's priority: achieving practical outcomes and challenging the status quo.

The images presented on evening news bulletins when reporting overcrowding almost always show footage of remote communities. What they do not show is the hundreds of houses that have been either destroyed or abandoned. Ask yourself how many abandoned or destroyed houses are in your neighbourhood. None or very few, no doubt. Why would there be so many homes in this state where the need is the greatest? There are many causes and if we are to improve the situation we must first understand *how* and *why* this happens.

Referring to my earlier visit to Wadeye (when two dozen houses were destroyed in a day), it was told to me the houses were destroyed as part of a long running dispute between two warring tribal groups. The cause of the fighting is said to be complex, and I do not have space here to explain it, however, the outcome was clear: some one hundred people became homeless overnight. The only solution being for most people to 'bunk' with relatives some distance from their community. The social housing in this community would be considered a health hazard in any other part of the country with graffiti and rubbish scattered throughout. The living conditions would shock most people. I found the situation unacceptable.

Wudapili is a small community fifty kilometres along the Port Keats Road. Described by the NT Government as

a 'Family Outstation' it has a population of 16; with 11 government-funded dwellings. When visiting one time, I observed at least three uninhabitable houses requiring a complete rebuild: with the remaining houses in poor condition at best. Given the community is home to one 'mob' and there being no clan disputes, I was left asking why were these houses destroyed, as well?

Like so many other outstations or homeland communities, Wudapili is occupied only during the dry season. Access to food and services during the wet season (between November and April) is problematic. Much of the year houses remain empty with residents seeking shelter in neighbouring areas such as Darwin, Wadeye or Daly River – resulting in the conundrum of overcrowded houses in one location and empty houses in another.

One kilometre away from the main community is a single house occupied by an elderly couple, traditional owners of the land. Their house was in pristine condition with a well-kept garden and a kitchen floor so clean you could eat off. After the filth and destruction in Wudapili and Wadeye, I was pleasantly taken aback. I chatted happily with the house-proud couple and asked why they chose to live in an isolated location. Their response was enlightening. They disapproved of the behaviour by some in the communities and felt safer and more in control where they lived. The contrast could not be starker. Most Australians have the choice where to live but for this Indigenous couple their choice of survival was made possible only through government funding.

Wudupili is one of many outstations across remote Australia where housing and infrastructure have been built and yet either cannot be or are not occupied for much of the year. In some cases, communities have been abandoned all together. The question then is how we can expect better health, education, and employment outcomes if we keep supporting (and building) communities where opportunities and services simply do not exist. Perhaps one answer lies with the voice of an Aboriginal elder.

Calling on respected elder and former Australian of the Year, Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM, he invited me to sit with him on his porch. I was happy to oblige. Looking out across the water stream adjacent to his house, a fulsome conversation between us ensued. Having touched on the complexity of social and economic wellbeing, Yunupingu leaned in,

You don't get it. Homelands are not traditional living places. They are where families run to get away

from the grog and violence. You (the government) then build houses for them. The grog and violence catch up and they move on, and the cycle starts all over again.

I knew he was right. Governments do not learn from their mistakes. Recently, over two-hundred million dollars (\$223 million) was allocated for remote housing in the 2022–23 Commonwealth Budget, with activists calling for a further investment of five billion dollars. These calls are ignorant as this would continue the social and cultural decay evident for all to see. Yunupingu's words remain forever etched in my memory.

## Land tenure

This leads me to the next restriction on the housing market, land tenure. In the Northern Territory, all community land, including towns such as Wadeye, are held in an Aboriginal land trust as inalienable freehold (meaning it cannot be sold). A decision taken in 1976 ensured no Aboriginal person could aspire to own their own home in their community placing limitations on potential housing stock. This was a policy I took on with gusto. Through establishing 99-year leases, the Commonwealth allowed the same secure tenure for people residing in the Northern Territory as provided to homeowners living in the nation's capital, Canberra.

The Tiwi Island 'Nguui' community were the first to embrace this policy initiative. I spoke recently to a Tiwi community member asking how things are now. He responded:

'... I would have to say that the best project that has worked from day one and is only getting better by the year...is your Township leasing. Tiwi's have built homes and businesses and jobs have been created'.

I was delighted for him and his people.

There was, of course, much pushback from Labor Party politicians and self-interest groups, but the strong leadership of the Tiwi elders prevailed creating this positive change. Reflecting on those heated negotiations, my friend recalled it this way: 'ahh, the memories of those early days when all the haters said we will all burn in hell, haha!'. Leadership in action.

As minister, I also had responsibility for an annual funding round for Indigenous Housing. This program funded between 500 and 1000 new or renovated dwellings

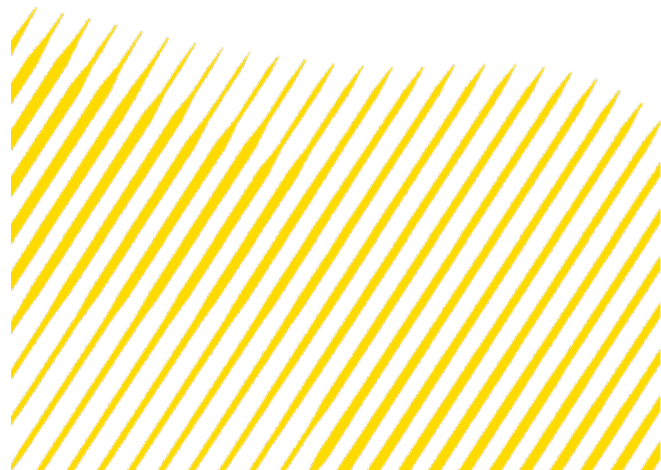
each year via grants to Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHO). In 2006 there were 496 'ICHO's' managing 21,758 permanent dwellings. The problems with this program are too many to cover in detail, however, it is true that the model did not meet community standards for governance, fiscal management, or sustainability. The program did not deliver the best and most equitable outcome for the people it was designed to support. I had to act.

In tackling these issues inevitable pushback came from those who had benefitted from the 'flowing cash'. Investigations uncovered houses being sold to benefit individuals and local governments forced to sell homes to meet unpaid rates. To rub salt in the wound, we discovered the Commonwealth Government had no legal recourse to address this fraudulent activity. The result being money earmarked for housing was forever lost. A shameful act perpetrated by those who should have known better.

## Lessons learned

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There are many generic lessons that flow from my time as Minister for Indigenous Affairs. Some of them include vested interests fighting hard to retain their position of influence and power regardless of cost to community; accepting more of the same will deliver improved outcomes is folly; and leadership at both the political and community level are essential in effecting change. I undertook the challenges presented to me in this portfolio much the same way I did throughout my career in the Australian Army: get a good understanding of the facts on the ground, and charge forward with a practical plan of action. I make no apology for treading on toes or upsetting some in the Aboriginal industry. My sole focus was on improving the lives of young indigenous children. Only time will tell if I made a difference.



## Endnotes

- 1 See Mal Brough (Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), National emergency response to protect Aboriginal Children in the NT, media release, 21 June 2007, viewed 7 December 2011, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2F8ZFN6%22>



# The Howard Library Annual 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 Australian Defence Force Academy Library and other papers managed by the Howard Library at Provisional (Old) Parliament House. This series has become the authoritative treatment of the Howard years.

Contributors are 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 attracts 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 Timor-Leste 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 was concerned with the period October 2004 to November 2007 and examined 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.



Our 2022 conference focused on crisis management and assessed the Howard Government's responses to the crises it encountered in its eleven years in office. From the beginning of the 'war on terror', through the (almost simultaneous) collapse of Australia's second airline, to the scandal of the Australian Wheat Board's dealings with Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein and the waterfront struggles of Australia's stevedoring companies against union control. How did it 'frame' these crises for public understanding and support; what role did the media play in explaining particular crises and critiquing Government's responses; how were the Government's responses evaluated – by it and its critics - after each crisis had passed; was there a pattern from which we can learn to better inform contemporary government responses to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and those that lie in wait? The ensuing papers aim to critically reflect on those policy decisions of the Howard Government in order to provide context and perspective for contemporary policy debates and facilitate discussion among the policy community and the broader Australian public.

## UNSW Press Howard Government Series Titles

- 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 (released 2021)
- V The Art of Coalition: The Howard Government Experience, 1996-2007 (released 2022)



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