JOHN HOWARD: A STUDY IN POLICY CONSISTENCY

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DECLARATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Services
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFR	*Australian Financial Review*
AFFF	Australian Farmers' Fighting Fund
AIRC	Australian Industrial Relations Commission
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANZAC	Australia and New Zealand Army Corps
APS	Australian Public Service
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATC	Australian Teaching Council
AWA	Australian Workplace Agreement
AWNL	Australian Women's National League
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CFA	Consumers' Federation of Australia
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CPU	Cabinet Policy Unit
DPM&C	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
ECCV	Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
FTB	Family Tax Benefit
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
MUA	Maritime Union of Australia
MPI	Matter of Public Importance
NAC	National Aboriginal Conference
NATSEM	National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling
NFTPA	National Forum for Teacher Professional Associations
NFF	National Farmers' Federation
NPP	National Priorities Project
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QWN	Question Without Notice
QON	Question On Notice
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RCNA	Royal College of Nursing Australia
SES	Senior Executive Service
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SMH	*Sydney Morning Herald*
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the key policies of John Howard were consistent throughout his political career, from his entry into the Australian parliament in 1974 until Prime Minister in 2007 when he lost government and his seat of Bennelong. Studies of parliamentary debates, public speeches and policy documents reveal Howard's reluctance to shift from policy positions that reflect his core philosophical and political convictions. They also show determination, self-belief and unremitting political ambition, despite significant obstacles. Many of Howard's ideas are traced to the early influences of family, school, church, and the post-war, politically-conservative era of his youth, led by Liberal Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. Howard later used the narrative of his personal beliefs and value systems as factors that shaped his policy agenda, while drawing on his own background and experiences to indicate his understanding of what was important to "ordinary" Australians. Consequently, he was consistently a social conservative who supported traditional families, a British head of State, the ANZAC legacy as defining the moment of Australia's nationhood and its national characteristics, a small-business/ entrepreneurial spirit, pride in colonial achievement and historical culture linked to Europe, with a Judeo-Christian base. He argued for border sovereignty, resisted the concept of multiculturalism, extracted acceptance of "Australian values" from new citizens, and rejected treaties, separatism, or a formal apology to Australia's Indigenous people. His family's small business background, attitude of self-reliance, and wariness of unions and public servants, pre-disposed his acceptance of the 1980s "New Right" or neo-liberal formulations of smaller government, deregulated markets and financial systems, competition, user-pays, targeted welfare based on mutual obligation, privatisation, broad-based taxation, and workplace reform that curtailed

union power. Within this context, and aligned to personal predilections, he used neo-liberal critiques of so-called "élites" and "special interests" to appeal to "mainstream" Australia.   Howard was prepared for strategic reasons to deviate, postpone or retreat on some issues, but was intransigent on core principles. He claimed most people knew the values he stood for, and that policy consistency was an element in his political success. However, when consistency became intellectual rigidity, it was his political downfall.

INTRODUCTION

"The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing".[1] Isaiah Berlin.

"Ours has been a government of consistency and commitment through times of public support and also times of public reservation and public criticism".[2] Howard, 2003.

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[1] From Greek poet Archilochus; essay by Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox,* Simon & Schuster, New York, 1953, p22
[2] John Howard, Address to Victorian State Council of Liberal Party, Melbourne, 29 March, 2003.

This thesis argues that John Howard was remarkably consistent in most of his policies throughout his long political career with the Liberal Party of Australia. While some academics and political writers have noted this aspect of his political progression, there has not been before an historical and systematic study to show the existence of his overall policy consistency as Member for Bennelong, Minister of the Crown, Deputy Leader, Opposition Leader, and Prime Minister from 1996 until he lost his seat, and government, in 2007. This work will also show that many of Howard's ideas can be located to the influences and experiences of his childhood and youth. Most people bring to adult life those experiences, but few become national leaders, and therefore the ideas he drew from traditional family life, suburban Sydney, church, and conservative leadership under Liberal Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, shaped his political policies. When in 1988 Howard said one was "always a captive of one's own personal experiences", he acknowledged the impact of past influences.[3] Later in 2007 he declared the impossibility of charting the "future of this country unless we have a true understanding of where we have come from", and frequently referred to the values of his parents as drivers of his political narratives.[4]

Howard was born in 1939 on the eve of the Second World War, into a family familiar with the 1914-1918 Great War and the subsequent 1930s Depression. His family lived through the sombre Labor government years of John Curtin and Ben Chifley and then what Howard called the "golden era" of post-war prosperity under Menzies' leadership.[5] It was also a time of the fading British Empire, the Cold War and massive,

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[3] Howard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives), 3 June, 1988, p.3276.
[4] Howard, Community Morning Tea, City of Gosnells, 20 February, 2007.
[5] Howard considered Australia in this era "had a sense of family, social stability and optimism … reasonable levels of economic growth, virtually no unemployment …" Quoted by Gerard Henderson, *A Howard Government? Inside the Coalition,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1995, p.31.

assisted immigration programmes. The Howards were socially conservative, patriotic, church-going Australians who supported the Liberal Party principles of free enterprise, were hostile to trade unions and socialism, chary of Catholics, dismissive of public servants, and with little apparent interest in, or exposure to, Aborigines or migrants. These formative influences were evident in Howard's later policies relating to trade unions, the Australian Public Service, republicanism and pride in "Australian values". His memories of the war service of his father and of his grandfather in the First World War contributed to his promotion of Australian military involvements, Gallipoli and the ANZAC legend in particular, as pivotal in Australia's history, and the formation of nationhood and national identity.   The family's forays into garage ownership engendered a protective bias towards small business, while the role of his mother as welfare- and caregiver was evident in later policies supporting traditional marriages and families.

Howard was not demonstrably influenced by the 1960s and 1970s social revolutions and demands for greater recognition by gay, feminist and Aboriginal movements. Gerard Henderson, Howard's former Chief of Staff, historian and Director of the Sydney Institute, suggests the religious (Catholic/ Protestant) sectarianism Howard experienced at home led to a "psychological process of denial", whereby unity was preferable to plurality or difference.[6] Within a protective family, from his predominantly Liberal, Anglo-Celtic suburb, devoid of migrants, Aborigines, alternative life-styles, or poverty, Henderson argues that Howard gained the impression that Australia was a fair and egalitarian place; beyond those confines, however, was a different social scene of which Howard was unaware. Safeguarding "sameness" was seen in many later policies: in his wish for a "One Australia", Howard consistently opposed any form of treaty or

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[6] Henderson, *A Howard Government?* p.26.

apology to Indigenous people, a Bill of Rights, multiculturalism, and in government, formalised marriage as a union only between a man and a woman. He resisted the Fraser government's 1970s Cabinet decision to accept Vietnamese asylum-seekers, and in 1988 as Opposition Leader advocated reduced Asian immigration to ensure community harmony. As Prime Minister in 2001, following terrorist attacks in Washington and New York and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, he deterred asylum-seekers from reaching Australia. As will be noted, many critics claimed he was motivated by racism, an appeal to fear, and political expediency, but studies of Howard's speeches, particularly from the 1980s, show he had always maintained "mainstreaming" policies over sectoral interests, on immigration based on cultural compatibility, on the right to say who, and in what circumstances, may cross Australian borders, on rejection of multiculturalism as government policy, the imperative for new citizens to adopt Australian "values", and for Indigenous people to insert themselves into the Australian economy and social structure.

When Howard celebrated his tenth anniversary as Prime Minister in 2006, John Warhurst commented that the decade had been characterised by "extensive debate about both the ideological underpinnings of the government and the personal beliefs and motivations of its prime minister".[7] This thesis hopes to add to the debate by charting the origins and consistency of Howard's key policies, drawing on his parliamentary speeches, public statements and the publications, academic articles and media coverage generated by his policies and style of leadership during his four terms of office. To date, oddly, Howard has attracted only two biographies. While the first chapter of this work describes some biographical elements that impinged on his later policies, it is not a biography. Nor does it offer psychological explanations for his relentless ambition,

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[7] John Warhurst, "The Howard Decade in Australian Government and Politics", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.189-194.

consistency of commitments and views, or his capacity to withstand humiliations and criticism, especially during his failure as Opposition leader in the 1980s.[8] Also, it does not cover every policy portfolio, but rather those issues seen as priorities by Howard.

This thesis has adopted a narrative and comparative approach to its argument, rather than a theoretical one. Howard followed aspects of neo-liberalism, and declared himself to be a social conservative, but he avoided detailed doctrinal discussion. Similarly, Menzies had rejected "doctrine" when he established the Liberal Party in 1944, to clearly define it from the Labor Party.[9] Howard saw political success arising from a guiding philosophy, or a "directional touchstone" which he claimed provided overall consistency.[10] Indeed, the policy manifesto *Future Directions,* written in 1988 by Howard and National Party leader, Ian Sinclair, states that the "the heart of politics is not political ideology but people".[11] Studies of Howard show that while he was familiar with the history and principles of the Liberal Party, the legitimacy of his beliefs came from personal values, convictions and experience rather than the "more abstract systems of cultural and social knowledge".[12] As Judith Brett observes, Howard's voice spoke as the

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[8] The contribution of psychology to political science is acknowledged. As Fred Greenstein writes: there is "nothing novel in the assertion that behaviour is a consequence of the actor's environment and his psychological dispositions …. [it] is so fundamental to an appreciation of why psychological evidence frequently is essential for political analysis that it deserves to be dwelled upon". *Personality and Politics: Problems and Evidence, Inference, and Conceptualization,* Markham Publishing Co., Chicago, 1970, p.7.

[9] See *Australian Liberalism: the Continuing Vision,* eds. Yvonne Thompson, George Brandis and Tom Harley, Liberal Forum, Melbourne, 1986, pp.92-94; Howard claimed Menzies "forged modern Australian Liberalism not as a fixed ideology but as a political philosophy with values that need to be related to the great issues of the day, and of the future", "The Liberal Tradition. The Beliefs and Values Which Guide the Federal Government", 1996 Sir Robert Menzies Lecture, 18 November, 1996.

[10] Howard, Address to American Enterprise Institute, "Sharing Our Common Values", Washington DC, 5 March, 2008.

[11] Howard and Ian Sinclair, *Future Directions. It's time for plain thinking,* Canberra, 1988, p.3; see also Ernie Chaples, "'Future Directions' or Tales of Politics Past?", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* 65, 10, March, 1989, pp.29-30.

[12] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class. From Alfred Deakin to John Howard,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 211-212.

"person who bases their judgments and views on the world they know".[13]   He did not

pretend to be an intellectual leader – on the contrary, he fashioned himself as "an

ordinary bloke" – and his references to philosophers were confined to identification with

Edmund Burke and to John Stuart Mill, with the latter leading to his idea of "the broad

church of Australian Liberalism".[14]   From personal observation, Howard was a politician

of conviction but dismissed the political value of "grand theories". Highlighted

throughout, therefore, are policy continuities and their origins, rather than any

implications for broader theoretical analyses.

Howard was often accused of being poll-driven, and of abandoning or reversing

some decisions, although it will be argued that he was predominantly consistent on issues

of *core* value to him.   He came to his second Opposition leadership in 1995 having learnt

that political leadership meant selecting policy issues of fundamental worth, but

remaining sufficiently flexible to acknowledge mistakes and the need to shift when

necessary.[15]   While research indicates that on key policy issues Howard was remarkably

consistent over many decades, the argument of consistency must be judged against his

boast of being "expert at getting 90 per cent of what he wanted, provided his core

objectives were met".[16]   It must also be pointed out that the arguments regarding

Howard's consistency in this thesis run counter to the views of some other commentators,

and some are listed below. For example, in his first year of government, *The Age* wrote

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[13] Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class,* p.211.
[14] For discussion of Howard's self-description of "Burkean", see Tony Abbott, *Battlelines,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2009, pp.71-72. Howard referred to "the broad church" in "The Liberal Tradition", 18 November, 1996.
[15] See Howard interview with Liam Bartlett, Radio 6WF, 7 March, 2001.
[16] Glenn Milne, "The Howard Factor", *Sydney Papers,* 18, 2, Autumn 2006, pp.91-95. Also Howard interview with Kerry O'Brien, "John Howard reflects on highs and lows as PM", ABC TV, *7.30 Report,* 2 March, 2006, when Howard said: "I frequently say to my colleagues, 'It's better to be 90% pure in Government than 126% pure in Opposition'".

that he "fashioned himself and his behaviour to suit public opinion".[17]   On the other

hand, poll analyst, Murray Goot, points out that if "Howard was influenced by the polls

on issues such as guns, immigration and asylum-seekers, it was because the polls pointed

him in the direction he already wanted to go".[18] Guy Rundle in a 2001 *Quarterly Essay*

accused Howard of being an opportunist who seized any chance to retain government.[19]

By contrast, journalist Janet Albrechtsen argued that, "Far from being an opportunist,

John Howard has shown remarkable philosophical consistency throughout his political

career".[20] Geoffrey Barker, in the *Australian Financial Review,* claimed Howard had

performed policy reversals in the 2001 election year on petrol excise, the Goods and

Services Tax (GST) reporting requirements and trusts that might "restore the Coalition's

political fortunes and ensure its victory in the federal election".[21] The *Sydney Morning

Herald* detailed Howard's policy "u-turns" on Asian immigration, Medicare, the Native

Title Act and the Land Fund.[22] In 2001, Labor's Simon Crean accused Howard of "so

many backflips … he can join the circus".[23] Journalist Laurie Oakes in 1995 listed what

he considered Howard's policy inconsistencies, quoting back Howard's words after the

British Conservative Party victory in 1983 that "the recent UK elections serves to remind

us all of the enormous value of consistency in politics".[24] Despite the 1996 pre-election

"absolute" guarantee, Howard cut funding for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

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[17] *The Age,* 30 November, 1996, quoted by Murray Goot, "Politicians, Public Policy and Poll Following: Conceptual Difficulties and Empirical Realities", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 40, 2, June, 2005, pp.189-205.
[18] Goot, "Politicians, Public Policy and Poll Following", pp.189-205.
[19] Guy Rundle, "The Opportunist. John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction", *Quarterly Essay,* 3, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2001, p.58.
[20] Janet Albrechtsen, "PM, history warrior", *The Australian,* 25 October, 2006.
[21] Geoffrey Barker, "U-turns kink the straight and narrow", *Australian Financial Review,* 5 March, 2001.
[22] Quoted by Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart. A portrait of Paul Keating PM,* Knopf, Milsons Point, 2002, p.623.
[23] Simon Crean, CPD, Representatives, 5 April, 2001, p.26605.
[24] Laurie Oakes, "The ghosts that walk", *Bulletin,* 21 November, 1995, reprinted in *Power Plays. The real stories of Australian politics,* Hachette, Sydney, 2008, pp.127-130.

(ABC) immediately on gaining office.[25] Having inherited Labor's budget deficit, he

differentiated between "core" and "non-core" promises.[26] Under pressure from

colleagues, he amended his policy on mandatory detention of asylum seekers to release

families with children into community detention arrangements.[27] Howard was accused

of "dog whistle" politics, with subtle but separate messages for different constituencies.[28]

Despite these many criticisms and accusations of policy shifts, the research

undertaken for this thesis demonstrates that Howard showed significant policy

continuity on issues where his core or key values were at stake. For example, he was

persistent and finally implemented the GST in his second term of office; the final

piece of his workplace reforms in *WorkChoices* was completed in his fourth term, and

he consistently opposed Australia becoming a republic or having a Bill of Rights.[29]

He was unyielding in his support for the United States after terrorist attacks in New

York and Washington in 2001.[30] Support for traditional family units and rejection of

alternative life-styles were constant refrains, with claims that past gains for women

and equality had been diminished under his terms of government.[31] He maintained

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[25] See Quentin Dempster, *Death Struggle: How political malice and boardroom powerplays are killing the ABC,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2000, pp.215-258.

[26] See Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen, *John Winston Howard. The Biography,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2007, p.248.

[27] See Janet Phillips and Harriet Spinks, Parliament of Australia Library Background Note, "Boat arrivals in Australia since 1976", 28 January, 2010.

[28] See Josh Fear, "Under the Radar. Dog-whistle politics in Australia", Discussion Paper 96, The Australia Institute, September 2007.

[29] Howard claimed pressure from colleagues to change his republican views, but he "would not, could not"; interview, 24 March, 2006, Melbourne. Out of office, he continued to oppose a Bill of Rights. See his "Politics and the Media: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly", University of Melbourne, 4 August, 2009, and Menzies Lecture "Proposed Charter of Rights", University of Western Australia, 26 August, 2009.

[30] Howard, CPD, Representatives 19 October, 2006, p.84: "It is the responsibility of any Prime Minister … to listen to public opinion, distil it and be guided by it but, in the end … he has got to make a judgement based on his assessment of the longer term interests of this country. And so it was in March 2003 that this government took the most poll defiant decision [to go to war in Iraq] it has taken in the whole 10½ years it has been in government".

[31] See Sarah Maddison and Emma Partridge, *How well does Australian democracy serve Australian women?* Report No.8, ANU, Canberra, 2007, p.104.

staunch "moral" opposition to gambling, guns, and X-rated pornographic videos.[32]

During a 2006 interview, Howard said the major change to which he would admit was of being more of a "nationalist".[33] Yet his resistance to separatism, readiness to overcome State or Territory laws, his industrial relations reform, and the altered State/ Commonwealth funding relations through the GST, suggest that centralist tendencies had always existed.[34]

Howard was relentless in his political ambition, having announced as a schoolboy that he wanted to become Prime Minister.[35] He was supported by his mother, then his wife, Janette, and was tenacious despite obstacles, opposition, and an apparent lack of popularity or appeal.[36] As Opposition leader from 1985 to 1989 he was taunted by failure and low popularity ratings ("Mr Eighteen Percent") and on losing leadership in 1989 he considered his prospects of regaining leadership like "Lazarus with a triple by-pass".[37] After thirteen years of Opposition from 1983 to 1996, characterised by the Liberal Party's leadership and ideological struggles, Howard allegedly "accepted

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[32] For Howard's "moral" crusade against illicit drugs, and its origins in his "strict", "Anglo-Saxon" family neighbourhood where drug addicts did not exist, see Philip Mendes, "Social Conservatism vs Harm Minimisation: John Howard on Illicit Drugs", *Journal of Economic and Social Policy,* 6, 1, 2001. http://epubs.scu.edu.au/jesp.

[33] Howard admitted to sympathy with Prime Minister John Gorton for his "centralist" ideas. Interview, 24 March, 2006, Melbourne.

[34] Howard overturned the Northern Territory legislation on euthanasia in 1997 and ACT civil union laws in 2006. See James Allan: "To paraphrase Lloyd Bentsen, 'I know federalists, and John Howard was no federalist'", "John Howard and the Constitution", *Quadrant,* April, 2008, pp.6-15. See also Robyn Hollander, "John Howard, Economic Liberalism, Social Conservatism, and Australian Federalism, *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 53, 1, 2008, pp.85-103: "Howard's federalism was informed by the goal of building a single nation, with a single, national economy and a single, national identity". Andrew Parkin and Geoff Anderson in "The Howard Government, Regulatory Federalism and the Transformation of Commonwealth-State Relations, *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June 2007, pp.295-314, describe the Howard governments' "transformative engagement with Commonwealth-State relations" as among their "most significant but least expected activities".

[35] See Howard interview with Liz Jackson, ABC TV, *Four Corners,* "An Average Australian Bloke", 19 February, 1996.

[36] Australian Democrats founder, and former Liberal colleague, Don Chipp, said he "had yet to meet a person who has been excited by [Howard] …. He comes over as a decent, embattled little man who is seriously out of his depth". *Chipp,* ed. John Larkin, Methuen Haynes, North Ryde, 1987, p.100.

[37] "Mr Eighteen Percent. Why does this man bother?" *Bulletin,* 20 December 1988. Howard made his "Lazarus" remark at a Media Conference, Canberra, 9 May, 1989, when he lost leadership.

completely" he would never lead the Liberals again.[38]   On the contrary, this work

suggests that his leadership ambitions were never relinquished, and that his policies

remained substantially unaltered. When he became Prime Minister, he reflected:

> If you look back at my 25 years in politics, particularly my time from the early 1980s
>
> onwards, you'll see a consistent pattern …. I've been very strongly committed to those
>
> [economic] reforms because I've seen them as essential to the shaping of the modern
>
> Australia … to giving Australia a show in the modern world.[39]

Howard claimed in 1994 that consistency in philosophy and narrative were keys

to political success, a view repeated when out of government.[40]   When invited to

comment on the central argument of this thesis, he agreed his policies had been constant

throughout his career.[41]   Close reading of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates

(CPD) shows that Howard's speeches from 1974 often repetitiously follow the same

general policy direction and outlook on social issues, while economic reforms became

more defined in Opposition from 1983. *Future Directions* attempted to combine

economic change and social stability as policy statements, and while the document was

satirised for its perceived outdated 1950s nostalgia, and its inherent contradictions, it

stands today, on Howard's admission, as a record of his economic goals, personal values,

and policy "fidelity".[42]   Carol Johnson notes that it "contained many of the key elements

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[38] Howard, quoted by Greenlees, *The Australian,* 31 May 1994.
[39] Howard, "Interview with John Howard", Paul Kelly, *100 years: The Australian Story,* Allen &
Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p. 243.
[40] Howard, "Some Thoughts on Liberal Party Philosophy in the 1990s", *Quadrant,* July-August, 1994,
pp.21-23; see also Inaugural John Howard Lecture, Menzies Research Centre, Melbourne, 20
February, 2009, claiming a "major reason why [my] government remained in office for so long was
that it governed in a predictable and consistent fashion".
[41] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006.
[42] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006.

which Howard was to build on in the lead-up to the 1996 election".[43] Journalist Tony

Wright recognises the document's connection with core values learnt at home, writing in

the *Bulletin* on the tenth anniversary of the Howard governments, "Search the philosophy

stated in 'Future Directions' or Howard's major decisions as prime minister and you will

find the child everywhere".[44] Howard's later *Quadrant* contributions in 1994 and 2006,

and his 2007 Sydney Institute speech contain common policy directions first published in

Future Directions.   Each later speech reflected its particular decade, but also his

philosophy covering individualism, choice, traditional marriages, Indigenous people,

migrants, trade unions, the public service, small business, targeted welfare, mutual

obligation, small government, primacy of the marketplace, and "mainstream" interests

over special interest groups[45]

Howard claimed these ideas expressed the objectives of individualism, yet he

substantially removed elements of social liberalism from the Liberal Party. Many social

liberals opposed his stand on feminism, equal opportunity and affirmative action,

immigration and asylum-seekers, "mainstream" interests over the rights of individuals,

and many resigned or were driven from the Party. When the Coalition lost government in

1983, the combination of Malcolm Fraser's resignation as leader, retirement from politics

and the subsequent leadership and ideological rivalry between Howard and Andrew

Peacock, ensured a turbulent time in Opposition. Howard was predisposed to New Right

influences and neo-liberal economics, and when Opposition leader he moved the Liberals

towards the idea that unfettered markets, financial deregulation, lower tariffs and small

governments were the natural state of free and liberal societies. While he supported most

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[43] Carol Johnson, *Governing Change. From Keating to Howard,* Network Books, 2nd ed., Perth, 2007,
p.41.
[44] Tony Wright, "The house of Howard", *Bulletin,* 7 March, 2006.
[45] Howard claimed to have altered his position on Aborigines in his speech to the Sydney Institute on
11 October, 2007, but actually *consolidated* earlier views (discussed in Chapter 5).

of the taxation and economic initiatives of the Hawke and Keating Labor governments, he demanded greater industrial relations reform. His constant goal was to change workplace culture by removing the influence and power of the trade union movement, and through flexible, negotiated agreements between employers and employees. Howard's parents had been disdainful of the Labor Party and its connection to trade unions, and with memories of his family's garages, he wanted to encourage individual effort unconstrained by regulation (in government, a priority was to cut "red tape").[46] Yet, while he initiated economic changes, Howard set them against the social conservatism he portrayed as having existed under Menzies and exemplified through stable, traditional families and from "Australian values". When he talked about homes or families, for example, it was in terms of safeguarding them against threats or "alternative life-styles" (as in *Future Directions)* an idea he later extended to security of the "nation".[47] Howard's maiden speech talked about preserving "a sense of local identity … of community, a sense of belonging to one's own particular part of the world", and having a "local identity".[48] These ideas appeared to fuel his later 1990s engagement with Keating on the so-called history "wars" and his insistence on Australia's place as a European, Anglo-Celtic, Christian nation, with a proud, colonial history and national characteristics, even if located in an Asian/ Pacific region.

According to Howard's former Chief of Staff, Arthur Sinodinos, for a government to implement its agenda, it "does really come down to the values and beliefs of the leader,

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[46] "The Coalition is taking action to reduce the burden of regulation and red tape carried by small business …". "Statement by the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP: More Time for Business", Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 24 March, 1977.
[47] See *Future Directions,* p.11, and Fiona Allon, *Renovation Nation. Our Obsession with Home,* New South, Sydney, 2008, p.91.
[48] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 September, 1974, p.1912.

the Prime Minister".[49] Howard's values and ideas were criticised by many, and polarised

opinion. Former Howard government minister, Tony Abbott, complained that probably

no government in Australia was "the subject of such sustained loathing by writers and

intellectuals".[50] Some saw Howard as a divisive leader who corrupted debate and

silenced dissent.[51] Others, like journalist Dennis Shanahan, considered him "Australia's

most successful prime minister".[52] Before their biography of Howard, Wayne Errington

and Peter van Onselen in 2004 wrote his record would outstrip Menzies' achievements,

and he would "go down as Australia's most successful prime minister".[53] Howard

enjoyed support from right-wing journalists Piers Akerman, Dennis Shanahan, Janet

Albrechtsen, Paul Sheehan and Andrew Bolt, and in his personal office, staff were

delegated to attend specifically to enquiries from radio broadcaster (and former Liberal

staff member) Alan Jones.[54] *The Australian* editorials were largely sympathetic to the

Howard agenda but critical of the implications for the government and the Australian

Public Service arising from the AWB Ltd. "wheat for oil" scandal during the Iraq war,

and the government's pre-2001 election handling of aspects of refugee policies

(discussed in Chapter 5). Gerard Henderson generally agreed with Howard, but noted his

lack of empathy with asylum-seekers and refugees.[55] Canberra Press Gallery journalists,

Michelle Grattan, Laurie Oakes and George Megalogenis regularly critiqued Howard's

leadership style, agenda and government policies, through the media or their

[49] Arthur Sinodinos, ABC TV, *Lateline,* "Rudd's challenge: A Howard confidante gives his assessment", 5 February, 2008.

[50] Abbott, quoted by Michael Duffy, *Latham and Abbott,* Random House, Milsons Point, 2004, p.356.

[51] See David Marr, "His Master's Voice. The Corruption of Public Debate under Howard", *Quarterly Essay,* 26, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2007. Brett said half the electorate saw Howard as "primarily a partisan figure of conflict and division", "Exit Right. The Unravelling of John Howard", *Quarterly Essay,* 28, 2007, p.4. See also *Silencing Dissent. How the Australian government is controlling public opinion and stifling debate,* eds. Clive Hamilton and Sarah Maddison, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2007.

[52] Dennis Shanahan, "Two Howards", *The Howard Factor. A Decade that Changed the Nation,* ed. Nick Cater, Melbourne UP/ *The Australian,* Carlton, 2006, p.31.

[53] Errington and van Onselen, "Howard betters Ming", *The Australian,* 21 December, 2004.

[54] Chris Masters, *Jonestown. The Power and the Myth of Alan Jones,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2006, p.355. Jones was speech-writer to Malcolm Fraser (p.120).

[55] Henderson, "The PM's lack of empathy", *The Age,* 17 August, 2004.

publications.[56] Paul Kelly's publication *End of Certainty* remains a definitive journalistic

account of Australian politics in the 1980s, although, like some others, he once dismissed

Howard's likelihood of regaining Liberal leadership. Political journalists Margo

Kingston, Mungo MacCallum and David Marr were hostile to most of Howard's policies

and the values he espoused.[57] Aboriginal leaders, Noel Pearson, Pat and Mick Dodson,

Lowitja O'Donohue and Marcia Langton, criticised Howard's inability to engage at a

practical *and* symbolic level with Indigenous people, and his dismantling of the

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).[58]

Howard allegedly considered academics "idle", despite their prodigious analyses

of his leadership, policies and style of governance.[59] Murray Goot and Ian Watson

suggest, however, that the electoral performance of the Howard governments has

attracted less sustained attention from academic political scientists "and certainly less

satisfactory explanations, than one might have hoped".[60]   Notwithstanding this remark,

copious scholarly publications relating to Howard have appeared from Judith Brett,

Marian Sawer, Carol Johnson, Anne Tiernan, John Wanna, John Warhurst, Michael

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[56] See Michelle Grattan: *Reconciliation: Essays on Australian Reconciliation,* Black Inc, Melbourne, 2000, *Can Ministers Cope? Australian Federal Ministers at work* (with Patrick Weller), Hutchinson, Richmond, 1981, *Australian Prime Ministers,* New Holland, Sydney, 2000, 2001, 2003; Paul Kelly: *End of Certainty. The story of the 1980s,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992, *Future Tense. Australia beyond election 1998,* ed. Murray Waldren, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1999, *The March of Patriots. The Struggle for Modern Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2009; George Megalogenis: *Faultlines. Race, work and the politics of changing Australia,* Scribe, Carlton North, 2003, *The Longest Decade,* Scribe, Carlton North, 2006, 2008; Laurie Oakes: *Power Plays. The real stories of Australian politics,* Hachette, Sydney, 2008.
[57] For example: Margo Kingson: *Not Happy, John!* Penguin, Victoria, 2004, *Still Not Happy , John!* Penguin, Victoria, 2007; Mungo MacCallum: "Girt by Sea. Australia, the Refugees and the Politics of Fear", *Quarterly Essay,* 5, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2002, and *Run, Johnny, Run,* Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 2004.
[58] While Noel Pearson supported Howard's Northern Territory intervention, and the need to replace Indigenous welfare with employment, he had earlier been critical. See "'Racist Scum': Pearson Blasts PM", *Weekend Australian,* 1-2 November, 1997.
[59] Donald Horne, *Looking for Leadership. Australia in the Howard Years,* Viking, Ringwood, 2001, p.71.
[60] Murray Goot and Ian Watson, "Explaining Howard's Success: Social Structure, Issue Agendas and Party Support, 1993-2004", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.253-276.

Wesley, Fiona Allon, Norman Abjorensen, Deborah Brennan, Clem Macintyre, Stuart

Macintyre, Robert Manne and Marion Maddox, and all have been drawn on extensively

when researching this thesis.[61]   The post-election analyses published as part of the

Australian Commonwealth Administration and *Australian Studies* series, were also

valuable sources of record and reference. [62]   Publication of *The Howard Factor. A*

Decade that Changed the Nation, marked the tenth anniversary of the Howard

governments, as did the 2006 Canberra conference, "The Howard Decade", with the 2007

June edition of the *Australian Journal of Political Science* dedicated to selections from

the proceedings. [63]

Howard's policies relating to Indigenous people, refugees and asylum-seekers

attracted accusations of being race-motivated, and became the subject of many

publications. Anthony Burke argued that Howard's use of fear of invasion in relation to

asylum-seekers was "a linked strategy of coercion and persuasion that is the very

antithesis of freedom.[64] David Marr, Patrick Weller, Tony Kevin, Peter Mares and Don

McMaster, also wrote critically about Howard's refugee and asylum-seeker policies.[65]

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[61] See particularly Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 1992 and 2007,
and *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class,* also her *Quarterly Essays* "Relaxed and
Comfortable" and "Exit Right", 19 and 28 respectively, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2005; see Carol
Johnson's theoretical approach to leaders' strategies in negotiating national change in *Governing
Change. From Keating to Howard;* Marian Sawer in *The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in
Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2003, analyses the history of social liberalism in Australia. Marion
Maddox, *God Under Howard. The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics,* Allen & Unwin,
Crows Nest, 2005*,* challenges Howard's social policies as products of Methodism.
[62] *Howard's Agenda. The 1998 Australian Election,* eds. Marian Simms and John Warhurst, UQP, St
Lucia, 2000; *The Howard Government,* ed. Gwynneth Singleton, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000; *2001:
The Centenary Election,* eds. John Warhurst and Marian Simms, UQP, St Lucia, 2002; *Howard's
Second and Third Governments,* eds. Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005;
Howard's Fourth Government, eds. Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008;
Mortgage Nation: The 2004 Australian Election, eds. Marian Simms and John Warhurst, with Richard
Nile, General Editor, API Network, Perth, 2005.
[63] Nick Cater, ed. *The Howard Factor. A Decade that Changed the Nation,* Melbourne UP/ *The
Australian,* Carlton, 2006.
[64] Anthony Burke, *Fear of Security. Australia's Invasion Anxiety,* Cambridge UP, New York, 2008,
p.11.
[65] See David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, *Dark Victory,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003, Peter
Mares in *Borderline. Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers,* UNSW Press, Sydney,

Sarah Maddison wrote of Howard's failure to improve conditions and relationships with Indigenous people.[66] Howard's striving for close liaison with the US and its President, George W Bush, and his support for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, ignited heated debate and criticism. Linda Weiss, Elizabeth Thurbon and John Mathews criticised Howard for what was perceived as a betrayal of national interests by tying them so closely with the US alliance.[67] National demonstrations in 2003 protested against Australia's support for the US, with former Australian intelligence officer, Andrew Wilkie, publicly refuting Howard's reasons for going to war in Iraq.[68] Writers Caroline Overington and Stephen Bartos revealed the government's lack of accountability in the AWB bribery allegations during that war.[69] Howard's industrial relations policies on the waterfront in 1998 led to a publication by Helen Trinca and Anne Davis in which they claimed the nation was changed.[70]

Many books appeared after 2007 analysing Howard's electoral defeat, but as this thesis concentrates on historical origins and the consistencies of some of his key policies, these current books have not been extensively cited.[71] Paul Kelly's 2009 publication,

2001 and Patrick Weller, *Don't Tell the Prime Minister,* Scribe, Melbourne, 2002. Tony Kevin in *A Certain Maritime Incident. The sinking of SIEV X,* Scribe, Melbourne, 2004, alleges government involvement in a sinking vessel containing asylum-seekers. Don McMaster in *Asylum Seekers. Australia's Response to Refugees,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2002, p.126, considered Howard's mandatory detention system "draconian and extreme".

[66] Sarah Maddison, *Black Politics. Inside the Complexity of Aboriginal Political Culture,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2009, p.229: "The eleven and a half years that Howard was in office were an unmitigated disaster for Australia's Indigenous peoples".

[67] See Linda Weiss, Elizabeth Thurbon and John Mathews, *National Insecurity. The Howard Government's Betrayal of Australia,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2007.

[68] Andrew Wilkie, *Axis of Deceit. The story of the Intelligence Officer who risked all to tell the truth about WMD and Iraq,* Black Inc., Melbourne, 2004. Howard said that, given "time again, I would take the same decision"; Address at Coalition Campaign Launch, Brisbane, 26 September, 2004.

[69] Caroline Overington, *Kickback. Inside the Australian Wheat Board Scandal,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2007, and Stephen Bartos, *Against the Grain. The AWB scandal and why it happened,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006.

[70] Helen Trinca and Anne Davies, *Waterfront. The Battle That Changed Australia,* Doubleday, Milsons Point, 2000.

[71] See Christine Jackman, *Inside Kevin 07. The People. The Plan. The Prize,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008; Peter van Onselen and Philip Senior, *Howard's End. The Unravelling of a Government,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008; Peter Hartcher, *To the Bitter End. The dramatic story behind the fall of*

The March of Patriots, is arguably the most recent significant journalistic study of the Keating and Howard governments, concluding that both politicians were products of the same era, and possessed of abiding ambitions to convert Australia to a modern, globalised nation (if expressed in different ways).[72] Kelly touches on biographical elements and their links to Howard's later actions and policies, following an earlier observation in 2000 that Howard's political range was "shaped by the parameters of his own life".[73] Unlike the central argument of this thesis, Kelly's biographical or continuity themes have not been an over-arching focus.

Despite the many publications about his governments and his policies, Howard has been a neglected biographical subject compared to other Australian political leaders like Robert Menzies, Bob Hawke, Bill Hayden, Paul Keating, Peter Costello, Mark Latham or Kevin Rudd.[74] Howard is reportedly finalising his memoirs for publication in 2010, and predicted to outline his economic reforms.[75] Richard Allsop notes the dearth of biographical interest in Howard, but says that most people "had a fair idea of what John Howard was on about in 1996, without the need for a biography".[76] Foreign affairs expert, Michael Wesley, observes the lack of "good, objective writing about the philosophies, motivations and political skills of this country's second-longest serving prime minister", despite the "extraordinary continuity in Howard's philosophies, rhetoric

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John Howard and the rise of Kevin Rudd, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2009; and Nicholas Stuart, *What goes up … : Behind the 2007 election,* Scribe, Carlton North, 2007.

[72] Kelly, *The March of Patriots,* pp.1-6.

[73] Kelly, "The Common Man as Prime Minister", *Paradise Divided. The Changes, the Challenges, the Choices for Australia,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 2000, p.21.

[74] See Tom Switzer, "John Howard and the missing biographers", *Quadrant,* 48, 10, October 2004, pp.38-40.

[75] Dennis Shanahan and Christian Kerr, "PMs finding publishing prolixity", *Weekend Australian,* 13-14 February, 2010.

[76] Richard Allsop, "People, pundits and Prime Ministers. What biographies reveal about Australia's political culture", *Institute of Public Affairs,* October, 2007, pp.11-14.

and actions in relation to Asia for close to a decade". [77] David Barnett and Pru Goward,

both close to the Liberal Party, wrote a Howard biography in 1997 that was "panned by

the critics and quickly disappeared from bookshop shelves".[78] A decade later, Wayne

Errington and Peter van Onselen published *John Winston Howard. The Biography,* but

which, according to Howard, contained some inaccuracies.[79] It concludes with Howard

still in government, and does not, as one reviewer says, "delve into the boy and the youth

as shapers of Howard the man".[80]   *The Costello Memoirs* written by Peter Costello with

Peter Coleman in 2008 contributes contemporary comment on the Howard governments,

and is sympathetic to the economic success of the Howard governments when Costello

was Treasurer.[81] Tony Abbott's *Battlelines,* part autobiography/ part philosophical

discussion of the Liberals' policy directions, provides insight into how Howard worked

as Prime Minister, although as a Howard protégé, he is broadly unquestioning.[82]

Malcolm Fraser's 2010 memoirs, written with Margaret Simons, offers information about

the Coalition governments from 1975 to 1983, with critical assessment of Howard's

performances as Minister, Treasurer and Deputy Leader in the Fraser governments.

Many of the views relating to refugees and Howard's shift from the social liberalism

espoused by Menzies and Fraser, were outlined to me during an interview with Fraser in

2006.[83]

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[77] Michael Wesley, "Howard's way: northerly neighbours and western friends", *Griffith Review, Up North: Myths, Threats and Enchantment,* Edition 9, Griffith University, 2005.

[78] David Barnett was press secretary to Malcolm Fraser; Howard appointed Pru Goward as Sex Discrimination Commissioner. For critique of Barnett's and Goward's biography, see Richard Allsop, "People, pundits and Prime Ministers", pp.11-14.

[79] Errington and van Onselen, *John Winston Howard. The Biography.* Howard referred to biographical inaccuracies in CPD, Representatives, 7 August, 2007, p.35.

[80] Paul D Williams, "John Winston Howard: The Biography" (book review) *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 54, 3, September, 2008, pp.488-490.

[81] Peter Costello with Peter Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs. The Age of Prosperity,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, particularly Chapters 4-7, 9, 11 and 13.

[82] See Duffy, *Latham and Abbott,* p.184. Howard referred to himself as Abbott's "Dutch Uncle".

[83] Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser. The Political Memoirs,* Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2010. Interview with Fraser, 21 June, 2006, Melbourne.

From this brief overview of publications on Howard and his governments, apart from the right/ left, partisan/ non-partisan or neutral/ academic angles taken by various authors, there emerges coverage of *specific* topics or events. As noted earlier, some authors have mentioned Howard's political consistency as an element underlying his political success, but not as a central thesis. Gerard Henderson, for example, wrote often about the Liberal Party and considered Howard to be a "remarkably consistent politician over 30 years".[84] Liberal Party Federal Director, Brian Loughnane, considered that predictability won elections for Howard, as the electorate knew what to expect because he had been "committed to the same core values throughout his political career".[85] Former Howard speechwriter, John Kunkel, claimed ease of connection between Howard's past statements, because consistency "was a signature of the Howard brand".[86] Surprisingly, then, Errington and van Onselen claimed Howard's success lay within his capacity to be "many John Howards".[87] Others believed his personal and political aspects were entwined. [88] This thesis will pursue the line that Howard used prior to the 2007 election: "love me or loathe me, the Australian people know where I stand and what I believe in".[89]

An important but peripheral element within the argument of Howard's policy consistency is his constant portrayal in public life as an "ordinary man". After ten years

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[84] Henderson, "Friday Forum", ABC TV, *Lateline,* 24 February, 2006.

[85] Brian Loughnane, "The Liberal Campaign", *Mortgage Nation: the 2004 Australian Election,* eds. Marian Simms and John Warhurst, Network Books, Perth, 2005, p.134.

[86] John Kunkel, "Reflections on the 'Howard Project'", *Institute of Public Affairs,* May, 2008, pp.11-13.

[87] Errington and van Onselen, *John Winston Howard,* p.vii.

[88] Liberal Nick Minchin said there were not "two" John Howards. "I do think one of his strengths is what you see is what you get …. He doesn't put on a guise to enter the public arena"; "Love him or loathe him, Howard is a truly great PM", *Adelaide Advertiser,* 13 December, 2004. Craig McGregor said of Howard in 1987, "the distance between his interior and exterior is nil", *Headliners. Social Portraits,* UQP, St Lucia, 1990, p.155.

[89] Howard, Media Conference, Canberra, 14 October, 2007; see also discussion by David Adams, "Staying On", *Howard's Fourth Government,* p.266.

in office, he told ABC broadcaster, Kerry O'Brien, that coming from a "lower middle

class" family, he believed in "being average and ordinary" and in conducting a "perpetual

conversation with the Australian people".[90] It is beyond argument that few "ordinary"

men or women rise to national leadership and remain there for over a decade.[91] While

Howard enjoyed some luck in the timing and circumstances of coming to government,

and was unchallenged by strong Opposition leadership until 2006, behind his plain

personality, dull rhetoric and unimposing façade were formidable ambition, tenacity,

determination, self-belief, and a sense of *being* different.[92]   Being "ordinary" evolved

into a valuable political tool. Howard's re-election as Opposition Leader in 1995

followed twelve years of the Labor government's extensive economic reform, and

perceptions of neglected "mainstream" Australian concerns in favour of élites or

privileged interest groups.   His "homespun persona" and language of "family values",

"moral values", "border protection" and "national identity", captured at the time, as

David McKnight says, "the spirit of popular anxiety and the desire for something stable

and secure".[93] Howard drew on the values of his family for much of the "story" he told

the nation about himself, and itself, in order to identify with "mainstream" aspirations

and values. Political scientist David Burchell notes that currently politicians increasingly

draw on family backgrounds to explain their credentials for political office.[94]   When

Kevin Rudd became Labor Opposition Leader in 2006, he talked about his

underprivileged background, and Malcolm Turnbull as Liberal Leader in 2008 also spoke

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[90] Howard, interview with Kerry O'Brien, ABC TV, *7.30 Report*, 2 March, 2006.
[91] A point echoed by van Onselen, in "John Howard", *Sydney Papers,* 19, 3, Sydney Institute, Sydney, Winter, 2007, pp.160-169.
[92] Paul Magee argues in "John Howard's Body" that Howard claimed "'we're essentially the same', but a crucial source of his power is the fact that he himself is not". Proceedings of UNAUSTRALIA, Cultural Studies Association of Australasia's Annual Conference, December 6-8, 2006, pp.2-32.
[93] David McKnight, *Beyond Right and Left. New Politics and the Culture Wars,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, p.11. See also Allon, *Renovation Nation,* pp.51, 85-87.
[94] David Burchell, "From the old school", *Weekend Australian,* 20-21 September, 2008.

about modest family circumstances.[95] Before that, Mark Latham rhetorically summoned

ladders of opportunity out of a poor suburban environment.[96] Julia Gillard, when

appointed Prime Minister in June 2010, spoke about qualities she learnt from her Welsh

working-class parents.[97] As a consistently self-declared "ordinary man", Howard was

unequivocal about attributing his social values to his parents, for, as he said, he brought

those values "to the job".[98]

This thesis is structured around Howard's early influences, followed by chapters

on selected policy platforms. Chapter One, "Early Influences of Politics and 'Home'" is

a brief biographical overview of the interpretations he took from time, place, and the

politics of his first home (considering his brother adopted a different political

philosophy).[99] It discusses Howard's exposure to church, the Liberal Party, school, the

lack of exposure to cultural diversity, and how they impinged on later policies. As he

attributed many political ideas to Menzies, this chapter highlights their similarities and

differences. Chapter Two, "Leadership and the 1980s Economy", outlines Howard's

entry into Federal politics, and his rapid promotion to the ministry, then as Treasurer and

Deputy Leader. The Liberals in Opposition from 1983 brought philosophical and

leadership conflicts and tested Howard's ambitions and formalised many of his policies.

As the main architect of the Liberal's neo-liberal direction, co-author of *Future

Directions,* and drawing on "New Right" sources and conservative think-tanks, the

economic and social policies that emerged were largely unchanged from those he took

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[95] See Christine Jackman, *Inside Kevin 07,* p.148. Wealthy former merchant banker Malcolm Turnbull talked about living in rental accommodation with his single father.
[96] See Allon, *Renovation Nation,* pp.102-103.
[97] Julia Gillard, Media Conference, Parliament House, Canberra, 24 June, 2010.
[98] John Howard, National Press Club, Canberra, 1 October, 1998.
[99] Bob Howard, former ALP branch president, calls himself "the socialist sheep of an extremely conservative family", quoted by Luke McIlveen and Stephen Brook, "Blood is thicker than politics", *The Australian,* 18 May, 1999.

into government in 1996. Howard's entry into the controversial debate of slowing Asian immigration is discussed in the context of the continuity of his ideas relating to cultural compatibility, national sovereignty and border security. He ended the 1980s as a failed and humiliated leader, but with the experiences laying the groundwork for many future government policies, and how he would lead the Coalition from 1996.

Chapter Three discusses the series of "Headland Speeches" delivered prior to the 1996 election, and are important for the continuities revealed between previous policies and those Howard took into government. Chapter Four, "Unions and the Australian Public Service" shows his long-standing determination to reform the workplace, including the Australian Public Service. His collision course with unions is seen as a constant feature of his political life, alongside his intolerance of compulsory union membership (including on university campuses). Chapter Five, "Cultural Diversity" discusses Howard's lack of empathy, his long-standing "mainstreaming" policies relating to migrants and Indigenous people, and his rejection of multiculturalism as government policy. While Howard twice claimed a shift of attitude towards Aboriginal politics, it will be seen that he did not fundamentally alter his position, or resile from policies on migrants, citizenship or asylum-seekers. Chapter Six, "Family and Feminists", compares the unchanging nature of Howard's views about traditional marriage and the disdain with which he held the feminist movement and its aspirations. As women are often welfare recipients and principal carers of children, this chapter deals with some welfare and childcare issues (from which can be seen familiar directions). The final chapter, "Construction of National Identity", amalgamates many Howard policies. His approach to history and his revival of the ANZAC legend were politically astute, but resonated with his social conservatism, education, and family sentiments. In government he

claimed victory in restoring pride in Australia as an Anglo-Celtic, Judeo-Christian nation with roots in British heritage, with a noble colonial history, although his construction of national identity began years before.

This work concludes that Howard came to parliament with a range of core values and principles and that many (if not most) framed his political and government policies. His public career centred on his wish to return to what he considered the liberal principles of individualism over collectivism, choice over compulsion, and the diminution of the power of the trade union movement. In so doing, he undermined many social liberal principles on which previous Liberal leaders based their policies. He was sometimes forced to compromise, to delay or modify some policies, but it can be shown that he refused to abandon key or core principles or values important to him at a personal or political level. This underpinned Howard's political strategy over decades, despite opinion polls, focus groups, pressure from colleagues to change his views on some issues, or critics who earlier predicted his political demise. He parlayed himself as an "ordinary" man who understood the aspirations and values of mainstream Australians, but was driven by an ambitious and competitive nature, and never disguised his wish to reshape Australia.[100] His arrival and long tenancy at the Lodge as Prime Minister reflected extraordinary perseverance, conviction in the "truth" and "national interest" of his policies, and an understanding of political power and determination to use it.[101] Like Berlin's "hedgehog", Howard operated mainly within "a single central vision" that

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[100] When Howard was asked if he would take Australia in a different direction should he win the 1987 election, he replied: "That is my aim, yes". *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7 September, 1985, quoted by Norman Abjorensen, *John Hewson. A Biography,* Lothian Books, Port Melbourne, 1993, p.13.
[101] Brett, "Three Legacies of John Howard", NSW Fabian Forum: John Howard: 10 Years On, 22 March, 2006.

shaped his ideas and political policies.[102]   The following study of values hewn in youth,

alongside decades of parliamentary speeches and documents, reveals an overall

consistency in key policies. As the first chapter shows, most had their origins in

Howard's early life in Earlwood.

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[102] Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox,* p. 22. Peter van Onselen claimed that Howard had "mutated" from a "one-issue 'hedgehog'" to the "ultimate political fox", in Verity Edwards, "Howard mutated from hedgehog to homespun fox", *The Australian,* 6 July, 2006. My point is that Howard's policies were always shaped by an overarching belief system.

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY INFLUENCES OF POLITICS AND "HOME"

"I brought to the job the values that I learnt from my parents".[1] Howard, 1998.

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[1] John Howard, National Press Club, Canberra, 1 October, 1998.

Introduction

This chapter identifies the influences of home, family, church, Robert Menzies and the Liberal Party on many of John Howard's later government policies. It shows the nexus between early life experience and the impact on his political career and later government, aspects that have only been touched on by other commentators. Biographers Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen suggest Howard's "political success is owed, on one level, to his suburban Sydney upbringing [and by staying] true to the simple, timeless values of his parents".[2] Former Liberal Opposition Leader, John Hewson, claims that Howard was "driven by prejudices with which he grew up".[3] Robert Manne sees him as a man of "old-fashioned and dogmatic opinions and emotions".[4] Judith Brett writes that he was steeped "not just in Australian Liberal rhetoric, but in the experiences he speaks of: families and small businesses centred on work and neighbourhood, bounded by a relatively taken-for-granted nationalism".[5] Paul Kelly attributes Howard's success as Prime Minister to his unshaken values over decades even as he evolved to meet new demands and circumstances.[6] In his 2009 book, *The March of Patriots,* Kelly reinforced Howard's "pride in family, Liberal party and nation …. [and] saw his family story as a template for the nation's story …. [his] certainty about Australia came from his certainty about his family"[7]. As acknowledged

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[2] Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen, *John Winston Howard. The Biography,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2007, p.viii.

[3] John Hewson cites Howard's focus on families, difficulty in saying sorry to Aboriginal people, attitude to some women's issues and the republic; see Andrew Denton, ABC TV, *Enough Rope,* 6 August, 2006.

[4] Robert Manne, "In search of Howard's end", *The Age,* 9 October, 2006.

[5] Judith Brett, "The New Liberalism", *The Howard Years,* ed. Robert Manne, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2004, p.74.

[6] Paul Kelly, "Defeat may damage PM's legacy", *The Australian,* 19 May, 2004. See also Glenn Milne, "The Howard Factor", *Sydney Papers,* 18, 2, Autumn, 2006, pp.90-95, and "Purpose Driven", *The Howard Factor,* ed. Nick Cater, Melbourne UP/ *The Australian,* Carlton, 2006, pp.46-47.

[7] Paul Kelly, *The March of Patriots. The Struggle for Modern Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2009, p.17. Cf his earlier comment that "Howard grew within the narrow confines of his background – university, law, Young Liberals"; *End of Certainty. The story of the 1980s* 1st ed. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992, p.101.

in the Introduction, most individuals bring to adult life their experiences of childhood, but Howard as a long-standing, national political leader becomes an important subject when determining the experiences, intellectual motivation, values and beliefs which drove his policy agenda and style of governance.

This chapter is not a biography, but offers examples of how particular events and influences shaped the core principles that Howard brought to political policies. His stable childhood within a traditional family, with mother as homemaker and father and grandfather as former soldiers, imbued in him an idealised version of homes and families as sites of welfare, nurture and education, and respect for military culture and the ANZAC tradition.[8] The Liberal Party attracted his parents for its free enterprise principles, anti-communism, sense of British Empire and the United States alliance, ideas that remained with the adult Howard.[9] He was a child of the post-war prosperity of Robert Menzies, who dominated the Liberal leadership for an unsurpassed seventeen years.[10] Although Howard often referred to Menzies as enshrining the Liberal Party's ideals, and drew on the Party founder's legacy as a template for his own political guidance and directions, comparison of the two leaders shows that Howard's later conversion to aspects of neo-liberalism veered markedly from the John Maynard Keynes economics preferred by Menzies.

Howard's involvement as Sunday School teacher at the local Methodist church is informative for the political use he made of his Christian heritage, but as Marion

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[8] Don Edgar saw the post-war years as "the era of the homemaker", "Volunteerism and the changing patterns of women's lives", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* 65, ll, April, 1989, pp.19-23.
[9] Kelly, *End of Certainty ,* p. 101.
[10] Graeme Starr says few would disagree the "Menzies era represented a time of considerable progress in Australia", "The Old Man on the Stairs", *The Menzies Era. A Reappraisal of Government, Politics and Policy,* eds. Scott Prasser, J R Nethercote and John Warhurst, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1995, p.50.

Maddox notes, without reference to the progressive social justice church debates of the 1950s and 1960s. His school and university education provide insights into his ideas on history and compulsory student unionism, while the origins of his disdain for the Labor Party, unions and the public service originate from discussions in the Howard family home. His parents valued private enterprise, reward-for-effort, and the virtues of independence and self-reliance. As with all modest small business entrepreneurs, they were vulnerable to the government's handling of the economy, or more powerful corporations and organised labour (like unions). Then, as now, when these entities threaten the independence or progress of smaller projects or individuals, as Judith Brett points out, there arises potential for expressions of grievance.[11] Howard understood this dynamic, and used it effectively in the 1996 election that saw him elected as Prime Minister.

Howard took from his parents the values of thrift, courtesy, hard work, financial rectitude, regard for authority and Westminster democracy.[12] He respected the British monarchy, the US alliance, ANZAC Day, masculine courage at war, maternal strength within traditional families and homes as haven and sites of nurture and education. He believed in reward for small business endeavours, and the practical Christian message of charitable welfare delivery, self-reliance and mutual obligation. All these ideas, garnered from home, church, school and the Liberal Party, are discussed in the context of their influence on many of Howard's later policies.

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[11] Brett, "John Howard, Pauline Hanson and the politics of grievance", *The Resurgence of Racism. Howard, Hanson and the Race Debate,* eds. Geoffrey Gray and Christine Winter, Monash Publications in History: 24, Victoria, 1997, p.10.
[12] Howard considered Westminster government a "terrific institution …. far better that we assault each other with words … [than] with fists". Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives), 8 December, 1994, p.4381.

Howard's background: religion and education

John Howard was born in July 1939 and named after the family's British hero,
Winston Churchill.   In September that year, their Australian hero, Robert Menzies, told
the nation that as Great Britain was at war, so too was Australia.[13] Following the Great
War and Depression, these were not, according to Howard, "exuberant times".[14]
Howard's first biographers, David Barnett and Pru Goward, describe his parents as
"honest, unpretentious and upright, and strongly imbued with the Protestant work
ethic".[15] John Carrick, former Liberal Party Secretary-General, Changi prisoner-of-war
survivor, government minister and Howard mentor, saw them as "decent, hard-working
and entrepreneurial", typifying Menzies' "forgotten people".[16] Howard described
them as dedicated family people, his mother as ambitious for her children, and
committed to "one's country" and "one's community". [17] She was a voracious reader
of newspapers, and they "would talk endlessly about social and political issues".[18]
They listened to parliamentary proceedings and discussed "those great debates between
Sir Robert Menzies and Dr Evatt … over Petrov, the letter to Molotov, the unfolding of
the Royal Commission into Communism, espionage in the 1950's, the great schism in
the Australian Labor Party".[19] Bob Howard confirmed his brother's fascination with

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[13] Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light. Some Memories of Men and Events,* Cassell, Melbourne, 1967,
p.15.
[14] Gerard Henderson, *A Howard Government? Inside the Coalition,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1995,
p.22.
[15] David Barnett with Pru Goward, *John Howard: Prime Minister,* Viking, Ringwood, 1997, p.4.
[16] See Carrick's interview with Milton Cockburn, "What Makes Johnny Run ", *Sydney Morning
Herald,* 7 January, 1989. Paul Kelly considered Howard "a living embodiment of the force of
Menzies' 'forgotten people' pledge from the 1940s – decent, hard-working, thrifty"; *End of Certainty,*
p.101. Howard reportedly "cultivated" the influential NSW Liberal "machine man" who became a
"father figure", Craig McGregor, *Headliners. Social Portraits,* UQP, St Lucia, 1990, p.155.
[17] Howard interview with Liz Jackson, ABC TV, *Four Corners,* "An Average Australian Bloke", 19
February, 1996.
[18] ABC TV, *Australian Story,* "In the Family – the Howards", 25 October, 2001. Paul Keating taunted
Howard as a product of the Menzies' era, and the "school of red arrows". CPD, Representatives 29
May, 1987, p.3647.
[19] Howard, Inaugural Prime Ministers on Prime Ministers Lecture, Canberra, 3 September, 1997.

current affairs, reading *Time* and *Newsweek* in the 1950s.[20] Another brother, Walter, claimed he "always had this passionate interest in history and politics".[21] Consumerism and capitalism were absorbed through the regular delivery of the American magazine, *Saturday Evening Post,* "a smorgasbord of American consumer goods …. log-cabin-to-the-White House, kids selling lollies on the roadside", and apparently more influential than the church in shaping the family's values.[22] Interestingly, many ideas from the *Saturday Evening Post* were discerned in Howard's later views on private enterprise, prosperity from individual effort, class mobility and "ultimate empowerment".[23]

Howard described in a 2006 interview how "values, qualities, were hewn in the Menzies era – home, church, patriotism".[24] His brother Bob describes more difficult aspects of that era:

> My father had a tough life in the sense that he went to the war very young and he was the oldest of many children. And I think that the business was a very tough undertaking in the Depression years. And he worked very hard. My mother had a tough life in the sense that she came from a working-class family …. Her mother had died when she was 8. And her father was keen on the drink. In all of those senses I think she had a very tough life.[25]

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[20] Bob Howard, quoted in Michael Duffy, "Who is John Howard and why are they saying these things about him", *Independent Monthly,* February, 1996, pp.28-37.

[21] Walter Howard, quoted by Luke McIlveen and Stephen Brook, "Blood is thicker than politics", *The Australian,* 18 May, 1999.

[22] Bob Howard, quoted by Marion Maddox, *God Under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2005, pp.20-21.

[23] See Brian Musgrove, "Myth-speak: Politics and Cultural Symbolism in Contemporary Australia", *Politics and Culture,* 3, 2006.

[24] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006, Melbourne.

[25] Bob Howard, quoted in Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.25.

Howard was a keen "joiner" of clubs and institutions (which he saw as a generational trademark).[26] His competitive spirit spurred him at sixteen years of age to take part in a radio quiz show where he displayed "the political art of bluffing one's way through a question he had no idea how to answer".[27] Importantly, he admitted he "flirted" with the idea of becoming Prime Minister while at primary school.[28]

According to Bob Howard, the Howard boys were reared in a "rather uncritical intellectual environment".[29] Mona Howard ensured her sons "did not go around with other little boys in gangs …. always worried about undesirable influences, about people who would lead you astray".[30] They did not mix with Catholics, and stayed within their own "overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon neighbourhood".[31] Relevant to the perceived divisive nature of many of Howard's later policies, Bob Howard recalls that the "family had a real us-and-them thing. It was the climate we grew up in, not at all modified by the church".[32] Mrs Howard encouraged sport, paid Howard's university fees until he won a Commonwealth Government scholarship, and later negotiated his £6 wage at Myer Rosenblum's law firm in 1959.[33] Family life was marked by Christian faith but not overt religiosity.[34] The family was patriotic, independent, hard-working, sober,

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[26] Howard said, "All of my life … I've wanted to be involved, and be a player and do things … part of my upbringing was you joined a team"; quoted by Tony Wright, "The Howard interview: his family", *Bulletin,* 9 February, 2005. At the Opening of Restored Party Rooms, Old Parliament House, Canberra, 24 November, 2003, Howard said: "We live in an age where people don't automatically join institutions. People of my generation … joined all sorts of things when you left school".

[27] Howard appeared on the Jack Dyer radio quiz show *Give it a go*; see "Boyhood bluffs put John in lather", *SMH,* 6 June, 2002.

[28] Howard interview with Liz Jackson, *Four Corners,* 19 February, 1996.

[29] Bob Howard, quoted in Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.26.

[30] Barnett with Goward, *John Howard,* p.5.

[31] Cockburn, "What Makes Johnny Run?" *SMH,* 7 January, 1989.

[32] Bob Howard, quoted by Maddox, *God Under Howard,* p.22. "Us and Them" was the theme of a book on the phenomenon of "anti-elitism" discourse that flourished under Howard. See *Us and Them. Anti-Elitism in Australia,* eds. Marian Sawer and Barry Hindess, Network Books, Perth, 2004.

[33] Guy Rundle, "John Howard", *New Internationalist,* 2003. See also Errington and van Onselen, *John Winston Howard,* p.30.

[34] Howard described his mother as "privately devout" and his father as a "believer", with his grandmother "a very strong Methodist". Quoted by Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.22.

church-going, lower middle-class, community-spirited and respectable (if slightly tainted by scandal). [35] Howard's part-time employment in the family garages led to an appreciation of the hard work and vulnerabilities of small business owners, and his later government policies were geared towards their viability.[36] As well, the post-war entrepreneurial endeavours of his father and grandfather reinforced his belief in private enterprise and the flow-on benefits to family and community: the best economic undertaking in life, he said, "was to start something with your own resources and work very hard and make it better and pass it on to your children and that is exactly what my father did".[37]

Howard perceived a sense of egalitarianism in the Sydney suburb of Earlwood where he lived, but which Henderson claims was based on a false premise:

> In 1950 John Howard looked around him and saw that all, or most, was equal. And he liked what he saw. Had he looked beyond Earlwood he would have seen something else again. But he didn't then – and he still seems unaware today of slum life in the late 1940s and beyond in the working-class suburbs of all Australian cities …. It's a kind of denial of difference.[38]

Craig McGregor makes a similar point when Howard moved to Sydney's more affluent northern shore:

[35] Lyall and Walter Howard (grandfather and father) in the 1920s were "dummy" owners of Papua New Guinea plantations, and attracted government scrutiny. See David Marr, "The secret Howard plantations" *SMH,* 10 June, 2006; also Errington and van Onselen, *John Winston Howard,* pp.7-8:

[36] Howard said of his pre-1996 commitments: "none was more important than our commitment to small business and none has been more comprehensively honoured by this government"; CPD, Representatives 4 December, 1996, p.7668.

[37] Howard, Address to Small Business Forum, Perth, 19 February, 2007. Repeated at Menzies Research Centre, "Building Prosperity: The Challenge of Economic Management", Canberra, 27 February, 2007.

[38] Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.29.

For John Howard, asleep in Wollstonecraft, Blacktown might as well be on another planet … [he] has always retained that hard, ineradicable, right-wing mindclamp which he never seems to have had the will, or the imagination, to cast off and which maims him intellectually.[39]

Fiona Allon also challenges Howard's version of 1940s and 1950s reality, and suggests the times were less simple than his nostalgia infers:

The cherished symbols of Howard's world reveal a process of selective memory and idealisation. His sporting hero, Don Bradman, doesn't simply represent the game of cricket, but a particular tradition of cricket associated with white, middle-class Protestant men, free of any trace of the sectarianism that the history of cricket in Australia possesses. The heroics of Gallipoli and the "spirit of Anzac", the image of the Aussie battler, the values of mateship and egalitarian innocence, are fictions in exactly the same way, belonging to and drawn from a fictional, idealised past. That they were fictions didn't make them any less effective as political tools, however.[40]

The suburb from which these images emerged had once been "an oasis of Liberalism", with post-war brick bungalows, Federation homes and street names commemorating historical events or heroic men.[41] With successive influxes of migrants, however, it became increasingly cosmopolitan.[42] Howard later claimed to have an affinity for the western suburbs as examples of successful migrant integration for those "who've

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[39] Craig McGregor, *Australian Son. Inside Mark Latham,* Pluto Press, North Melbourne, 2004, p.161.
[40] Fiona Allon, *Renovation Nation. Our Obsession with Home,* New South, Sydney, 2008, p.107.
[41] Graham Freudenberg, *A figure of speech. A political memoir,* Wiley, Milton, 2005, p.198; Allon, "Home as Cultural Translation. John Howard's Earlwood", *Communal/ Plural,* 5, 1997, pp.1-25.
[42] Labor MP Laurie Ferguson said Howard "expressed great amazement when the first Italian moved opposite his house and he saw them tiling their front patio". "Howard drops multiculturalism", *Daily Telegraph,* 23 January, 2007.

become Australian".[43] Nonetheless, ambition took him with his mother to Drummoyne

in 1968 to contest a State seat of parliament, and was apparently "distraught" when he

lost.[44] When he married Janette Parker in 1971, he moved to Wollstonecraft and

ultimately won the Federal seat of Bennelong. [45]

Howard admitted to being reared within a family and in a generation that "didn't

verbalise their feelings or their religion".[46] Australians, he said, did not wear their

religion "on their sleeve quite as much as some from other countries do".[47]

Consequently, he was "very wary of people who too frequently parade virtue".[48] His

own religious leanings took him to the local Methodist church, where he became a

Sunday School teacher, and served as secretary until 1963.[49] He played cricket, learnt

about missionaries, and later claimed the church's "plain, non-conformist beliefs as the

core of his values". [50] Methodism, he said, instilled in him "a sort of social justice

streak".[51] When later accused of racism, he protested "as an ethic, racial equality was

something I was taught both by my parents and also by the church".[52] Indeed, he

declared his opposition to "any form of discrimination … based on ethnic background,

[43] Howard, Address at Greenway Community Morning Tea, Sydney, 12 July, 2006: "I've always had in my political career, an affinity for the people of western Sydney …. It brings people from the four corners of the world who've become Australians".
[44] See Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.37.
[45] Howard won the seat without support from retiring Catholic incumbent, John Cramer. See CPD, Representatives 30 May, 1994, p.923. Cramer objected to working mothers, and considered virginity a woman's most valued asset. See "WEL in Wonderland", *Nation Review,* 14-20 October, 1972.
[46] Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.22.
[47] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 December, 2004, p.116.
[48] Howard interview with Geraldine Doogue, ABC TV *Compass,* "What Our Leaders Believe", 3 October, 2004. See also Maddox, ABC Radio National, *Encounter,* "Faith in Politics", 16 November, 2008.
[49] Maddox, "Howard's Methodism: How convenient?!" *Journal of Australian Studies,* 83, 2004, pp.1-11. Sunday School was a "serious business" with exams for the "most committed" and "John appears to have been the family's Sunday School enthusiast".
[50] See David Marr, *The High Price of Heaven,* Allen &Unwin, St Leonards, 1999, p.28.
[51] Howard, quoted by Michelle Grattan, "John Howard", *Australian Prime Ministers,* 1st ed., New Holland, Sydney, 2000, p.442.
[52] Howard, quoted by Marr, *The High Price of Heaven,* p.30.

nationality, race, colour of skin, religious or political conviction".[53]   He seemed

unaware of different forms of racism, and, interestingly, Michael Wesley suggests that

Howard's Methodism brought out a dogged adherence to his opinions, self-assurance,

and an inner certainty despite "choruses of opposition and mountains of contrary

evidence".[54]

Marion Maddox challenges the notion that Howard's government policies

reflected the values of the Methodist Church of the 1950s and 1960s, and cites its

debates on trade unions, refugees, big business and nuclear energy, its call for

engagement with Asia, and full citizenship rights for Aborigines.[55]   She argues that a

perception existed that Howard's "economics were a matter of considered political

conviction developed through his career", while his social policy was deemed to be "a

kind of default mechanism, ingrained in childhood and never rethought".[56]   According

to Howard, his economic policies *did* evolve over time to meet contemporary trends and

challenges, and learnt, as he said, "from experience".[57]   If he remained untouched by

social issues raised by the church, he certainly believed that church organisations,

together with other charitable and volunteer groups, were best equipped to handle

welfare delivery.   Many of his later welfare reforms involved contracting services to

organisations with a common moral, religious, and long-standing charitable culture.[58]

At another level, some of his government appointments reflected his willingness to

[53] Howard, Launch of National Multicultural Advisory Council Report, *Australian Multiculturalism for a new century: Towards inclusiveness*, Canberra, 5 May, 1999.
[54] Michael Wesley, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006,* ABC Books, Sydney, 2007, p.46.
[55] See Maddox, *God Under Howard,* for Howard's early church life: "What we find there upsets any easy association between Howard's childhood churchgoing and adult policies", pp.5 and 18-19.
[56] Maddox, *God Under Howard,* p.2.
[57] Howard belonged "to that school of thought which does not necessarily believe that economic expertise is coincidental with formal economic training", CPD, Representatives 30 April, 1981, p.1805.
[58] Philip Mendes, *Australia's Welfare Wars Revisited. The Players, the Politics and the Ideologies,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.132. See also Ruth Phillips, "Tamed or Trained? The Co-option and Capture of Favoured NGOs", *Third Sector Review,* 13, 2, 2007, pp.27-48.

insert the ethos of Christianity and its adherents into government processes. For

example, his ill-fated appointment of Anglican Archbishop Peter Hollingworth as

Governor-General in 2001 indicated his regard for Christian practitioners at a

leadership level.[59] As well, when Howard appointed Ian Harper as Fair Pay

Commissioner in 2005, the Christian Harper claimed "faith would provide him with a

moral compass in the task of setting wages".[60]

  As a Sunday School teacher, Howard learnt that "God can work in the economic

life of Australia by our seeking His will in industrial relations, trade unions and

commerce", with the congregation urged to activity "in the political parties of their

choice" where their "services are sorely needed".[61] However, the Howard family

considered the church's role as providing spiritual guidance, not political advice on

social justice campaigns.[62] There were

> some aspects of Methodist tradition from which they did hold themselves quite aloof,
>
> like they just were not particularly interested in the social justice strand of Methodism
>
> and would be quite critical around the family dinner table of the Ban the Bomb kind of
>
> Methodism …. [it would be] less about the content of say, the theology, than … did you
>
> think the Anzac Day service was adequately done, or do you think there was
>
> appropriate recognition of national commemorations …[63]

In government, Howard's relationships with Christian leaders were often strained when

they criticised his policies on native title, welfare, refugees, economic rationalism, the

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[59] See Errington and van Onselen, *John Winson Howard,* pp.327-328.
[60] Paul Dyer, "What will you get paid? Lord knows", *Sunday Mail,* 30 October, 2005.
[61] Maddox, *God Under Howard,* pp.9, 18.
[62] See Maddox's interview with Terry Lane, ABC Radio National, "The National Interest: Religion and Politics in Australia", 27 March, 2005.
[63] Quoted by Maddox, ABC Radio National, *Encounter,* "Faith in Politics", 16 November, 2008.

Iraq war, and industrial relations reform.[64] He advised them to speak about moral issues and to steer clear of "sounding very partisan" for fear of dividing their congregations. As he warned:

> I know something of the composition of church congregations. There are a range [sic] of political views and you can offend. Particularly when some of the church leaders have been particularly critical of our side of politics, they end up offending a large number of their patrons.[65]

Yet, as with his government appointments noted above, and as John Warhurst points out, more so than its predecessors, the Howard government was "active in word and deed, in emphasizing … its religious credentials and beliefs and in emphasizing the positive contribution of Christian values to Australian society".[66] Marion Maddox agrees with this point.[67]

Howard retained Christian rituals in parliament, and described as "absurd" the Australian Democrats' proposition to abolish the Lord 's Prayer that started each parliamentary day.[68] It was Christian values that Howard endorsed as creating a better

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[64] John Warhurst, "Religion in 21st Century Australian National Politics", Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Canberra, 5 May, 2006. See also Maddox's interview with Lane, "The National Interest".

[65] Howard, *Adelaide Advertiser,* 16 February, 2004. He criticised the Anglican Primate of Australia for suggesting after the Bali terrorist attack that Australia was too close to the US. Quoted by Fr Frank Brennan in "Honesty and the Issues", *Sydney Papers,* 16, 1, Summer, 2004, pp.122-137.

[66] Warhurst, "Religion in 21st Century Australian National Politics".   See also S Mutch, "Religion in Australian politics: a surfacing debate", *AQ: Journal of Contemporary Analysis,* September-October, 2004, pp.15-16.

[67] Maddox interview with Terry Lane, "The National Interest", 27 March, 2005.

[68]"What the separation of church and state means in this country is that there is no established church …. It doesn't mean that we abandon our Judeo-Christian heritage. It doesn't mean that we eliminate from public life all references to God"; Howard, Media Conference, 2 March, 2006.

society, and when he talked about attending church, it was always a Christian church.[69]

He strongly believed in the value of Christianity in public life, for in a 2004 interview, Howard said that he regarded the Judeo-Christian influence on Australia as the single "greatest force for good in the community".[70] When countering Muslim fundamentalism in 2006, it remained the case, he said, that the Judeo-Christian "ethic has been the greatest moral influence and the greatest shaper of the behaviour of human endeavour in Australia", and "a remarkable force for good".[71]

Howard's primary, high school and tertiary education – and what he took from it – also sheds light on some of his views on history, particularly when seen against his later engagement with Paul Keating during the so-called history "wars", and Howard's very precise views on Australia's past as one of achievement and colonial courage. Howard attended Earlwood Primary School where he won the Eric Willis Prize for Citizenship, but where, his co-student brother Bob said, they were taught little of Australian history, and "even less of Aboriginal history".[72] Howard later won a place at Canterbury Boys' High School through competitive examination.[73] There, he gained good marks in his Leaving Certificate but failed mathematics and "managed only a B pass in economics".[74] (As Treasurer he was ridiculed for this lack of expertise.)[75] At school, he developed "Churchillian" oratory skills and, interestingly, once took the

[69]Howard, interview with Doogue, ABC TV, *Compass,* "What Our Leaders Believe", 3 October, 2004. See also Maddox, *For God and Country. Religious Dynamics in Australian Federal Politics.* Parliament of Australia Library, 2001, Canberra, p.13.
[70] Howard, ABC TV, *Compass,* 3 October, 2004.
[71] Howard, CPD, Representatives 7 December, 2006, p.113.
[72] See Cockburn, "What Makes Johnny Run?", *SMH,* 7 January, 1989; Bob Howard said: "I don't think there was any attempt to get to the real truth of the matter"; quoted by John Huxley, "How little Johnny learnt about race", *SMH,* 26 October, 1996.
[73] Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.19.
[74] Denis Fitzgerald, "The history of John Howard", *Education,* 11 November, 1996, p.10.
[75]See V G Venturini, *Malpractice. The administration of the Murphy Trade Practices Act,* Non Mollare, Sydney, 1980, p.275: "[When Howard was] seeking 10 new chairs for his office [he said] four were to be leather and five vinyl. If four and five make 10 whatever will happen to the national deficit?"

school debating side that argued *against* the proposition that "migrants are proving beneficial to Australian culture".[76] According to critic Humphrey McQueen, Howard's version of history was

formed when history in our schools could still mean the deeds that won the Empire. For his Leaving Certificate, Howard excelled at history, but that of course did not involve learning about his own country …. Their history master at Canterbury Boys' High, Frank Driscoll, wrote a school text, *The Story of Australia* (1946), which did little beyond tracking the explorers. Only in the last dozen of his 225 pages did Driscoll move … far beyond the domain of facts to champion the White Australia policy "as sacred as the name Anzac"[77]

Judith Brett also locates early influences:

Howard has been forced to think about the past, about Australia's history. In the main his response has been to focus on and reinforce the idealised past of the Australian nation, to see the history of Australia as a history of the triumph of progress and peaceful settlement, much as it would have been taught to him in school in the 1940s and 1950s, much as it was seen by his hero Robert Menzies …. He has also shown himself to be deeply attached to the time of his childhood and youth – the Australia of the 1940s and 1950s when he felt the world was safe and secure.[78]

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[76] According to the school magazine *Canterbury Tales:* "No one could mistake or fail to be impressed by, the Churchillian oratory of John Howard". Don Aitkin, *What was it all for? The reshaping of Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, p.35.

[77] Humphrey McQueen, *Suspect History. Manning Clark and the Future of Australia's Past,* Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1997, p.201.

[78] Brett, "Why John Howard Can't Say Sorry", *Arena,* December, 2000, p.35.

Howard repudiated claims that British texts were used in Australian schools in the 1950s and 1960s, saying he studied "exclusively from books by Australians".[79] He was contradicted by the Australian Education Union President, Denis Fitzgerald, in a 1996 article on British-based education curricula: "Now that the Prime Minister has significantly engaged in debates around history and its content, it might be interesting to dwell a little on the actual history that Mr Howard remembers so fondly".[80] History master, Frank Driscoll, had then informed secondary students

> Australia was a white man's land and they wished to remain white. It was not class distinction, but simply a big family of white British people saying in effect, "This is our home and surely we are entitled to say what friends we shall ask under our roof".[81]

Driscoll's language was remarkably similar to that of later Independent parliamentarian, Pauline Hanson, especially when he further warned:[82]

> If the vigilance of the past is relaxed, if Asiatics are allowed to enter our land at will, perhaps in far less than another half century, this will not be our land at all. As Australians we should be proud of our land … we should demand that other nations mind their own business concerning our domestic affairs. We do not tell other people what friends they should choose and we must belatedly tell the world that this is our land and that we are quite capable of choosing our own friends.[83]

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[79] Quoted by Ross Terrill, *The Australians. The way we live now,* Doubleday, Milson's Point, 2000, pp.272-273.
[80] Fitzgerald, *Education,* p.10.
[81] Frank Driscoll, quoted by Fitzgerald, *Education,* p.10.
[82] Cf Pauline Hanson, CPD, Representatives 10 September, 1996, pp.3860-3863: "if I can invite whom I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say in who comes into my country".
[83] Driscoll, quoted by Fitzgerald, *Education,* p.10.

A contemporary Canterbury student of Howard's, Don Anderson, reflects that history was about Australian explorers, and "in retrospect, I would have to say the view of Aborigines was condescending, patronising".[84] A theme taught by school librarian, Jim Kentley, was that the world was "heading into an era of wars, one of which would be blacks against whites … Asians against non-Asians".[85] Interestingly, these comments paralleled later remarks of writer Samuel P Huntington who expressed similar views, and who irritated Howard by suggesting that Australia had decided to defect from the West and to redefine itself as an Asian society.[86] In a theme that became a constant, Howard's response was that it was "just absurd, that we should be seen as anything other than predominantly a western society".[87]

Constitutional expert, Helen Irving, notes the influence of British-based curricula on Howard's university education. He

> began studying law at Sydney University in 1956, during a period for which he has a well-known nostalgic affection. The syllabus of his undergraduate years included constitutional law, a compulsory subject which, as it was taught then, drew on the theory and history of the English constitution far more than on the Australia constitutional case law and doctrine that is predominantly studied by law students today. When he speaks of the constitutional system that underpins Australia's stability, we can presume that he remembers this education.[88]

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[84] Don Anderson, quoted by Huxley, *SMH,* 26 October, 1996.
[85] Anderson, quoted by Huxley, *SMH,* 26 October, 1996.
[86] See Samuel P Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996, p.28, when he predicted, "the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will … [be] between peoples belonging to different cultural entities". See also, pp.151-153.
[87] Howard, quoted by Robert Garran, *True Believer. John Howard, George Bush & the American alliance,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2004, p.52.
[88] Helen Irving, "A True Conservative?" *The Howard Years,* p.99.

Howard studied with mainly male students. One-time Liberal leadership aspirant, Bronwyn Bishop, read law in Sydney in the 1960s, and confirms that women were "an exception, a pretty rare breed – maybe ten out of the class of 300".[89] Howard described himself on campus as a "young activist in politics", who opposed communism and supported the government's involvement in the Vietnam war.[90] Philip Ruddock, fellow Young Liberal and later Howard government minister, recalls the combination of "great tenacity with forceful debating skills, going on to university campuses to argue the [government's] case".[91]

Another student contemporary, Malcolm Mackerras, confessed to underestimating Howard because "He's obviously much more clever, much more cunning, than I ever realised. But he never struck me as being brilliant until this year [1997]".[92] Another student, Marcus Einfeld, acknowledged Howard's "incredible single-mindedness", but also his limited cultural and life experiences:

> I don't believe he would discriminate against a person because of their race. Rather, he is unfamiliar with the issues. He never mixed with other cultures, or travelled to the Australian interior to see the Aboriginal people. He just doesn't have the feel for it. I would say he is racially unfamiliar.[93]

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[89] See David Leser, *Bronwyn Bishop. A Woman in Pursuit of Power,* Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1994, p.25.

[90] Howard, Keynote Speech to International Democratic Union, Washington DC, 10 June, 2002.

[91] Philip Ruddock, quoted by Megan Saunders and Richard McGregor, "Evolution of a PM: Howard's way for 25 years", *The Australian,* 18 May, 1999.

[92] Malcolm Mackerras, quoted by Michael Gordon, "One Year On. The View from Howard's Nest", *Australian Magazine,* 22-23 February, 1997.

[93] Marcus Einfeld, quoted by Robert Wainright and Tony Stephens, "Canterbury Tales", *SMH,* 18 September, 2004.

Bob Howard consolidates this point, recalling his brother as goal-focussed, but lacking in intellectual curiosity:

> [John] considered doing some politics and philosophy but he just as quickly decided that there was really not much point in it. That there was very little he had to learn from spending time doing that sort of thing …. I've often wondered how revealing the remark was. Whether he … did deny himself exposure at least intellectually to a few different positions, to a few different views.[94]

When faced with the Catholic/ Protestant sectarian rupture within his childhood home, Henderson believes that, for Howard, "unity, however artificial, was preferable to plurality if the latter led to emphasis on difference".[95] This was later seen at a rhetorical level in his frequent exhortations about unity rather than division, and is discussed more fully in Chapters Five (Cultural Diversity) and Seven (Construction of National Identity).[96] Howard's lack of exposure to, or curiosity about, cultural and racial diversity, and later initial tolerance of racist remarks from Pauline Hanson, led his colleague, Peter Costello, to conclude that Howard had

> come of age in an era when Anglo-Celtic Australians perhaps had a Chinese greengrocer or a single Chinese restaurant specialising in noodles and cabbage-heavy dishes in their suburb, and that was as far as their Asian experience went. That was still, to some degree, the Australia that lived inside Howard's head … [97]

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[94] Bob Howard, quoted by Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.33.

[95] Howard's mother, "Like many Protestant women of that time, she was a bigot and in later years, she successfully discouraged a romance her youngest son had begun with a Catholic woman he had met through the Young Liberals"; Cockburn, "What Makes Johnny Run", *SMH,* 7 January, 1989. See also Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.26.

[96] One example of many is the Commemoration of Federation Ceremony, 1 January, 2001, Sydney.

[97] See Shaun Carney, *Peter Costello. The New Liberal,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.277.

Einfeld and Howard talked "for hours about the way in which the social order should operate".[98]   Howard favoured the "trickle down" system of wealth distribution, an idea that appeared in his 1974 parliamentary maiden speech:

> It is only through the creation of community wealth by the efforts of individuals in the community that it is possible for government to undertake social welfare and to fund their operations …. Only through the generation of wealth in this country is it really possible to achieve lasting social reforms and equality of opportunity.[99]

University life also appeared to compound Howard's hostility towards unionism and compulsory union fees.[100]   In Opposition in 1989 he said:

> When I attended the University of Sydney law school in the late 1950s …. The meagre amenities provided then were a very poor recompense for the compulsory fees that were extracted from us …. I think it is a very sorry day when this Government proposes … to coerce State governments and universities into maintaining an insidious form of compulsory unionism.[101]

Presciently, he predicted that the "battle will go on".[102]   In 2004 he introduced legislation that ended compulsory union fees at tertiary education institutions. In 1999 he applied this argument to the legal profession, with his comments on

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[98] Einfeld, "Canterbury Tales", *SMH,* 18 September, 2004.
[99] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 September, 1974, p.1913.
[100] Derek Cooke, in "Feedback", *Australian Magazine,* 15-16 November, 2008, said if Howard had "some rowdy young siblings he would have appreciated a place where he could do some swotting in peace and had he used the facilities he would have met students from other faculties and broadened his mind and education".
[101] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 November, 1989, p.3183.
[102] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 November, 1989, p.3183.

compulsory wage awards and "animus" towards universities being both constant and pertinent:[103]

> I was an articled clerk working for a firm of solicitors in Sydney …. some zealous minimum wage people came running along and said, "This is disgraceful. You are employing these people at $10 a week", and that was an overpayment for most of us when we first started to work …. I learnt far more about the law and the practice of the law … while I was being articled to my master solicitor in the early 1960s than I learnt … at the Sydney University Law School.[104]

Beyond study and career aspirations, Howard journeyed overseas to Turkey (including Gallipoli), Poland and India, and lived in London in the 1960s when one was "very proud then to be British".[105] While there, he tried "to help the conservative government get re-elected".[106] He also watched Winston Churchill's funeral procession, proud that Menzies' speech "left the others for dead".[107] In India, he was impressed by British Empire influences, the use of the English language and legal similarities:

> I wandered into the Supreme Court and I sat in on a constitutional case. It was an argument between the central government in New Delhi and the States and I felt very much at home, because that sort of thing occurs constitutionally in other respects in

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[103] Luke Slattery wrote in *The Australian* Higher Education Supplement, 17 December, 2008, that "former John Howard bore a deep animus towards universities"

[104] Howard, CPD, Representatives 16 May, 1990, p.699.

[105] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006. See also Malcolm Farr, "Howard's Agenda", in *Howard's Race. Winning the Unwinnable Election,* ed. David Solomon, HarperCollins, Pymble, 2002, p.10: "Howard's transition from family life to the outside world wasn't swift, although … punctuated by an odd pilgrimage".

[106] Howard, Address to 50th Anniversary of Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Sydney, 30 May, 2003.

[107] Cockburn, "What Makes Johnny Run?" *SMH,* 7 January, 1989.

Australia. And it reminded me of just how many things we had in common. The proceedings were conducted in English.[108]

On his return to Australia, Henderson claims that Howard put into effect his twenty-year plan to become Liberal leader, although one discerns this ambition existed long before.[109]

The Liberal Party

While not a detailed Liberal Party history, it is useful to highlight aspects that impacted on Howard's early political ideas and ambitions. By the end of the 1960s, with Menzies' retirement, and with Aborigines, feminists, gay activists and anti-Vietnam war protestors increasingly active, the Liberal Party faced new social, political and leadership challenges.[110] Britain's entry into the European Common Market loosened traditional trading and cultural bonds, while Menzies' successor, Harold Holt, began to dismantle the White Australia policy. Later Prime Minister John Gorton, brought to politics his own brand of gregarious larrikinism and federalism. William McMahon (with Howard as Young Liberal campaign assistant) led the Coalition to defeat in 1972 after twenty-three years in office.[111] The incoming Whitlam Labor government represented much that Howard opposed: Aboriginal land rights, feminism, capitulation in Vietnam, multiculturalism, free university education, generous welfare, and perceived economic profligacy.

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[108] Howard, Address to Business Luncheon, 6 March, 2006, New Delhi. Repeated at Australia India Business Council, Sydney, 1 September, 2006.
[109] Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.37.
[110] For account of 1960s/ 1970s social movements, see Bill Murray, *Crisis, Conflict and Consensus,* Rigby, Adelaide, 1984, pp. 294-339.
[111] Howard was seconded from the Liberal Party to assist the 1972 McMahon campaign. According to his widow, Sonia McMahon, Howard was considered a Liberal Party "spy". See Julian Leeser, "Gracious, stylish and steadfast", *The Australian,* 5 April, 2010.

Howard came to Federal parliament in 1974 steeped in Liberal Party history and traditions, having joined at eighteen years, and claimed in his first parliamentary speech that he had never doubted the Party's basic philosophy.[112] He declared himself to be "a child of the party organisation", who loved everything it represented and to which he owed his political achievements.[113] According to historian Ian Hancock, to understand Howard's resilience is to understand that, as a protégé of the Party's New South Wales Division, he "came through a tough school".[114] His ambition was evident when in 1964 he became President of the Young Liberals.[115] John Carrick – contrary to later comments in Kelly's book *March of Patriots* – first saw Howard's potential as leader in 1974: "This man, this candidate of ours", he said, "will go right to the top".[116]

Carrick also suggests that to understand Howard, one must understand Menzies and his era of wars, Depression and post-war prosperity. He claims that when Howard entered parliament he was the beneficiary of the "sort of post-war society we were trying to build … when the older heads were absolutely tired of war and its horrors …. sickened by depression and the conflicts it caused in homes. We wanted change".[117] Carrick represented a generation that had entered parliament with a realistic view of the world, and with first-hand knowledge of war and Depression.[118] Howard belonged to a

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[112] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 September, 1974, p.1912.
[113] Howard, Liberal Party National Convention, Melbourne, 16 April, 2000; CPD, Representatives 9 December, 2004, p.116.
[114] Ian Hancock, *The Liberals. The NSW Division 1945-2000,* Federation Press, Annandale, 2007, p.7.
[115] Carrick wrote to Howard on 2 July, 1964: "I know of no time in the Party's history in which the Young Liberal Movement has been happier or more progressive. This is a nice tribute to you'". Quoted by Ian Hancock, *The Liberals,* p.125.
[116] Kelly says Howard was heavily involved in the party, but "not even Carrick saw Howard as a future leader"; *March of Patriots,* p.12. Cf Carrick's comments in Wallace Brown, *Ten Prime Ministers. Life among the politicians,* Longeville, Double Bay, 2002, p.204.
[117] Carrick, quoted by Wainright and Stephens, "Canterbury Tales", *SMH,* 18 September, 2004.
[118] On Carrick's retirement, Howard paid tribute to "a very special brand of Australian brothers – those who went into captivity with the 8th Division in Changi in World War II"; CPD, Representatives 4 June, 1987, p.4041. See Martin Lumb and Scott Bennett, "Members of the Commonwealth parliament with war service", Parliament of Australia Library Research Note, 19 April, 2006, 30, 2005-6. "MPs in Parliament with war service reached a peak between 1955 and 1969 with over half the Parliament

new generation, but eulogised war veterans who shared an "extraordinary camaraderie" across political divides, and whose politics were "moulded by the searing experiences of the Great Depression". [119] On the death of former Liberal minister, David Fairbairn, he praised a traditionalist who possessed

> instincts of honour, decency, service, commitment, loyalty and all of those values that people sometimes sneer at and deride but which at the end of the day mean more in the collective life of a nation than some of the more passing, fashionable and seemingly more attractive qualities of men and women. [120]

Howard here was already alert to what he saw as Labor's erosion of the values he treasured. He was also disdainful of what was later called "political correctness", but was especially infuriated by what he considered political manipulation of history that denigrated military service. [121]

Howard became the Member for Bennelong after a 1974 double-dissolution election, and although his first experience of Federal parliament was in Opposition, his ambitions were undisguised. [122] Former Liberal leader, Billy Snedden noted he was

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during that time having some form of war service". See also Carrick in ABC Radio National series, "An attitude of mind and faith; liberalism in Australian political history", "The legacy of Alfred Deakin", 1 April, 2007; also Hancock in later episode "Malcolm Fraser – the liberal paradox", 15 April, 2007: "It's important to remember that people who governed the Liberal Party in the 1940s through to the 1960s and 70s had been those who'd known the Great Depression and … the Second World War, and those two events influenced them considerably in their political attitudes".

[119] Howard, CPD, Representatives 7 February, 2006, p.1; CPD, Representatives 8 February, 1999, p.2026.

[120] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 June, 1994, p.1418.

[121] See Andrew Campbell, "John Howard – leadership and character; Peter Costello, 'The Hollow Man'", *National Observer – Australia and World Affairs,* 58, Spring 2003, pp.12-33.

[122] Howard said: "I'd be the last person to decry ambition … because I was ambitious myself"; interview with John Laws, 2UE, 13 July, 2006.

an ambitious, competent, articulate person who is determined to go places. Although

he was his own man, he was nevertheless prepared to be another's helper when it

advantaged him while he was building his way up. After the House rose, Howard

would go into the Whip's room and have a beer late at night, talk with the boys. It

was not his natural habitat, but it was something he did because it was part of the

drill.[123]

Throughout 1974-1975 Howard joined Coalition efforts to discredit the unorthodox

revenue-raising methods (the "Loans Affair") of the Whitlam Labor government, and

when it was brought down by the refusal to pass Supply bills in the Senate, Howard

remained unrepentant about his contribution.[124] He also took part in the leadership

coup that overturned Snedden in favour of Malcolm Fraser, and when Fraser won

government in 1975, Howard was quickly given a portfolio.[125] He later mused that the

Fraser government was flawed because of the way it won office, and "concluded that

being 'straight' in politics was best, and harmonised with his upbringing".[126] This

rationalisation overlooked his involvement in the Snedden/ Fraser leadership coup, the

Loans Affair, blocking Supply, and ignored Liberal Party traditional ruthlessness

towards leaders who could not win elections.[127] It also elided his later undermining

actions towards his leadership rival, Andrew Peacock, after the Coalition lost

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[123] Billy Mackie Snedden and M Bernie Schedvin, *Billy Snedden. An unlikely Liberal.* MacMillan, South Melbourne, 1990, p.189.

[124] See Gough Whitlam's version of Howard's involvement in *The Truth of the Matter,* Penguin, NY, 1979, p.140. Howard vowed to "defend to my last breath the action taken by the Liberal and National parties in 1975", CPD, Representatives 8 October, 1987, p.1022.

[125] Grattan, *Australian Prime Ministers,* 2003, p.444.

[126] See Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.102.

[127] "Leadership is a simple issue for the Liberal Party which has always judged its leaders by one criterion – electoral success"; Dean Jaensch, *The Paradox of Parties. Australian Political Parties in the 1990s,* ed. Marian Simms, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p.10

government in 1983.[128]   With good reason, Howard earned the reputation of "supreme political practitioner".[129]

Howard was appointed Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs in 1975, then to his delight, in 1977 became the "boy Treasurer" at the age of 38.[130]   Labor Opposition saw him as an "exceptionally competent young man … one of the best performers on the Government side", but who lacked personality, "looked sly and has a sneering manner of speech which tends to turn people against him".[131]   Although he worked hard and mastered his portfolios with legal dexterity, many colleagues felt they could not support him.[132]   As Treasurer, he was

> tough, a formidable fighter with guts …. He's stubborn, too …. Not too stubborn
> though to change his mind about taxing subsidised housing, flexible enough to finally
> shoot down the kite about reintroducing TV licences. But he has been easily capable of
> sticking to his guns to become one of the most unpopular Australian treasurers.[133]

It set the pattern for Howard's later willingness to compromise, but rarely at the expense of any fundamental goal, value, or Liberal Party policy that reflected them.

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[128] For account of Howard's disloyalty, see Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser. The Political Memoirs,* Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2010, pp.618-619.

[129] Interview with Jim Carlton, 21 June, 2006, Melbourne.

[130] Vincent Matthews writes: "When I first met [Howard] 30 years ago on his European trade mission, a distinctive boyish grin told of his enthusiasm for the job. He was in the first team now … almost jumping with excitement after receiving a phone call in a Brussels hotel from Fraser … telling him the election was on and he was going to be Treasurer". "PM still walking the walk", *The Australian,* 2 October, 2006.

[131] Clyde Cameron, *The Cameron Diaries,* Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1990, p.486.

[132] Jim Carey and Toni McCrae, *Peacock, M.P.*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1982, p.151.

[133] Quoted by Venturini, *Malpractice,* p.276.

Howard and Menzies

Howard drew on Robert Menzies' reputation as the longest-serving Australian Prime Minister, and repatriated his memory as a "figure from a distant, eccentric past".[134] While Menzies did not "originate the move which resulted in the unity of non-Labor political organizations", he is generally credited with having formed the Liberal Party in 1944.[135] By consolidating non-Labor organisations, he wanted to offer a post-war choice between government control on the socialist model, or the society he envisioned which was based on free and encouraged private enterprise.[136] Howard and Menzies came from modest households and shared similar political experiences, but there were significant policy differences, mainly in education and economics. Menzies valued education and left his mark on Australian universities.[137] As he said, he would "like to be remembered as the Prime Minister who opened new doors for the universities of Australia".[138] Howard worked in his family's garages, had a narrow tertiary education in law, was disdainful of academics, and promoted skilled trades over arts degrees.[139] Menzies borrowed books from the local library or Mechanics' Institute Library, and described his parents as "great readers" who taught their family to love literature and knowledge.[140] Books were "links, the lifelines, from the remote, alien place of Menzies' birth to another world, and Menzies quickly learned that mastering

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[134] Graeme Starr, "The Old Man on the Stairs, *The Menzies Era,* p.45. Starr argues (before Howard was PM) that, apart from Malcolm Fraser and Alexander Downer, the Liberal Party did "little to promote the memory or an image of Menzies, even with its own ranks" (p.47).

[135] For discussion on colleagues involved in the formation of the Liberal Party, see Kevin Perkins, *Menzies. Last of the Queen's men,* Rigby, Adelaide, 1968, pp.153-155.

[136] Menzies, *Afternoon Light,* pp.282.

[137] Howard quoted Menzies' belief that the "massive expansion of university resources and the availability of a university education for Australians as one of the greatest achievements of [Menzies'] long period as Prime Minister of Australia". "The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach", 6 June, 1995.

[138] Quoted by H C Coombs, *Trial Balance,* MacMillan, Crows Nest, 1981, p.211.

[139] Howard, Address at *Quadrant's* 50th Anniversary Dinner, 2006: "[W]e should not underestimate the degree to which the soft-left still holds sway, even dominance, especially in Australia's universities". He earlier dismissed the "highest path of success for a young person [being] to go to university", "Reflections on Australian Federalism", Address at Menzies Research Centre, Melbourne, 11 April, 2005.

[140] Menzies, *Afternoon Light.* pp.9-10,

the knowledge they contained could provide a way out".[141] By contrast, Howard's family read political magazines, or the *Saturday Evening Post,* and he repeatedly returned (rhetorically) to his suburban, "mainstream", "ordinary" environment. Unlike Howard's protestations about British-based texts, Menzies reveled in English history and English-derived law:

> England's role as the source of so much of the curriculum of the Australian education system inextricably linked it with the ambitions of young scholars. When Menzies entered politics, his success to a very great extent depended on his mastery of the English-derived Australian political institutions and their legitimations, including his ability to speak well in the King's English.[142]

Both respected Westminster traditions, symbols and rituals, with Menzies inspired by Britain as "both an exemplar of the high and selfless standards of which humanity is capable".[143]   He loved Britain and its monarch, but as an old man in 1974 he protested his Australian nationalism: "If there ever was a dinkum Australian, it's myself … devoted to this country".[144] Howard more plainly described himself as an "an average Australian bloke".[145]

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[141] Brett, "Menzies and England", *Political Lives,* ed. Judith Brett, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1997, p.73.
[142] Brett, *Political Lives,* p.75.
[143] Brett, *Political Lives,* p.77.
[144] Quoted by David McNicoll, *Luck's a Fortune. An Autobiography,* Wildcat Press, Sydney, 1979, p.216.
[145] Howard interview with Liz Jackson, *Four Corners,* 19 February, 1996.

Liberalism for Menzies lay in the Enlightenment interpretation of respect for the rights of human beings, and seeing state and private enterprise as partners in Australia's economic development. [146] He was chary of an

> uncontrolled and unregulated free enterprise system [that] would tend to destroy the weak, impoverish the poor, and reduce the dignity of the individual man and woman which it must be the purpose of democracy to create and enhance …[147]

In Opposition and then in government, Howard increasingly reworked the Liberal Party's relationship between citizen, state and market.[148] In 1975 he particularly lamented the

> extent to which a government – be it a government of the persuasion of the present Government or a government of our persuasion – should intrude by regulation or in any other manner into the way in which people conduct their own lives either on a personal or a business basis ….[149]

Menzies' interest in libraries, universities, and state aid for Catholic schools was a natural merger of government assistance and private initiative to encourage individuals to reach their full potential.[150] Howard saw a reduced role for government, greater involvement of markets and private enterprise, and "mainstream" interests over sectoral groups, or, one could argue, individualism. They diverged

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[146] See Peter Tiver, *The Liberal Party,* Jacaranda Press, Milton, 1987, pp.226-227.
[147] Tiver, *The Liberal Party,* p.228.
[148] Carol Johnson, *Governing Change. Keating to Howard,* Network Books, 2nd ed. Perth, 2007, p.150.
[149] Howard, CPD, Representatives 14 May, 1975, p.2279.
[150] See Marian Sawer's discussion on social liberalism in *The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2003, pp.9-30, 108.

markedly on centralised wage fixing, a policy which Howard excised from the Liberal platform, explaining as Prime Minister in 1999 that

> Sir Robert, as befitted people of that generation, had a very different view about centralised wage fixation …. He had a very strong view about the role of the then Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. Over the years any dynamic evolving political party, no matter how much it holds in respect its founders or its earlier leaders, will evolve policies that are appropriate for the times.[151]

Howard constantly sought to decentralise wage fixation, and as early as 1983 had praised efforts to dismantle "industrial relations clubs" (discussed in Chapter Four).[152] Later, in his 1988 *Future Directions,* he outlined a process of negotiation between employers and employees.[153] Menzies, on the other hand, defended the arbitration system as a "powerful contribution to the living standards of unionists" and considered its preservation a "great task".[154]

Howard's identification with Australian "battlers" prior to the 1996 election paralleled Menzies' appeal to Australia's "forgotten people" in the 1940s.[155] Menzies was claimed to possess "an extraordinary prescience, an almost clairvoyant

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[151] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 June, 1999, p.7695.

[152] See Howard, "Workplace Relations Reform: The Next Logical Step", *Sydney Papers,* 17, 3-4, Sydney Institute, Sydney, Winter/Spring, 2005, pp.78-90.

[153] Howard and Ian Sinclair, *Future Directions. It's time for plain speaking,* Canberra, 1988, p.38.

[154] Chris James, Chris Jones and Andrew Norton, "The Liberal Party and economic rationalism", *A Defence of Economic Rationalism,* eds. Chris James, Chris Jones and Andrew Norton, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1993, p.114, quoting I McAllister and R Moore, *Party Strategy and Change: Australian Political Leaders Policy Speeches Since 1946,* pp.170, 182. See also Brett, "Future Directions. New Conservatism's manifesto", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* 65, 1, June, 1989, pp.11-17.

[155] See Brett, "Relaxed and Comfortable", *Quarterly Essay,* 19, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2005, p.30, and response from Matthew Sharpe, Geoff Boucher and Andrew Vandenberg in "Correspondence", *Quarterly Essay,* 20, pp.84-85: "If we look more closely and more patiently, we will see that there is in fact a direct line from Menzies' forgotten people to Howard's battlers".

knowledge of the thoughts and wishes of Australians *and New Australians*".[156]

[Emphasis added.] Howard felt that Menzies'

> political genius lay in that basic affinity with the aspirations of the Australian people.
> He understood the priority they placed on jobs, on rising living standards, on home
> ownership, on high economic growth, on a sense of national unity, and on opportunities
> for their children that were greater than they themselves had experienced …. [He] had
> his finger on the pulse of the Australian nation in a way that few other leaders have
> matched and none have surpassed.[157]

Similarly, it was written of Howard that "he doesn't have to imagine what ordinary
Australians think – he has just to decide what he thinks because they are virtually the
same".[158] Yet Menzies "failed to extend any imaginative human sympathy" to
Aborigines despite "vivid memories of them up in the country".[159] Howard's
difficulty with Indigenous politics was, as he later stated, "in part an artefact of who I
am and the time in which I grew up".[160]

Menzies and Howard cherished their families, and pursued pre-parliament
legal careers. Howard was described as a "suburban lawyer", while Menzies was
acclaimed as a barrister of "outstanding class with his excellent diction, fluency, keen

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[156] Cameron Hazlehurst, *Menzies Observed,* George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1979, p.325, quoting Don
Whitington, *The House Will Divide,* 1969.
[157] Howard, Sir Robert Menzies Lecture, "The Liberal Tradition. The Beliefs and Values Which Guide
the Federal Government", 18 November, 1996.
[158] Kelly, *Weekend Australian,* 11-12 December, 2004; quoted by Judith Brett and Anthony Moran,
Ordinary People's Politics, Pluto, North Melbourne, Vic, 2006, p.1.
[159] Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2007, pp.167, 170.
[160] Howard, Address to Sydney Institute, "The Right Time: Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous
Australians", Sydney, 11 October, 2007.

intelligence, and distinguished appearance".[161]   Each upheld values or principles

important to him, but understood political pragmatism. As Menzies said,

> It's damnably untrue to say that if you bow a little to expediency then you must
> abandon principle …. When we accommodate ourselves to the expediency of current
> events let us regard it as a mere side-current which doesn't blow us off our course but
> from which we can always return to what we think to be right".[162]

Howard, as quoted earlier, boasted of being "expert at getting 90 per cent of what he
wanted, provided his core objectives were met".[163]

Menzies loved cricket, but saw education as the individual's greatest asset and
had "contempt for people who had money and nothing else".[164] He derided society's
priorities where "a comedian or a beautiful half-wit on the screen can be paid fabulous
sums, whilst scientific researchers and discoverers can suffer neglect and
starvation".[165] Howard belittled university education, lauded competition and wealth
creation, and offered State funerals to businessmen whose commercial enterprises
earned them fame and personal wealth.[166] Howard also loved cricket, to the extent
that he declared the sportsman, Don Bradman, as the greatest (then) living Australian,

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[161] Bob Hawke called Howard a "Sydney suburban solicitor", CPD, Representatives 29 November, 1988, p.3421; for Menzies' legal skills, see Perkins, *Menzies,* p.36. .

[162] Menzies, quoted by Hazlehurst, *Menzies Observed,* p.338.

[163] Glenn Milne, "The Howard Factor", *Sydney Papers,* 18, 2, Sydney Institute, Sydney, Autumn, 2006, pp.91-95

[164] Menzies admired Bradman as "the master batsman, the superb captain, the very able man of many talents", see Menzies, *Afternoon Light,* p.346; and Perkins, *Menzies,* p.182, describing Menzies' "hero worship of cricketers". On attitude to money, see Carrick, ABC Radio National, "Menzies' liberals", 8 April, 2007: "The first thing to understand about Bob Menzies was that he wasn't interested in making money …. both he and Howard came from similar families; rather poor families …. He had simple family values".

[165] Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People,* p.11.

[166] For example, State funerals were offered for media billionaire Kerry Packer and environmentalist/ entrepreneur, Steve Irwin (the latter was declined).

and generously sponsored government-funded Bradman-related projects. [167] Howard and Menzies shared similar political humiliations and triumphs. Howard's party rejected him as leader in 1989, and Menzies was once accused of being unable to "lead a flock of homing pigeons". [168] This observation of Menzies could apply to Howard:

> Out of this humiliation there emerged a toughness and ruthlessness that were to achieve for him a measure of greatness. And the way through the ashes for this man of firm conviction, of intolerance, was a genius for persuasion. The mask he wore, deliberately created, was to become impenetrable to all but the closest friends, who were few and far between. [169]

Owen Harries, former adviser to Malcolm Fraser, noted that behind Howard's failures there was a capacity to "hang on", and "an element of ruthlessness in his makeup". [170]

Menzies' political and social base was Melbourne, while Howard was steeped in NSW Liberal Party culture. [171] Both understood and worked within the flexibility of Liberal Party principles, and the competing values within liberalism. [172] This was

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[167] Howard, Address at Opening of Bradman Museum, Bowral, 27 August, 1996. He was questioned whether funding for Bradman projects "inappropriately sought to exploit Sir Donald Bradman's name and reputation for political purposes". See also Deb Wilkinson and Andrew Macintosh, "Playing Politics with the Federal Heritage Regime", quoted by Ann Curthoys in "History in the Howard Era", Address to Professional Historians Association, Sydney, 19 July, 2006.

[168] Perkins, *Menzies,* p.148.

[169] Perkins, *Menzies,* p.153.

[170] Quoted by Duncan Currie, "Howard's end?" *The American (Washington, DC)* 1.6 September-October 2007, pp.30-39.

[171] "We have no friends in Melbourne", Howard said of Victorian Liberals (private communication). See also Sonia McMahon's comment in Leeser, *The Australian,* 5 April, 2010.

[172] John William Tate, "Free speech or equal respect? Liberalism's competing values", *Philosophy & Social Criticism,* 34, 2008, pp.987-1020. Tate argues that liberalism as a political tradition encompasses competing values. For example, Howard claimed racial and religious anti-vilification laws "that limit speech for the sake of other values like equal respect fail to achieve their desired ends and so are themselves not desirable", yet banned Holocaust denier David Irving from entering Australia because he "didn't think that was in the interests of a harmonious tolerant society we want". Mark

evident in Menzies' Communist Party Dissolution Bill and Howard's Border

Protection (Validation and Enforcement) Bill, each of which denied aspects of

democracy.[173] Menzies talked about homes "material, human and spiritual".[174] For

Howard, as discussed below, families were the central moral and educative force

within the community. Howard and Menzies became competent media performers to

convey their political messages direct to the public, Menzies through radio broadcasts

and his "Forgotten People" speeches, and Howard through publications like *Future

Directions,* television and talkback radio.[175] Both could pander to electoral grievance,

and privileged individualism against Labor's collectivism and appeal to class.[176]

Menzies fitted within a dying British Empire and Cold War era, a White Australia

policy, a post-war re-construction boom, massive immigration, anti-communism,

social liberalism, Keynesian economics and tariff protection.[177] Howard paid tribute

to Menzies as guardian of traditional social values, but claimed it was not his aim to

"re-create the circumstances and public policy priorities of [Menzies'] time".[178]

Through *Future Directions,* Howard attempted to link traditional social values of the

Menzies' era, but, at the same time, he executed a "clean break" from his

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Lopez also questions democracy, free speech and multiculturalism: should Islamic books that preach "hatred" be removed from sale? See "Reflections on the State of Australian Multiculturalism and the Emerging Multicultural Debate in Australia 2005", *People and Place,* 13, 3, 2005, pp.33-40.

[173] The 1950s Bill sought to dissolve the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) but was challenged in the High Court and defeated at referendum. See Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People,* p.78. Howard amended the *Border Protection Act* of 1999 to retrospectively place Christmas Island, Ashmore Reef and Cocos Island outside the "migration zone" for asylum-seekers. See James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera. The Story of Australian Immigration,* Cambridge UP, Port Melbourne, 2007, p.190.

[174] See Menzies, *The Forgotten People,* reproduced in Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People,* p.7, and for Howard, see Allon, "Home as Cultural Translation, pp.1-25.

[175] See Sally Young, "The broadcast political interview and strategies used by politicians: how the Australian prime minister promoted the Iraq War", *Media, Culture & Society,* 30, 5, 2008, pp.623-640.

[176] See Brett, "The Resurgence of Racism. Howard, Hanson and the Race Debate", p.11: Howard took "the strand of petit bourgeois grievance, so well articulated for Australian experience by Menzies during the War, and reshaped it to resonate with the changed political and economic circumstances of the 1990s".

[177] Import licences covering 98 per cent of Australian imports remained until 1960. When industry protested the abolition of import quotas, Menzies established the Special Advisory Authority, whose chairman's slogan was "You make it and I'll protect it". See James *et al., A Defence of Economic Rationalism,* p.114, quoting A Caplin and B Galligan, *Beyond the Protective State,* p.105.

[178] Howard, 1996 Sir Robert Menzies Lecture, 18 November, 1996.

economics.[179] Howard's melding of economic reform with Menzies' social values, was, as Johnson remarks, a question of social nostalgia being encouraged, while "economic nostalgia is not".[180]

Howard and "family"

The family unit was a cornerstone of Liberal policy, but the traditional family life Howard eulogised in the twenty-first century had splintered into different configurations from those commonly formed in the 1940s and 1950s.[181] Howard's reference points were his childhood family structure and the one replicated with his wife.[182] Both his mother and wife forewent career to become homemaker and caregiver, and each provided support for Howard's political ambitions.[183] With this background, it was unsurprising that *Future Directions* depicted family as a fundamental unit of society, where an "individual's character and personality can flourish and develop to the full [as] the most effective means for the care and development of children, and a source of personal happiness and social support".[184] In

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[179] Brett, "Future Directions. New Conservatism's manifesto", pp.11-17. Tim Battin says, while the "economic umbrella under which Menzies cultivated social policies was Keynesian in some respects …. the consensus built around Australian Keynesianism of the post-war period … was overturned in the 1970s and 1980s". *Abandoning Keynes. Australia's Capital Mistake,* MacMillan, Houndsmills, 1997, p.8.

[180] Johnson, *Governing Change,* p.153.

[181] See Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class,* p.185: the 1980s saw about 20 per cent of single-income, married couples with children households.

[182] When in London unveiling a war memorial, Howard was reportedly torn between two influences: "the sepia memories of men [like his father and grandfather] he could never follow into soldiering and whom he wishes to honour one last time, and the wife who replaced the mother who reared him, and who reads the political winds like an eagle"; Tony Wright, "Howard's end", *Bulletin,* 22 January, 2003.

[183]"[Janette] has devoted her life over the last 15 years to the family. We made a decision that she would stop paid work while the kids are young and we are pleased about that" Howard, quoted by Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.36, quoting Howard interview with Roy Masters, "Pain of a Plain Man", *Good Weekend,* 7 April, 1990.

[184] *Future Directions,* p.15.

1997 Howard reprised these sentiments, adding that family was a place where love and morality was instilled, and faith, loyalty, conscience and dignity taught.[185]

Howard's evocation of traditional family as a vital element in personal happiness, education and social cohesion was also used as a metaphor for the Liberal Party (a "great" family) and the nation.[186] By compressing the notion of domestic, political and national "homes", Howard conjured with the idea of vulnerability, manifest in his language of fear of loss or break-up of traditional families and the security they offered, extended to the loss of an (imagined) cultural homogeneity or national sovereignty.[187] For example, Fiona Allon notes that under Howard the "private domestic home and the national home – the nation … began to look remarkably alike: they became fortresses inside which we worried about safety and security and protecting our wealth".[188] Matthew Ryan in 1998 cited Howard's use of domestic home themes in political advertisements to convey security and threats: "The physically and conceptually bounded place of the suburban home – its maintenance and shelter – stands in for the nation.[189] And, as Norman Abjorensen observes:

> John was all for the Family, the suburban values that modern society trampled on, the
> small man, and the glories of the Menzies years …. [he] was forever captured behind a
> white picket fence: safe on the inside, he seemed to be telling us, but exposed to untold

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[185] Howard, Inaugural Prime Ministers on Prime Ministers Lecture, 3 September, 1997.

[186] See Howard, Address to Liberal Party 49th Federal Council, Sydney, 14 April, 2002.

[187] See Anthony Burke, *Fear of Security. Australia's Invasion Anxiety,* Cambridge UP, Port Melbourne, 2008, p.174.

[188] Allon, *Renovation Nation,* p.2.

[189] Matthew Ryan, "Trauma on the Home Front", *Arena Magazine,* 37, October-November, 1998, pp.14-15.

dangers beyond it. Inside were the traditional values of order, discipline, hard work, thrift and the family; outside lurked anarchy, anomie, chaos and turpitude.[190]

Judith Brett notes that *Future Directions* worked on fears, with the home as an embattled retreat: "In sharp contrast to Menzies' confident evocation of solid family homes, the family … is presented as fragile and threatened in an essentially hostile social world; families are in crisis and family values are being undermined.[191] Howard clearly saw a major threat for traditional homes and nuclear families through increasing choices of alternative life-styles.[192] In response, *Future Directions* promised to restore the balance, with families "the core unit of society".[193] In government, marriage was codified through legislation as being legally recognised solely between a man and a woman, "to the exclusion of all others".[194] Same-sex marriages were prohibited on the basis of their incompatibility with Australian values, particularly the "Judeo-Christian heritage" to which Howard claimed the nation owed much.[195]

Howard wrote in *Future Directions* that family and nation shared a symbiotic relationship:

Through the family, the moral, spiritual, ethical and social values of a civilised society are passed from one generation to another so that there is a shared system of values and attitudes that unites a community and enables its members to pursue shared goals from a secure base.[196]

[190] Norman Abjorensen, *John Hewson. A Biography,* Lothian, Port Melbourne, 1993, pp.22-23.
[191] Brett, "Future Directions", pp.11-17.
[192] Allon, "Home as Cultural Translation", pp.1-25. See also *Renovation Nation,* pp.97-98.
[193] Howard, *Future Directions,* p.11.
[194] Howard, Address to National Marriage Forum, Canberra, 4 August, 2006.
[195] Johnson, "John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June 2007, pp.195-209.
[196] *Future Directions,* p.15.

Therefore, the family had to be protected. Howard's secure childhood within a traditional family with specific gender roles provided a template for society and nation, with a consequent reluctance to accept erosion from alternative lifestyles, competing cultures or values. In government, he demonstrated practical support for traditional families by offering positive tax benefits, while his sweep of "family", in terms of its use as metaphor for nation, was later seen in his policies to deter asylum-seekers, border protection, and his insistence of Christian ethics as underpinning national cohesion.

Howard's "awesome ordinariness"

Howard promoted himself as an "ordinary Australian" as part of the "perpetual conversation" he claimed to conduct with the Australian people.[197] His suburban, lower middle-class background marked him as an ordinary Australian, a persona he converted into a political strength rather than a weakness.[198] His "home-spun" personality, while real, aimed to reach mainstream, middle Australians whose values, aspirations and understanding of suburban life he claimed to understand.[199] Judith Brett and Anthony Moran write in *Ordinary People's Politics* that the views of ordinary people "comprise the bulk of both 'the public' and the electorate, and in both guises their opinions and judgements can affect the course of governments".[200] Howard was aware of this group's political importance, but, at the same time, the label of "ordinary" sat comfortably with him because it reflected his personal understanding of their lives. Unsurprisingly, in Opposition and leading to the 1996 election, a central campaign

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[197] Howard interview with Kerry O'Brien, ABC TV, *7.30 Report,* "John Howard reflects on the highs and lows as PM", 2 March, 2006.

[198] Christine Wallace, *Hewson. A Portrait,* Pan Macmillan, Chippendale, 1993, p.126.

[199] Howard had a "mix of home-spun humility and ordinariness and the almost unwavering self belief that is, and has always been [his] mark"; Michael Gordon, "Staying the distance", *The Age,* 25 February, 2006.

[200] Brett and Moran, *Ordinary People's Politics,* p.3.

element stressed the distinction between his concerns for mainstream Australians against Labor's preference for so-called "élites".[201]

Howard's portrayal of "being ordinary" and rallying around "ordinary" symbols and values of an egalitarian society was clearly a natural position for him, as well as an effective electoral strategy (including devising what constituted "ordinary"). In short, Howard *was* ordinary, but he made extraordinary use of the concept: Richard Flanagan, writing of the 2004 election, considered there "was a genius of mundanity" about him.[202] Howard's legal training possibly made his language cautious, but one sees the extension of "ordinary" into his speeches, unlike Menzies who excelled at oratory and swift ripostes. Sally Young notes that Howard's interviews contained "dry, staid and often legal/ bureaucratic language", with deliberate lack of sensationalism.[203] Brett remarks on the plain, repetitive nature of Howard's speeches, while at the same time being able to strike chords of Australian experience.[204] Nick Dyrenfurth identifies Howard's use of the "the ordinary man mask" and the vernacular of ordinary Australians, like "mateship" and a "fair go" as a crucial element in his so-called "culture wars".[205] In her study of the political use of "being ordinary", Melissa Gregg sees in Howard's "arch-anti-elitism" a successful means of speaking with authority on behalf of "ordinary Australians", but with an accompanying defensiveness against an "implied Other".[206] Liberal colleague, George Brandis, said after the 2007 election that

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[201] See Johnson, "Howard, Labor and the Revenge of the Mainstream", *Governing Change,* pp.39-55.
[202] Richard Flanagan, "Sleepwalking with Howard", *The Age,* 2 October, 2004.
[203] Young, *Media, Culture & Society,* 30, 5, 2008, pp.623-640. Howard's extemporaneous speeches were often impressive for his ability to speak with conviction and erudition without notes (personal observation).
[204] Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class,* p.206
[205] Nick Dyrenfurth, "John Howard's Hegemony of Values: the Politics of 'Mateship' in the Howard Decade", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.211-230.
[206] Melissa Gregg said Howard recognised "that ordinariness gains traction as a political tool by virtue of the *number* of ways it can summon an implicit, and sometimes explicit, opposite". [Original

Howard "liked to appear as an everyday sports-loving suburban Australian. Yet that pose masked a mind … powerful enough … to take the Party with him in directions that were … unfamiliar to it".[207]   Michelle Grattan identifies it simply as "awesome ordinariness".[208]

Conclusion

Howard said in his 1997 Prime Minister's lecture that every Australian Prime Minister brought his own value system to the job.[209]   As he admitted, he brought to "his job" the values of his parents, as well as those beliefs, limitations, biases, prejudices and strengths absorbed from church, school and association with the Liberal Party. The conservative, traditional, patriotic background of his parents was reflected in his government's family and small business policies, alongside his reverence for war veterans, the ANZAC story and its place in Australian nationalism and history. His early limited life experiences, despite later overseas trips and exposure to diverse customs and ideologies, exacerbated an apparent lack of intellectual curiosity about wider cultural or social justice issues. The Christian church remained a bastion of respectability for Howard throughout his career, at one level drawing on its practical spirit for welfare delivery, while, at another, stressing its value to a nation that he declared to be predominantly European and Christian. His appointments of religious leader Archbishop Hollingworth as Governor-General, and "Christian economist" Fair Pay Commissioner, Ian Harper, to influential public leadership positions, marked Howard's own commitment to social conservatism. At the same time, he projected an

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emphasis.] "The importance of being ordinary", *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* 10, 2007, pp.95-104,
[207] George Brandis, "John Howard and the Australian Liberal Tradition", *Liberals & Power. The Road Ahead,* ed. Peter van Onselen, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, p.49.
[208] Michelle Grattan, quoted by Malcolm Schmidtke and Gay Alcorn, "Being John Howard", *The Age,* 21 August, 2004.
[209] Howard, Inaugural Prime Ministers on Prime Ministers Lecture, 1997.

aura of "ordinariness" which matched his personality but belied his resilience, tenacity, determination, and ambition. Astutely, the mantle of "ordinary" man was used as a credible and potent electoral tool to engage with mainstream Australians whose values he claimed to understand.

Howard's admiration of Menzies' leadership and the (then) Liberal Party stability and post-war prosperity were for him important yardsticks, and from which he creatively drew ideas.[210] Like his revival of the ANZAC Day rituals and its place in Australian history, Howard selectively resuscitated elements of the Menzies' heritage that suited his ideas and political agenda. While Menzies followed a social liberal tradition of state responsibility to ensure each individual reached his or her full potential, and saw a legitimate place for trade unions and state regulation, Howard changed the compact between state and citizen. His experiences in his father's garages taught him suspicion of government interference and union power, and the 1980s economic changes that prefigured a reduced role for government, limited welfare, greater self-reliance and a spirit of mutual obligation, fitted well with those ideas. Above all, he supported the traditional family life, having experienced its benefits of practical and shared ambitions from first mother, then wife. He took from his school education versions of successful British colonialism, later seen in his repudiation of any ignoble versions of Australian history.[211] Aborigines, migrants, poor people, and those of different faith or culture were on the margins of his experience, and laid the groundwork for later perceptions of exclusionary policies, racism and lack of empathy.

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[210] Brett considered Howard "the most creative Australian Liberal since Menzies", *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class,* p.184.

[211] Howard claimed that history "has succumbed to a postmodern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned and repudiated"; National Press Club, Canberra, 25 January, 2006.

The following chapter, "Liberal leadership in the 1980s" builds on many of the ideas that Howard had formed in earlier years, and which later appeared as Liberal Party policies. This chapter highlights his leadership ambitions when the Coalition lost government in 1983, set against his communication failures with the electorate, the media, and his own moderate colleagues who remained committed to tolerant aspects of social liberalism, as he tried to take the Liberals in a new economic direction. The New Right ideas matched Howard's economic predilections, but, as will be shown, were always attached to the social conservatism of his youth.

CHAPTER TWO
LIBERAL LEADERSHIP AND THE 1980s

"Politically, he is finished. The Liberal Party will have to work out how to get rid of him".[1] Kim Beazley, 1988.

"The key to grasping Howard's economics is to realise he was a man of the 80s …. Howard's government was shaped not by new ideas but old ideas yet to be implemented".[2] Paul Kelly, 2009.

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[1] Kim Beazley on John Howard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives) 25 August, 1988, p.429.
[2] Paul Kelly, "Rudd's legacy from old rivals", *Weekend Australian,* 12-13 September, 2009.

Introduction

This chapter will argue that the social conservatism that marked John Howard's earlier family years influenced his later social policies when he became a member of parliament. As well, many of the ideas he formed as the son of a small-business entrepreneur, encompassing choice, competition, and freedom from union interference, may be discerned in his adoption of aspects of neo-liberal economics from 1983. His terms as Minister and Treasurer from 1975 to 1983 are discussed to provide some comparison of the Liberal Party pre- and post-Malcolm Fraser government policies, and the key policy roles that Howard played in both. While Treasurer, then Deputy Leader under Fraser, Howard did not openly articulate the economic views of international leaders like Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, authors Milton Friedman, F S Hayek, Christopher Lasch and William E Simon, or from emerging New Right think-tanks within Australia.   After Fraser's election night resignation in 1983, the Liberal Party began thirteen years of policy restructuring, internecine leadership rivalries, lack of organisation between parliamentary and organisational wings, and electoral failure against a popular and reforming Labor government under Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Treasurer Paul Keating.   As Opposition Leader between 1985 and 1989, Howard tried to define an economic direction that emphasised deregulation, competition, free markets, reduced government, privatisation, limited welfare, and industrial relations reform. He largely supported the Hawke and Keating Labor government's financial and taxation reforms, but wanted *greater* emphasis on indirect taxation, targeted welfare reform based on mutual obligation, and, in particular, a workplace culture where negotiated workplace contracts replaced centralised wage-fixing, compulsory unionism, and significant reduction of union influence in government, factory, or university.

In Opposition, Howard sought to merge his social views with economic, taxation and industrial relations reform. He argued for the need to support families, to protect national borders, to reduce welfare demands and public service numbers; he resisted multiculturalism, jeopardised the bi-partisan approach to immigration by advocating in 1988 acceptance of fewer Asian migrants, and proposed that policies directed at Indigenous people be based on "mainstream" delivery services, with their entry into the Australian economy through education and employment. The 1988 *Future Directions* policy manifesto first articulated the Liberals' new social and economic directions, and provides consolidation of Howard's ideas then, and an interesting comparison with those he took into government in 1996 and beyond.

The previous chapter showed that Howard's early life experiences and intellectual range were relatively limited, and this chapter will discuss the paucity of personal and media skills that made it difficult for him as leader to negotiate the new Liberal Party direction from 1983. Policy conviction, diligence and political ambition were inadequate buffers against inefficient office management, his preference for surrounding himself with partisan staff, and his inability to accommodate views of moderate colleagues. His failure as communicator, his personal unpopularity with the media, some colleagues, and the electorate, were reflected in opinion polls. Contributing to his loss of leadership in 1989 to Andrew Peacock was his refusal to retreat from immigration comments seen as racist. Yet, although he was an ineffective leader in the 1980s, it can be shown that few doubted his policy convictions, determination or ambition.

Specific policy topics are discussed in greater detail in following chapters. This chapter is structured first around the policies that Howard espoused in the Fraser

government between 1975 and 1983, including the Goods and Services Tax (GST) he

tried to implement in 1981 (and eventually did so in 2000). Further sections cover the

Opposition years between 1983 and 1996, then Howard's first term as leader between

1985 and 1989. As these years saw the moderates, "wets", or social liberals within the

Liberal Party lose their influence under Howard's leadership, a section on Howard and

social change is included. The final section covers the value of *Future Directions* as the

first formal representation of Howard's policies. Overall, this chapter links the social

values of his early life with the new economic policies that evolved as Liberal Party

policy. The 1980s tested his ideas, resilience and ambition, but, as his colleague, Tony

Abbott, agrees, the battles waged in that decade helped to define Howard's political

character, and left the Liberals with a largely agreed agenda for government.[3]

Government to Opposition (1975-1983)

The Coalition lost government in 1983 at a time of economic recession and

drought, and when some considered Howard an unpopular and ineffective Treasurer.[4] He

had made corporate enemies with his retrospective legislation outlawing tax avoidance

through "bottom-of-the-harbour" schemes, and acquired the ironic nickname of "Honest

John" for withdrawing "the fistful of dollars" promised in the 1977 election.[5] He and

Fraser were accused (especially with Senate control) of having "talked a good fight, *but*

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[3] Tony Abbott, *Battlelines,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2009, p.60.
[4] George Megalogenis predicted in *The Australian,* 27 July, 2006, "Fruit and fuel not to blame for danger zone", that interest rates under Howard would cause potential inflation, unemployment and further interest rate rises: for Howard "this triple whammy would bring back uncomfortable memories of stagflation in the early 80s, when inflation, unemployment and mortgage rates broke the double-digit barrier and recession followed". See also Paul Kelly, *End of Certainty. The Story of the 1980s,* 1st ed., Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992, pp.95-96; Alan Ramsay in "Gone is Howard's jaunty confidence", *National Times,* 15-21 November, 1985, said Howard "could not deliver as Treasurer on economic policy changes he felt passionately about".
[5] The 1977 campaign included "fistful of dollars" television advertisements, depicting one hand with money, with "Liberals give", the other showing an empty hand and "Labor takes". See Jim Hope, "Famous election campaigns", *Bulletin,* 26 November, 2003.

did not fight it" in relation to smaller government.[6] [Original emphasis.] Howard had, in

fact, talked about replacing some public services that were duplicated in the private

sector.[7]   In 1979, when Treasurer, he set up the Committee of Enquiry into the Australian

Financial System (the Campbell Committee) to look at financial reform, although Fraser's

biographer refutes the "myth" that Fraser blocked Howard's efforts at deregulation and

small government.[8]   Fraser also denies this allegation in his 2010 memoirs.[9] Conversely,

one of his ministers, Neil Brown, claims

> [Howard was] fighting valiantly but to no avail for more liberal reform to the economic
>
> and financial structure of the nation. But in a Cabinet that simply did not want change,
>
> this was a forlorn hope and he had to be content with trying to keep government spending
>
> within reasonable limits and having the Campbell Committee set up to examine the case
>
> for change to the financial institutions of the country.[10]

Howard confessed to being aware in the late 1970s and early 1980s of the need to change

Australia's economic régime.[11]   However, as Minister for Consumer Affairs and Trade in

the first Fraser government (when he said "everyone was a Keynesian"), he followed

protectionist policies.[12]   Brian Buckley, adviser to former Treasurer, Phillip Lynch,

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[6] See Robert Haupt with Michelle Grattan, *31 Days to Power,* George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1983, p.9. Howard claimed not to make the same mistake when he had control of the Senate. After the 2007 election he said he "would rather lose office accused of having tried to do too much than, like the Fraser government, of not having done enough". Quoted by George Brandis, "John Howard and the Australian Liberal Tradition", *Liberals & Power. The Road Ahead,* ed. Peter van Onselen, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, p.59.

[7] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 May, 1981, p.2034.

[8] Philip Ayres claims the "myth" was "not securely based on the historical record", *Malcolm Fraser. A Biography,* William Heinemann, Richmond, 1987, pp.408-409

[9] Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs,* Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2009, pp.523-526.

[10] Neil Brown, *On the other hand ... Sketches and Reflections from Political Life,* Poplar Press, Woden ACT, 1993, p.188.

[11] Howard, CPD, Representatives 14 March, 1991, p.2076.

[12] Howard tabled tariff impositions on knitted tops; see CPD, Representatives 19 February, 1976, pp.115-116. The Coalition's tariff policy was: "We will give Australian industry the protection it needs. We would sooner have jobs than dogma" , quoted by Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 June,

considered Howard as Treasurer "still something of a wet on fiscal and industry

policies".[13] In his memoirs, Fraser states that Howard aligned himself with the "dry"

faction in the last year of the Coalition government.[14]

What is clear is that as responsible Minister in 1976, Howard was alert to the

political dangers of converting too hastily to tariff reduction or abolition, arguing it was

easy to find "an area where a free trade attitude has led to employment dislocations and

social deprivations", and "equally easy to find an example of where a protectionist

attitude has not necessarily produced the desired result".[15]   When Liberal Bert Kelly

(who Howard later praised as the "trailblazer of lower tariffs") warned that developing

countries should have access to Australian markets, Howard's reply was equivocal, as

"one ought not to be too dogmatic and … too doctrinaire when one talks about tariff

matters". [16]   He conceded that

> a nation as wealthy as Australia should be prepared to assist developing countries with
>
> their trade. That is a point of view which I have long accepted …. one can see that it is
>
> not a simple matter. It does not automatically follow that we must embark upon a policy
>
> of progressively and speedily lowering tariff levels in Australia.[17]

He left the door ajar for ambiguity: the issue could not be seen "in black and white

terms" and one could not give "uncritical, unceasing and unvaried protection to all sectors

1976, p.2959. See also David Barnett with Pru Goward, *John Howard: Prime Minister,* Viking,
Ringwood, 1997, p.32.   Howard made the "Keynesian" and "protectionist" remarks in an interview, 24
March, 2006, Melbourne.

[13] Brian Buckley, *Lynched,* Salzburg Publishing, Toorak, 1991, p.144.

[14] Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser,* p.523.

[15] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 April, 1976, pp.1809-1810.

[16] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 June, 1976, p.2957. In a condolence motion for Bert Kelly,
Howard said: "[When he] began to argue the cause of lower tariffs, it was not a particular popular line
…. The conventional wisdom … on both sides of politics, was that it was a good idea to protect
Australian industry from outside competition", CPD, Representatives 4 February, 1997, p.4.

[17] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 June, 1976, p.2957.

of manufacturing industry".[18]   Pertinent to his ambitions, he acknowledged that those

who had attempted tariff reform discovered "to their political cost" the "Australian

community happened to be interested in jobs and in strong manufacturing industries".[19]

When Prime Minister, Howard showed similar sensitivity to employment ramifications in

the motor vehicle industry, deciding on a tariff reduction formula that satisfied motor

vehicle companies and Premiers with automotive industries in their States.[20]

Although he was intellectually moving towards neo-liberalism, Howard as

Treasurer apparently lacked the authority or persuasive capacity in the Fraser Cabinet to

openly engage with the directional change of free markets, low tariffs, deregulation, small

government and limited welfare that proliferated in New Right think-tanks and

publications.[21]   With strained relationships between Treasury and its departmental head,

John Stone, Howard increasingly turned to advice from personally-appointed economic

advisers on his ministerial staff.[22]   In particular, he considered John Hewson, who later

became Opposition Leader, a "real guru".[23]   Hewson brought international economic

experience, and the view that Australia's "arthritic Australian financial system" could

only be cured through financial deregulation, zero tariffs, free markets, and reducing state

[18] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 June, 1976, p.2957.

[19] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 June, 1976, p.2960.

[20] The 1997 Productivity Commissioned recommended a post-2000 regime of accelerated tariff reductions for carmakers and a 10 per cent protection rate by 2005, but lobbying by carmakers convinced Howard to accept a freeze at 15 per cent from 2000-2004. Cabinet the same year announced a five-year tariff freeze on the textile, clothes and footwear industry. Peter Costello felt Howard was increasingly reliant on political considerations rather than reform. See Tracey Aubin, *Peter Costello. A Biography,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1999, p.235. See also Barnett, *John Howard,* p.790.

[21] For Howard's "agitation" for a shift from post-war Liberal policies to economic rationalism, see Bill Bainbridge, "A Nation-Building State Loses its Mind", *Arena Magazine,* 31, October-November, 1997, pp.21-27.

[22] Greg Whitwell writes, "Relations between Howard and Stone (and in fact the Treasury in general) deteriorated markedly after the 1980 election. Several factors were responsible: the leaking of material written by Stone and embarrassing to Fraser and Howard; … Stone's growing sense of dissatisfaction with the LNCP government was compounded by the 1982-83 budget. This budget symbolised the extent to which depending on the political circumstances, the Fraser government was prepared to depart from the Treasury line", *The Treasury Line,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, pp.237-238.

[23] See Norman Abjorensen, *John Hewson. A biography,* Lothian Books, Port Melbourne, 1993, p.75.

reliance in order to encourage self-reliant citizens. [24] Both supported small government

and private enterprise. Howard in 1981 had said

> individuals should be free to make their own choices …. This leads us inevitably to the
> view that the Government's role should be as small as is consistent with providing the
> basic environment within which individual freedom and private enterprise can thrive.[25]

From the late 1970s other countries, notably Britain and the United States, had

begun to move their economic agendas towards shifting functions from states and

bureaucracies to the marketplace.[26] The Campbell Committee was established to study

banks, non-banks, the foreign exchange mechanism, the securities industry, money

markets and government regulations, and was tabled in 1981 to limited Coalition

enthusiasm.[27] It recommended "sweeping and fundamental changes" through

competitive markets, subject to minimum regulation and government intervention. [28] As

with tariffs, Howard saw the political ramifications, and promised the government would

"naturally seek to achieve a balance between economic, social and political

considerations and realities".[29] Labor in government ultimately implemented many of the

Committee's findings, and Howard in Opposition recalled the "blind antagonism and the

vociferous opposition [including from his own ranks] to that report and everything it

stood for". He said

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[24] See Buckley, *Lynched,* p.102; Ian Cook, "John Hewson", *Liberalism in Australia,* Oxford UP, South Melbourne, 1999, p.202; Steven Burrell, "The Hewson Economic View", *Australian Financial Review,* 29 May, 1989.

[25] Howard, CPD, Representatives 12 March, 1981, p.758.

[26] Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra. A Nation-building State Changes its Mind,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1991, p.3. See also Bainbridge, "A Nation-Building State Loses its Mind", pp.21-27.

[27] Howard said later of the Campbell Report: "I have to say that, on occasions, I felt that I was the only person who supported it". CPD, Representatives 10 May, 1984, p.2264.

[28] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 November, 1981, p.2856; see also Greg Whitwell, *The Treasury Line,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, p.247..

[29] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 November, 1981, p.2856.

I am not an uncharitable person … because it is far more important that this country have an international financial system. When I established the Campbell Committee in 1979 I believed that one day Australia would become a world financial centre. I believe that with the efforts of both sides of politics in Australia that goal is within our grasp.[30]

On the eve of the 1996 election, he promised another enquiry (the "daughter of Campbell") to "stocktake" financial deregulation and regulatory frameworks for overlapping financial issues.[31]

The GST was first mooted in the 1970s Asprey Report, but did not capture the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and Paul Keating as Treasurer later failed to find union support in 1985 when devising his "taxation package".[32] It appeared as the central plank of Hewson's *Fightback!* document (to which Howard as shadow minister contributed), taken to the 1993 election, and contributed to the Coalition's electoral defeat.[33] It was a tax that for Howard had a long provenance. In 1981 he said:

A taxation system that has a better mix between direct and indirect taxation is a better taxation system. There are advantages in having less reliance on personal income tax and greater reliance on indirect taxation. It is easier to collect; it is harder to evade; it represents less of a disincentive to personal business effort.[34]

[30] Howard, CPD, Representatives 11 September, 1984, p.1057.
[31] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In. The Values, Directions and Policy Priorities of a Coalition Government Outlined in 1995", Canberra, 1995, p.34.
[32] See John Edwards, *Keating. The Inside Story,* Viking, Ringwood, pp.265-268
[33] John Hewson and Tim Fischer, *Fightback! It's your Australia: The way to rebuild and reward Australia,* Canberra, 21 November, 1991. See also Chris James, Chris Jones and Andrew Norton, "The Liberal Party and economic rationalism", *A Defence of Economic Rationalism,* eds. James, Jones and Norton, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1993, p.116, quoting D O'Reilly, "GST was Hewson's electoral ball and chain", *Bulletin,* 23 March, 1993. Also Peter Costello with Peter Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs: The Age of Prosperity,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, p.124.
[34] Howard, CPD, Representatives 14 October, 1981, p.1993.

Fraser was not interested in the new tax.[35]   In an interview, he recounted that Howard

brought a "slim" submission to Cabinet before an election and failed to argue his case.[36]

Keating later taunted:

> Why did not the honourable member for Bennelong, geed along by his adviser the now
>
> Leader of the Opposition, get the ball under the arm and run through the Cabinet Room
>
> with the consumption tax …. the reason is that they could not get a piece of tissue paper
>
> through the Cabinet, much less a submission.[37]

In 1981 Howard considered broadening the wholesale tax as "entirely proper and

defensible".[38]   In 1983 he complained that the taxation system relied excessively on

income tax as a source of revenue, rather than broad-based consumption taxes (even if

unpopular with the retail trade).[39]   He supported Keating's 1985 consumption tax and

argued that his broad-based tax with minimal – preferably zero – exemptions, would fund

major reductions in personal income tax.[40]   In 1986 he again promised to broaden the

indirect tax base when in government.[41]   In Howard's government, the GST appeared as

centrepiece of the 1998 election, and contrary to George Megalogenis' claim that Howard

would have preferred to keep his promise to not reintroduce any form of GST, Howard's

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[35] George Megalogenis said: "Fraser didn't bother telling Howard that his GST was dead. Howard
learned of the veto from political journalist Michelle Grattan …. Yet [he] took his plan to cabinet
anyway, knowing it would be rejected by Fraser"; *The Longest Decade,* 1st ed., Scribe, Melbourne,
2006, pp.236-237.
[36] Interview with Malcolm Fraser, 21 June, 2006, Melbourne.
[37] Paul Keating, CPD, Representatives 16 May, 1990, p.629.
[38] Howard, CPD, Representatives 14 October, 1981, p.1978.
[39] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 November, 1983, p.2892. The Fraser government considered this
option, but protests from the retail industry "illustrated the very great difficulty for any government in
Australia, whatever its political complexion, to carry out fundamental reform of our taxation system".
[40] Howard, CPD, Representatives 20 March, 1985, p.586. See his later comment to Keating that he had
offered "more support to introduce a broad based consumption tax than anybody in the Labor Party, or
the ACTU … resulting in considerable difficulty and discomfort for me from my own side of politics".
CPD, Representatives 22 August, 1990, p.1304.
[41] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.499.

actions and statements over decades indicated his determination to do so.[42]   Even when

pressured to abandon the tax, he persisted because, as he said, he had the "guts to do the

right thing for Australia".[43]   He later boasted in 2001:

> This country has needed tax reform for a generation and over the last 25 years …. Every
>
> person who has held a position of leadership on either side of politics in this House over
>
> that 25-year period has known in their heart that we have needed taxation reform. But the
>
> only person who has held that position, who is still in this parliament and who has been
>
> prepared to undertake the political heavy lifting to bring about that reform is me.[44]

When Howard and Peter Costello launched the GST proposal, *Tax Reform – Not a New*

Tax, A New Tax System, Costello bridled at Howard's claim to paternity. According to

Costello's biographer,

> Howard made a blatant attempt to claim ownership of the package. He spoke at length
>
> about his career-long belief in the need for tax reform and managed to praise Costello
>
> merely in passing before leaving his Treasurer to explain the details of the package.[45]

Howard had a special fidelity for the GST. Costello toiled over the details, and felt

usurped by his leader, but it remained Howard's ideological child.[46]   It was, he said, a

long-term goal to which he had committed "more than half of my life", and represented

"the achievement in a personal sense, as well as in a political sense, a lot of the things that

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[42] Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade,* p.238.
[43] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 June, 1999, p.7756.
[44] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 June, 2001, p.28887.
[45] Shaun Carney, *Peter Costello. The New Liberal,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.281.
[46] Costello, "Unchain my Heart: A New Tax System", *The Costello Memoirs,* pp.119-146.

I've wanted to do".[47] That the legislation passed with amendments demanded by Meg
Lees, then Leader of the Australian Democrats, is testament to Howard's ability to
compromise, so long as the *core* idea or value remains intact.

As Treasurer and Deputy Leader in the Fraser government, Howard hesitated to
publicly endorse publications from corporations, New Right think-tanks, rural or
employer groups, or join "dry" colleagues and factions complaining about Fraser's
perceived lack of economic reform.[48] At a political and leadership level, Howard
admired Margaret Thatcher's conservative ideas, and saw himself as her equivalent, "she
a grocer's daughter, he the son of a garage owner".[49] To him, she was the "most effective
and influential centre-right wing leader in the last 40 years".[50] He was attracted to her
policies of small government, greater responsibility for self and family against the "all-
pervading development of the welfare state".[51] She also embraced international financial
and trading relations, with the latter "as liberal as possible and based on the principle of
fair competition".[52] These approaches were seen in Howard's *Future Directions.*[53]

Within Australia, Howard could draw on advice from economists and
organisations similarly arguing for new government models. The Shell Australia-

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[47] Howard, Media Conference, Canberra, 13 August, 1998. He "claimed total ownership of the tax
package, from its broadest vision to its tiniest detail …" See Tracey Aubin, *Peter Costello. A
Biography,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1999, pp.268-269.
[48] Former Liberal Jim Carlton confirmed the existence of a group of Liberals who disagreed with
Fraser's directions, and who formed a "Crossroads" group; interview 21 June, 2006, Melbourne.
[49] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006.
[50] Interview with Howard; see also Howard's Keynote Speech when elected Chairman of International
Democratic Union: "the towering figures of world conservatism … Margaret Thatcher and Ronald
Reagan", Washington DC, 10 June, 2002.
[51] Margaret Thatcher, "What's wrong with politics?" Conservative Political Centre Lecture, 11
October, 1968, Blackpool.
[52] Thatcher, "Progress Through Interdependence", Walter Heller International Finance Lecture,
Chicago, 22 September, 1975.
[53] Ernie Chaples sees *Future Directions* as reminiscent of the "highly negative and largely populist
approach that was critical for Margaret Thatcher". "'Future Directions' or Tales of Politics Past?",
Current Affairs Bulletin, March, 65, 10, 1989, pp.29-30.

financed *Australia at the Crossroads* was published in 1980 as the "first blueprint for the ideas which dominated the decade".[54] It argued for Australia's conversion from a protectionist, high-tariff, large government, social-welfare orientated country to one with a free market with limited and targeted welfare.[55] As Marian Sawer points out though, there was little place for women in this vigorous new "Libertarian Australia" of minimum state control, free trade and deregulated labour and finance (discussed in Chapter Six).[56] The Crossroads Group was formed as a

> network, a political cell for market policies, a talkfest, a lobby group on the Fraser government (which was why secrecy was crucial) …. It became the first in a series of such groups which sprang up during the decade. [Liberal, John] Hyde says: "It gave us courage when we needed it because we were challenging the leadership of our own party".[57]

Economist and author F S Hayek visited Australia in 1976 under the aegis of the Institute of Public Affairs, at a time when the Institute said Australia had reached a "fateful parting of the ways so far as its political and economic future is concerned".[58] It supported Hayek's ideas of rewarding corporate and individual enterprise, and allowing the market to allocate resources. It also argued that individual freedom was at stake if governments took on larger roles in providing welfare and directing people's lives.[59] This fitted Howard's views about small governments and personal responsibility. He had met, and was impressed by, William E Simon, American author of the 1978 *Truth to*

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[54] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.41.
[55] Wolfgang Kasper, Richard Blandy, John Freebairn, Douglas Hocking and Robert O'Neill, *Australia at the Crossroads. Our choices to the year 2000,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Group, Sydney, 1980.
[56] Marian Sawer, "Political manifestations of Australian libertarianism", *Australia and the New Right,* George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1982, p.18.
[57] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.42, quoting John Hyde in 1987.
[58] *IPA Review,* Editorial, "Professor F A Hayek's Australian Visit", October-December, 1976, p.80
[59] *IPA Review,* p.80.

Tell.[60] Simon too called for free enterprise, small government, and a system of capitalism and free markets to allow "a torrential outpouring of man-made wealth".[61] Rose and Milton Friedman's *Free to Choose* was popular in Australia in the early 1980s, and this extracts shows why it would appeal to Howard:

> Wherever the free market has been permitted to operate, wherever anything approaching equality of opportunity has existed, the ordinary man has been able to attain levels of living never dreamed of before.[62]

Howard claimed in an interview to have been impressed with Christopher Lasch, the author of *The Revolt of the Elites,* and much of that anti-élitism discourse in favour of "mainstream people" was seen in Howard's 1996 election campaign.[63] (Discussed in the following chapter, "The Headland Speeches".)

Opposition from 1983 allowed Howard to pursue his leadership ambitions, and when unshackled from Cabinet loyalty he followed his preference for the economic reform expressed by the Crossroads Group, and writers and economists like Hayek, the Friedmans, Simon and Lasch, but especially by Margaret Thatcher, whose political ideas found favour and accord with his own.

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[60] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006. "Like all theorists, it was a bit over the top", he said, but took ideas from Simon's book.
[61] William E Simon, *A Time for Truth,* McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1978, pp.24-25. By 1988, Howard called himself a "capitalist", who respected people with the capacity to accumulate wealth as an "indispensable part of the Australian community"; CPD, Representatives 28 April, 1988, p.2281.
[62] Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose. A Personal Statement,* Secker and Warburg, London, 1980, p.146.
[63] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006. See also Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy,* W W Norton & Co., New York, 1995, p.6.

Opposition – the Wilderness Years (1983 – 1996)

In the 1980s, Paul Kelly dismissed Howard's leadership as irrevocably failed.[64]

Writing in 2006, however, he recognised the significance of the Coalition policies that

emerged in that decade under Howard. As he said,

> When Howard faced the existential crisis of his prime ministership in 1997, what did he
>
> do? He opened his top drawer and pulled out a GST-led tax reform, the policy he had
>
> championed since the early 80s as Fraser's treasurer. When Howard won Senate control
>
> in 2005, what did he do? He went for a "big bang" industrial relations reform, the idea he
>
> had cherished for more than 20 years. These were 80s mantras awaiting their
>
> redemption.[65]

The Liberals' time in Opposition was riven with leadership rivalries, ideological

differences, electorate unpopularity, and predictions of the party's terminal decline.[66]

Immediately after the 1983 election loss, the Liberal Party undertook a review (The

Valder Report), to which Howard contributed.[67] A major finding was a perceived

> loss of credibility. Often our performance in government simply did not match our
>
> rhetoric. Opportunities were missed. We did not always practice what we preached. Too
>
> often we were seen to be inconsistent, too pragmatic and, finally, too expedient. Bit by
>
> bit, our credibility was eroded.[68]

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[64] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* pp. 239, 478.

[65] Paul Kelly, "Rudd's legacy from old rivals", *Weekend Australian,* 12-13 September, 2009

[66] See Dean Jaensch, "The crisis of the 1980s", *The Liberals,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p.67; also Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class. From Alfred Deakin to John Howard,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 2003, p.166.

[67] According to Jaensch, the Liberals did not feel the need for self-assessment until the 1983 defeat, factional tensions and difficulties between organisational and parliamentary wings, led to the Valder Report, *The Liberals,* pp.78-79. For mention of Howard, see Foreword, *Facing the Facts. Report of the Liberal Party Committee of Review,* September, 1983, p.10.

[68] Valder Report, p.12

Despite the recommendations contained in the Valder Report, the Liberals were again defeated in 1984 and their difficulties were compounded. The Liberal Party parliamentary wing had traditionally ceded authority to leaders to provide policy directions, so long as they won elections, but neither Andrew Peacock nor Howard did so. Nor were structures in place to provide forums for debate on policy or philosophical differences:

> Members had been so used to policy being enunciated by the leader or the leadership
> group that they had little experience of policy debate and policy development. When the
> Liberals in opposition began to debate policy issues, they had difficulty in managing this.
> Too often such debate was seen to be a reflection of party disunity rather than open
> discussion.[69]

As Judith Brett agrees, this lack of structured opportunities for debate about values and ideas resulted in parliamentary leaderships taking over control of policy.[70] Without ideological leadership from Peacock, and Howard presenting an increasingly "dry" economic argument, the Liberals fractured into opposing sides, with some anticipating a return to government on old policies.[71] Political analyst Katharine West noted Howard's debating skills and his "disciplined conceptual clarity" in 1984, but also the party divisions:

> Displaced from their old political ground, the non-Labor parties have failed to fight … on
> new political ground of their own choosing. Fractured by irreconcilable divisions

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[69] Scott Prasser and Mark Neylan, "Liberal Leadership, Policy-making and Party Organisation", *For Better or Worse. The Federal Coalition,* ed. Brian Costar, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 1994, p.121.
[70] Brett, "Republicanism: the clash of symbols", *Arena Magazine,* 3, October-November, 1994, pp.2-3.
[71] Geoff Kitney, "Taking notice of John Howard", *National Times,* 31 May-6 June, 1985.

between small l Liberals and conservatives, the Liberal and National Parties were unable

to agree within their own ranks about the rules of the new social unity game …[72]

Lacking discipline, structure or an agreed policy position, the Liberals were

weakened with every successive electoral failure in 1984, 1987, 1990 and 1993, with

leadership instabilities adding political ammunition to a confident and united Labor

government.[73] Yet throughout the 1980s, Howard was undeterred in his leadership

ambition, and continued to argue his policy positions, often to bitter opposition. For this

he was credited with activating debate:

it must also be conceded, even by those who are suspicious of what he is doing and

despite the doubts about the viability of the policies he is advocating, that Howard is

playing a very significant role in provoking discussion and broadening the political debate

in Australia.[74]

These remarks were qualified, but indicated his persistence in presenting his policies to

colleagues, the media and the electorate. Underlying it, as noted, was his leadership

ambition.

Howard's first term as leader

Having "worked incessantly on the media and lobbied hard privately", John

Howard became Opposition Leader on 5 September, 1985, when Andrew Peacock

resigned following the failure to secure sufficient votes to ensure his own choice of

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[72] Katharine West, *The Revolution in Australian Politics,* Penguin, Ringwood, 1984, pp.73 and 99.
[73] Bob Hawke taunted Howard about leadership fragility: "Is it any wonder that a count is going on at this time to see whether the honourable member for Kooyong has the numbers or not"; CPD, Representatives 13 November, 1986, p.3032.
[74] Kitney, *National Times,* 31 May- 6 June, 1985.

Deputy Leader and Shadow Treasurer.[75] Peacock had been a capable former Foreign

Affairs Minister, but judged by Howard to be ideologically barren.[76] Because of

marked differences in style and substance, the contest was seen as a clash of future

directions between "orthodoxy and adventurism", with Howard described as the

"harbinger of a new era of Liberalism".[77] He might have called his elevation to

leadership "an accident", but clearly he had been working towards it.[78] Indeed, his

wife, Janette, confirmed that ambition.[79] The media noted

> There can be no denying the fact that there is considerable hostility within the Liberal
>
> Party to the way Howard has been operating as deputy leader, an underlying tension
>
> which has the potential to erupt and do great damage.[80]

It also noted

> no matter how strongly [Howard] proclaimed his loyalty, there was a clear public
>
> perception of his willingness to mount a challenge if the appropriate circumstances arose
>
> …. He has never had a very high opinion of Peacock, believing that he lacks
>
> philosophical commitment and intellectual toughness. Howard was convinced that, if the
>
> chance came for himself to take over the leadership, he would be a better leader and
>
> ultimately a better Prime Minister.[81]

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[75]See Gerard Henderson, *Menzies' Child. The Liberal Party of Australia,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1994, pp.282-287.

[76]Post-1984 election, Howard told journalist Peter Rees (mistaking him for Peter Reith, Liberal MP) "We don't know what he [Peacock] stands for". See Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade,* p.161.

[77]Kitney, "Howard accidentally anointed through Peacock's paranoia", *National Times,* 6-12 September, 1985.

[78] Howard's "accident" remark quoted by Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade,* pp.160-161.

[79] When Margaret Whitlam offered commiserations on Howard's first election as Opposition Leader, Mrs Howard responded: "You don't commiserate with somebody who's got what they always wanted". Quoted in Susan Mitchell, *Margaret Whitlam. A biography,* Random House, North Sydney, 2006, p.362.

[80] Kitney, *National Times,* 31 May-6 June, 1985

[81] Kitney, *National Times,* 6-12 September, 1985.

Fraser in 2010 wrote about Howard's disloyalty in 1984. He had endorsed the Peacock and Howard leadership team, recognising their ambitions and complementary political skills, but said that if he had known they were going to fight for the next decade, he may have stayed in parliament as leader.[82]

As Opposition Leader, Howard's difficulties were considerable. He was judged a good debater, intellectually consistent but "politically ham-fisted".[83] He was disadvantaged in an age of greater media scrutiny with deafness, a poor public image and Press Gallery antagonism.[84] He alienated himself from his colleagues, particularly his more moderate colleagues who did not share his "dry" economic direction, and he did not command loyalty or efficiently manage the shadow cabinet and his own private office.[85] He was beset by paranoia and agonised over hard decisions.[86] John Stone considered him a poor judge of people.[87] The *Australian Financial Review* judged Janette Howard a "covert power" and a significant influence on office and policy affairs.[88] Press Gallery journalist, Alan Ramsay, noted that shortly after Howard became leader, "the confident jauntiness of two months has disappeared", and concluded that the pressures of leadership

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[82] Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser,* p.617.

[83] Kitney, "S.A. voters hold key to Howard's future", *National Times,* 29 November-5 December, 1985.

[84] For selective negative reports in the *AFR,* see David Parker, "The News that Fits", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* 65, 3, August, 1988, pp.4-9; also Parker, *The Courtesans. The Press Gallery in the Hawke Era,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p.94: "There can be little doubt looking at the record that the Gallery attack on Howard when he led the Liberals was savage and sustained".

[85] In an interview, Carlton described Howard's office as disorganised, with suggestions for improvement declined. Nor did Howard delegate or seek advice from his colleagues, with access to him difficult. See also Laurie Oakes, "Howard's growth", *Bulletin,* 7 March, 2006, reprinted in *Power Plays: The real stories of Australian Politics,* Hachette, 2008, p.334: "[Howard] is capable of mistakes, and has made plenty of them. In his first attempt at leadership … like his hero, Sir Robert Menzies – he was a dismal failure …. [He] was too stubborn, too ideological, and a lousy manager of people".

[86] Mike Steketee, "The new Howard", *Weekend Australian,* 2-3 October, 2004.

[87] See John Stone, "Our Greatest Prime Minister", *Quadrant,* 52, 3, March 2008, pp.12-21.

[88] *AFR Magazine* supplement "Power 2004" nominated Janette Howard as a "covert power" for "singular and enduring influence on her husband", August 2004, p.44.

had worn him down.[89]   But, significantly, Ramsay warned it was "ridiculous to write [him] off so early, as some of the malcontents in the Liberal Party seem to have done. Howard is much more resilient, much more capable, that that".[90]   Kelly summarised Howard's dilemma:

> Howard's tragedy was that the main position he tried to advance – an Australia with smaller government, lower taxation, much less regulation and control, greater choice, more competition, less union power, more freedom for workers, cheaper imports, more exports, greater scope for business, and a harder line on welfare and unemployment benefits – was a natural majority position within the 1980s community. The polls confirm that the people pitch was to Middle Australia, beyond big unions and big business, an updated appeal along the lines of Menzies' "forgotten people" of the 1940s. Sometimes Howard tried to communicate this message, but it was neither often nor successful. [91]

To overcome communication difficulties, Howard made himself accessible for interviews regardless of the issue, and began to directly approach voters through talk-back radio.[92]   Nonetheless, research rated him the Party's most unappealing leader ever:

> without any kind of voter mandate. He is neither liked nor respected. Reflections on Howard are almost entirely negative. We can only question the potential inherent in a leader whose strongest perception is that he is boring.[93]

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[89] Alan Ramsey, "Gone is Howard's confident jauntiness", *National Times,* 15-21 November, 1985
[90] Ramsey, "Focus on Keating in the year ahead", *National Times,* 29 November–5 December, 1985.
[91] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.229.
[92] Steketee, "The Press Gallery at Work", *The House on Capital Hill. Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital,* eds. Julian Disney and J R Nethercote, Federation Press, Annandale, 1996, p.213. Howard claimed talk-back radio played a greater role in shaping recent election outcomes than other sections of the media. See Clive Hamilton, "Who listens to Alan Jones?" Australia Institute Webpaper, June 2006, and W Frew, "Radio gets too active", *Sydney Morning Herald,* 1 May, 2004.

Research leaked to the *Australian Financial Review* (AFR) when Howard was scheduled to give a televised national address, ran a front-page headline, "Howard can't win: Report", describing a poll as a

> devastating indictment of the Howard leadership and a sombre background to the Opposition's Leader's address to the nation tonight. Clearly, he will be speaking to a nation which does not see him as a future leader.[94]

Another poll leaked to the *AFR* led the newspaper to report that Howard had failed as a leader and it was now a question of whether he accepted it.[95] Studies by Derek Parker show that it was impossible to escape the conclusion that the *AFR* sought to undermine and attack Howard's leadership.[96] Interestingly, pockets of support emerged from those "battlers" with whom Howard purported to identify. Michael Kroger, former Victorian Liberal president, noted that with

> ordinary rank and file branch members, Howard was the most popular Leader we have ever had …. [with] an affinity … that no other leader has ever had …. [he was] very comfortable on the factory floor …. Talking to rank and file union members, or small business people, or people who run the corner store".[97]

The 1987 election campaign led by Howard was marked by policy errors, fractures within the National Party, and the Queensland Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen's

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[93] Quantum research, 1989, quoted by Robert Wainwright and Tony Stephens, "Canterbury Tales", *SMH,* 18 September 2004.
[94] Gregory Hywood, quoted by David Parker, "The News that Fits", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* August, 1988, 65, 3, pp.4-9.
[95] Parker, "The News that Fits", pp.4-9.
[96] Parker does not attribute Howard's loss of the 1987 election to *AFR* reporting, but questions the role of newspapers in selectively using partisan material.
[97] Quoted by Barnett, *John Howard,* p.542.

"Joh-for-Canberra Push".[98] In August 1988, Howard made his comments about Asian

immigration to the chagrin of some colleagues, and in May 1989 Peacock regained the

leadership after a well-executed coup.[99] The Senate Leader and Deputy Senate Leader

had abandoned Howard (the latter having told him the previous day he would make a

"great Prime Minister").[100] Howard was unprepared for the ambush, alienated from his

supporters, and isolated by the secrecy offered by the huge new Parliament House.[101]

When deposed, he declared that his prospects of again leading the party akin to "Lazarus

with a triple by-pass".[102] He temporarily sat on the back-bench, while publishing articles

in *The Australian* and *The Sunday Telegraph,* which led to suppositions that he had

indeed relinquished ideas of regaining the Liberal leadership.[103] However, Peter Costello

was convinced that Howard had never "stopped dreaming and scheming about a return to

the leadership".[104] Howard's first biographer shares Costello's sentiments, and the

conclusion drawn in this thesis that "never did he abandon his belief in himself as a

national leader".[105]

Howard's 1980s policies

As Opposition leader, while presiding over a divided and fractious political party,

Howard's consistent economic policy message was the need for a new workplace culture,

less union interference, more indirect taxation, free markets and deregulated financial

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[98] See Kelly, "Joh for Canberra: the false prophet", *End of Certainty,* pp.291-314.
[99] See Jaensch, *The Liberals,* 1994, p.84.
[100] Quoted by Barnett, *John Howard,* p.545.
[101] "Plotting in the old House was much harder to conceal. If a journalist didn't spot a plotter or bump into one who might drop a hint of a challenge, then someone loyal to the leader would …" Paul Malone, "Why Bob Hawke will give Peacock time", *Canberra Times,* 10 May, 1989.
[102] Howard, Media Conference, Parliament House, 9 May, 1989.
[103] Megalogenis, for example, said Howard "had given up on the Liberal leadership", *The Longest Decade,* p.173.
[104] Costello, *The Costello Memoirs,* p.225. See also p.54.
[105] Barnett, *John Howard,* p.615.

systems. Ironically, it was the Labor governments between 1983 and 1992 that undertook one of the most sustained periods of policy change in Australia's history.[106]   The

> program of economic reform for which [Howard] was fighting 20 or more years ago and that has revitalised the economy was carried out in large part by the time he came to office. Though his support was an important factor in its implementation, it was his opponents who received the credit.[107]

These changes, as Alan Fenna writes, put the economic structure in place for Howard's success in the next decade.[108]

As noted above, Howard claimed from the 1970s to have recognised the economic changes necessary if Australia were to become an international competitor in a changing world of competition, reduced protection, globalisation and high-speed technology. He called it being "mugged by the economic reality of the 1980s", when

> All of us, some earlier than others, recognised that the world changed forever in the early 1970s when we broke away from fixed exchange rates, when we had the first oil shock, and Australia for the first time really began to be exposed to a very cruel and inhospitable international economic environment".[109]

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[106] Laura Tingle, *Chasing the Future. Recession, recovery, and the new politics in Australia,* William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne, 1994, p.11.
[107] Steketee, *Weekend Australian,* 2-3 October, 2004. Howard said he had never "been reluctant to give the former government some credit for some of the reforms it carried out"; Address to Hasluck Business Lunch, Caversham, Western Australia, 28 July, 2006.
[108] Alan Fenna, "Governing in Good Times: Fiscal Policy and Tax Reform in Australia 1996-2006", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2 June, 2007, pp.329-349.
[109] Howard, CPD, Representatives 14 March, 1991, p.2076.

Thatcher and Reagan had begun their reforms in the late 1970s, and in the early 1980s

there was a collection of conservative economic theories held ready by the Australian

Treasury "waiting only for the politician brave and honest enough to wear them".[110] Peak

organisations representing employer, business and rural groups, were agitating for ways

to free their markets, and to lessen union influence and strike action. Under conservative

Ian McLachlan, President of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) (and later Defence

Minister in the Howard government), strikes were broken in shearing sheds and on docks

loading live sheep.[111] By the late 1980s, the New Right, and organisations like the Centre

for Independent Studies, the Australian Institute of Public Policy, the Sydney Institute,

the Samuel Griffiths Society, Centre for Policy Studies, the National Institute for Labour

Studies and the H R Nicholls Society, were influencing Coalition policies.[112]

Industrial relations reform was a constant priority ambition in Howard's political

career, for he saw it as central to sound economics and a liberalised workplace. For him

the trade union movement was a dominant (and dangerous) "interest group", and

therefore an impediment to choice, flexibility and productivity, whose influence must be

curbed. He promised when in government to abolish its privileged position, remove

compulsory union membership, and to adopt negotiable workplace agreements between

employee and employer. In fact, Labor had begun its own industrial relations reform,

through a prices and income accord (one of many) between the government and the

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) with pay rises indexed to inflation and

[110] Haupt with Grattan, *31 Days to Power,* p.3.
[111] See 25th Anniversary Album of National Farmers' Federation, July 2004, Canberra, pp.30-32.
[112] For discussion on difference between "Old Right" and "New", see David McKnight, "Modern Australia: the Ascendancy of the Right in Modern Australia, *Sydney Papers,* 18, 1, Summer, 2006, pp.201-205; McKnight, *Beyond Right and Left. New Politics and the Culture Wars,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, pp.8-9. See also Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra. A Nation-building State Changes its Mind,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1991, pp.227-228.

social wage elements in return for wage restraint.[113] Howard opposed the idea as it

confirmed his fears that unions had control of the economic direction of the country.[114]

He argued that real reform

> must include reduced government spending, reduced levels of taxation, reduced levels of
>
> militant union power, the provision of greater incentives for both employers and
>
> employees, the encouragement of further overseas investment and a major improvement
>
> in our transport and communications systems.[115]

As noted earlier, Howard was emphatically opposed to centralised wage fixing. In the

1980s the H R Nicholls Society was established to overturn the national wage-fixing

system and the compulsory arbitration implemented by Justice Henry Higgins at the turn

of the twentieth century.[116] When Howard became Opposition leader in 1985, the

Society regarded him as its main champion, and indeed his views matched its aims.[117] In

1983 he told the National Press Club that as Higgins considered it preferable for an

employer to go out of business rather than pay employees less than the fixed rate, it was

time to turn him "on his head".[118] In 1986 he again railed against the "harmful long-term

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[113] Howard did not "believe in a prices and incomes accord. I have very fundamental doubts and scepticism about a centralised wage fixing system". CPD, Representatives 16 November, 1983, p.2787

[114] See Howard's derision of Labor's idea about "greater government intervention in the area of prices and incomes… [those] policies have had very short lives in other parts of the world when they have been tried". CPD, Representatives 14 October, 1982, p.2046. By 1983, Howard claimed Labor continued "to whistle through the graveyard about the prices and incomes accord. The facts do not justify their optimism …. We need a more flexible and market-sensitive system of wage fixation than has ever prevailed in the past in Australia". CPD, Representatives 22 September, 1983, p.1190. See also Carney, *Peter Costello,* p.108.

[115] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.499.

[116] The H R Nicholls Society emerged in 1986 in response to the Hancock Report on Australian Relations Law and Systems, and was committed to overturning centralised wage fixing and "the right of individuals to freely contract for the supply and engagement of their labour by mutual agreement". See Introduction to *The H R Nicholls Society and its Work,* http://www.hrnicholls.com.au/work.html.

[117] See letter from H R Nicholls Society, quoted in Carney, *Peter Costello,* pp.119-120.

[118] Howard, Speech to National Press Club, August, 1983, and quoted in his essay, "Industrial Relations", *The Heart of Liberalism. The Albury Papers,* eds. Ken Aldred, Kevin Andrews and Paul Filing, McPherson's Printing Group, Micham, 1994, pp.249-250.

effects of new protectionism … and so-called comparative wage justice embodied in the Higgins' decision".[119]

In this climate, the Dollar Sweets Company case became a landmark triumph for anti-union sentiments in the 1980s. It tested the rights of unions, and, according to Howard, established the principle that if trade unions destroyed a business, they would be held accountable.[120] Peter Costello, the barrister who had acted for Dollar Sweets against the ACTU, said later that few in 1985 would have "predicted that events at Dollar Sweets would signal a turning-point in Australian industrial history.[121] When the Federated Confectioners' Association was ordered to pay $175,000 compensation for losses suffered from union pickets, it was a significant victory against unions, and twenty years later Howard celebrated the event with those involved, and which curiously coincided with the passing of his *Workchoices* legislation.[122] In 1986, the NFF established an Australian Farmers Fighting Fund (AFFF) to finance court actions against unions or governments considered to be impeding the livelihoods of farmers.[123] These years were watersheds in Coalition, conservative, New Right, and corporate efforts to change marketplace culture and curtail union power.

Another key aspect of changing workplace culture and the relationship between government and marketplace was Howard's promise of a "full-blooded privatisation policy".[124] As Aulich and O'Flynn write, this agenda was

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[119] Howard, *The New Challenge of Liberalism,* 1986 Alfred Deakin Lecture, Alfred Deakin Lecture Trust, Melbourne, 1986, pp.4-5.
[120] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 March, 1992, p.1424.
[121] Peter Costello, "The Dollar Sweets Story", Vol.5, Chapter 5, H R Nicholls Society. See also "From Confectionery to Canberra", *The Costello Memoirs,* pp.33-39
[122] A black-tie dinner was held in Melbourne, with guests including Peter Costello, Ian McLachlan and Fred Stauder, the owner of Dollar Sweets; see Costello, *The Costello Memoirs,* p.37.
[123] McLachlan launched the AFFF in Victoria on 1 July, 1986.
[124] Howard, CPD, Representatives 13 April, 1989, p.1634.

strongly focused on linking privatisation with his preference for individual choice, market
exchange and private decision-making over more collectivist social exchange notions that
had traditionally characterised Australia's experience with nation-building.[125]

Howard had always been predisposed to the market taking over, where possible, the tasks
of government. In 1981, as noted above, he favoured reduction of public services where
they duplicated the private sector, and in 1985 suggested that Telecom and Australia Post
be taken "right out of the government account".[126] In 1987 he added Australian Airlines,
49 per cent of Qantas (with a review to possibly extend it 100 per cent), domestic airport
terminals, the Housing Loans Insurance Corporation, the Australian Industry
Development Corporation, 49 per cent of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission
(Australia), 100 per cent of Aussat, the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation,
Medibank Private and the Australian Pipeline Authority. The Commonwealth Banking
Corporation was also under review.[127] He positioned the Coalition as the champion of
market forces, but assured he was "not getting rid of the assets of the Australian people",
but, rather, offering ownership of those assets.[128] As with the 1970s tariff debates, he was
mindful of electoral sensitivities:

> We have always said that we sell a public asset only if there is a clear public benefit in
> doing so. We have always said that we have to run the test of public and consumer
> benefit over the proposed sale before making an affirmative decision.[129]

On the other hand,

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[125] Chris Aulich and Janine O'Flynn, "John Howard: The Great Privatiser?" *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.365-381. See also Aulich, "Continuing Howard's privatisation agenda", *Howard's Fourth Government,* eds. Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.59.
[126] Howard, CPD, Representatives 15 May, 1985, p.2411.
[127] Howard, CPD, Representatives 24 November, 1987, p.2401.
[128] Howard, CPD, Representatives 15 May, 1985, p.2411.
[129] Howard, CPD, Representatives 24 November, 1987, p.2401.

There is no ambiguity; there is no squeamishness; there is no going to water; there is no backflipping or double standards from the Liberal and National parties on the issue of privatisation. We understand the economic need of the country. We have nailed our colours to the mast …[130]

In government he additionally promised to

operate far fewer government departments than currently exist …. Many statutory authorities and bodies will be abolished. These will include the Human Rights Commission, the Constitutional Commission, the Commission for the Future, the Prices Surveillance Authority, the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, the Economic Planning Advisory Council, the Advisory Council on Prices and Incomes and the Foreign Investment Review Board.[131]

In government he kept his promises and found additional targets – related to multicultural affairs, human rights, Aborigines and women's groups – to excise from the government purse, and celebrated each sale or transfer from public to private sector as validation of his "old fashioned free-market view that governments are very bad at running businesses".[132]

Howard was pragmatic when he struck opposition in 2006 with the proposed sale of the Commonwealth government's share of the Snowy Mountain Scheme. He withdrew the proposal on the grounds that it was a "mistake", and on discovering its sentimental value.[133] On radio, he said

[130] Howard, CPD, Representatives 24 November, 1987, p.2401.
[131] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.499.
[132] Howard, Address to Ryde Business Forum, Sydney, 5 April, 2007.
[133] Howard, Address to Cooma Ex-Serviceman's Club, 19 July, 2006.

The Snowy has become part of the post World War Two story … the immigration and all

of those wonderful stories of people mixing and becoming Australians. And I think I

underestimated the strength of feeling when we took the original decision. I don't mind

acknowledging that …. *If there were a policy benefit then I'd have had a different*

view.[134] [Added emphasis.]

Despite the earlier promise to privatise the Scheme, Howard declared it had never been

part of his policy platform, denied a long-term commitment to it, or that he had "believed

in [it] passionately in the first place". [135] Again, Howard proved that he was prepared to

compromise in the face of resistance, but only, as in this case, when the bulk of his

privatisation programme had been achieved. He showed this again when he faced

electoral opposition to the sale of Medibank Private and the full sale of Telstra, where he

again equivocated, then withdrew decisions.[136] As Aulich and O'Flynn conclude, he

shifted from being an ideologue to political pragmatist, but succeeded in driving a major

privatisation programme "in line with the principles he had earlier enunciated".[137]

With the prevailing 1980s neo-liberal climate, welfare reform was a key issue and

an expression of Howard's "core objectives". Here one sees how his socially

conservative principles of self-reliance and responsibility integrated within his new

economics. In 1987 the Australian Institute for Public Policy published *Mandate to*

Govern, which contained many ideas that Howard had earlier expressed, or would later

adopt in relation to welfare policy. The Institute contended that if welfare was allowed to

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[134] Howard, interview with John Laws, Radio 2UE, Sydney, 2 June, 2006.

[135] Howard interview with Laws, 2 June, 2006; see also Howard interview with Alan Jones, Radio 3BG, 2 June, 2006.

[136] Howard, CPD, Representatives 12 September, 2006, p.2. "Our financial advisers have suggested that, clearly, the two [Medibank and Telstra] should not be run together". See also Nick Minchin, "Medibank private to be floated in 2008", Media Release, 12 September, 2006.

[137] Aulich and O'Flynn, "John Howard: the Great Privatiser", pp.365-381.

continue on its present path, the nation was headed for "an economic crisis of severity comparable to the Great Depression".[138] It recommended that private-sector organisations administer welfare within a competitive environment. Two years earlier in 1985, Howard had expressed what became a familiar preference for welfare delivery through organisations like the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul.[139] Subsequently, when in government he instituted a process of tendering that encouraged participation of church and voluntary organisations. The Institute also suggested a "work for dole" scheme whereby people claiming unemployment benefits would be "drafted to work" on community projects, and recommended pension equalisation for men and women. It also questioned the concept of compulsory retirement, an idea "floated" in government.[140]

The National Priorities Project (NPP) in 1988 commissioned a study of policy objectives relating to social security, youth wages, and welfare. Its ideas accorded with Howard's later policies, particularly its encouragement to individuals and families to self-provide for retirement, health and accident insurance. It also claimed that social security measures were "a wasteful middle-class welfare system funded by a tax system, both of which discourage self-provision".[141] Of significant concern was the cost to government of the burgeoning numbers of single parents.[142] Interestingly, Howard had raised this issue two years earlier in 1986 when promising in government to ensure parental responsibility for children (and in government kept his promise).[143] The NPP also

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[138] John Nurick, ed. *Mandate to Govern. A Handbook for the next Australian Government,* Australian Institute for Public Policy/ The Australian Chamber of Commerce, Perth, 1987, p.109.

[139] See Steketee, "The Howard way to better welfare", *SMH,* 24 May, 1985, quoting Howard's raising of the "possibility of 'privatising' social welfare programs".

[140] See Peter Costello's Media Release: "We need to move away from concepts of early retirement and compulsory retirement at a set age"; "Australia's Demographic Challenges", 25 February, 2004.

[141] John Freebairn, Michael Porter and Cliff Walsh, eds. *National Priorities Project 1988. Spending and Taxing. Taking Stock,* Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1988, p.104.

[142] Freebairn *et al*., *National Priorities Project,* pp.112-114.

[143] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.499. In government, he shifted benefits to sole parents with a youngest child aged six or more to a Newstart Allowance, rather than the Parenting

argued for deregulated youth wages, so that young people could work for low wages but

gain job skills, a controversial idea that appeared in *Fightback!* but later dropped.[144]

Howard appeared to regret the disappearance of youth wage policy, for in government in

1999 he boasted he had

> fought consistently and persistently to achieve the preservation of youth wages to
>
> underwrite the simple proposition that, if an employer is required to pay a young person
>
> with little experience a wage not consistent with his or her age or experience, that
>
> employer will be disinclined to do so.[145]

Howard's welfare reform was outlined in the McClure Report, which was tabled

in 2000 and regarded by him as a "blueprint for welfare".[146] In this report, many 1980s

ideas resurfaced. In particular, McClure advocated the concept of reciprocal

responsibilities, which, it was claimed, would develop participation between individuals

and communities.[147] It was, in fact, mutual obligation, for Howard had stated in 1997

that while the government was obliged to help the genuinely needy, it was appropriate

that recipients "should give something back to society in return".[148] This argument had a

long provenance: he had raised it in his 1986 Alfred Deakin lecture, and in parliament

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Payment Single, which meant some families received considerably less cash a week. See Ann
Harding, Quoc Ngu Vu, Richard Percival and Gillian Beer, "The Distributional Impact of the Proposed
Welfare-to-Work Reforms Upon Sole Parents", National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling
(NATSEM), August 2005.
[144] For comments on *Fightback!* see Costello, *The Costello Memoirs,* p.57.
[145] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1999, p.9046.
[146] Howard, Address to St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal, Sydney, 1 May, 2001.
[147] Valerie Braithwaite, Moira Gatens and Deborah Mitchell, "If mutual obligation is the answer, what
is the question?" *Australian Journal of Social Issues,* 37, 3, August, 2002, pp.225-46, quoting Welfare
Reform Reference Group, "Participation Support for a More Equitable Society" (McClure Report)
Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, 2000.
[148] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 November, 1997, p.10460. Also Address to Australia Unlimited
Roundtable, Canberra, 4 May, 1999, "Building a Stronger and Fairer Australia: Liberalism in
Economic Policy and Modern Conservatism in Social Policy".

promised to attack welfare fraud by "enshrining the principle" that the unemployed would

work in return for benefits[149]. *Future Directions* had claimed

> The present system … is also open to abuse and does little to encourage self-reliance,
>
> self-respect or the work ethnic and encourages voluntary unemployment …. Under the
>
> [Coalition's] Community Service Scheme, unemployed people aged 19 or over will be
>
> required to engage in useful community work in return for their unemployment
>
> benefits.[150]

In government, mutual obligation was contained in the *Social Security Legislation*

Amendment (Work for the Dole) Act 1997, an idea he had "in different ways in different

guises" always held in public life, and had wanted to "bring about".[151] As he said, he

acted on a principle he had "unflinchingly advocated".[152]

Howard and social change

Howard in 1987 declared himself "the most conservative leader the Liberal Party

has ever had".[153] The description suited Howard's personality and his social views, but it

alarmed his colleagues at a time of change, and quickening community interest about

social justice issues, and greater demands from feminists, Indigenous people and

migrants. Much of the "anti-Howard sting" was

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[149] Howard, *The New Challenge of Liberalism,* The 1986 Alfred Deakin Lecture; see also CPD, Representatives 2 August, 1986, p.499.

[150] *Future Directions,* p.73. Christopher Puplick notes "John Howard's own powerful intellect and sheer determination turned these positions into party orthodoxy, reflected most coherently in *Future Directions*". *Is the Party Over? The future of the Liberals,* Text, Melbourne, 1994, p.57.

[151] Howard, Address to Work for the Dole Achievement Awards, Canberra, 9 March, 2000.

[152] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 December, 1997, p.11898.

[153] Howard interview with John Laws, Radio 2GB, Sydney, 2 March, 1987, quoted by Norman Abjorensen, *Hewson,* p.13.

provoked by his scepticism about multiculturalism, his opposition to South African sanctions, his campaign to retain all the British symbols of nationhood, his opposition to affirmative action, his distaste for feminism, and his apparent backing for most aspects of the Thatcher and Reagan experiments.[154]

Howard's views on conservatism were complex. As Marian Sawer points out, the political trend of libertarianism espoused by him and fellow "dries" did not relate to a kind of conservatism that preserved traditional institutions and values.[155] Menzies had eschewed conservatism when he formed the party, because he wanted a progressive party "willing to make experiments, in no sense reactionary".[156] Like Margaret Thatcher, Howard was willing to accept new and radical economic ideas, but remained resistant to changing ideas regarding race, apartheid, multiculturalism, feminism, ethnic diversity and alternative life-styles. Nor as Treasurer did he express urgency in overcoming gender wage disparity.[157]

In the 1970s Howard objected to Fraser's acceptance of Vietnamese asylum-seekers.[158] As a non-advocate of multiculturalism, or any form of separatism or "special group", he would have seen no reason to establish the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).[159] As well, he opposed Australia's sanctions against an apartheid South Africa, not, he insisted, because he supported apartheid, but because he believed the method

[154] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.243.
[155] Marian Sawer, Introduction to *Australia and the New Right,* ed. Marian Sawer, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1982, p.ix.
[156] Menzies, *Afternoon Light,* p.286.
[157] Howard, CPD, Representatives 7 September, 1982, p.1156.
[158] Fraser confirmed Howard's resistance to refugees: "We're not going to take too many of these people, are we?" Interview, 21 June, 2006, Melbourne. See also Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser. The Political Memoirs,* p.425.
[159] See Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser,* p.373.

would not work.[160] In the mid-1980s, he dismissed Labor's equal opportunity and affirmative action legislation, refused quotas for Liberal women candidates, and vetoed feminist groups within the Liberal Party (discussed in Chapter Six). When he advocated reducing Asian immigration numbers to ensure social harmony, he refused to retreat when accused of racism and abandoning the traditional bi-partisan approach to immigration. Each day he attended the Old Parliament House from 1974 he passed the mock Aboriginal Embassy and remained indifferent to protests of Indigenous people.[161] He alienated social liberal colleagues like Peter Baume, Ian Macphee and Christopher Puplick, who opposed many of his policies in Opposition, and on occasion were forced to vote with the Hawke government and against their own Party.[162]

With Howard's early life largely devoid of cultural or ethnic diversity, he appeared comfortable with the social conservatism of his youth. This was problematical in the 1980s when the nation underwent what Robert Manne describes as two "peaceful social revolutions" in culture and economics.[163] Carol Johnson writes that Howard's governments

> embraced economic change as an ultimately positive force for all Australians. However, rather than incorporating social change into the economic, they have attempted to

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[160]See Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.453. He shared Thatcher's unsympathetic attitude to sanctions against South Africa, according to Anthony Seldon and Daniel Collings, in *Britain Under Thatcher,* Pearson, Harlow, 2000, p.74.

[161] The Aboriginal Embassy was a group of tents erected by activists on the lawns outside Parliament House on Australia Day 1972 to symbolise Aboriginal alienation in their own land. See H C Coombs, *Trial Balance,* MacMillan, Crows Nest, 1981, p.290. Also Damien Short, "Reconciliation, Assimilation, and the Indigenous Peoples of Australia", *International Political Science Review,* 24, 4, 2003, pp.491-513.

[162] Peter Baume opposed Howard's stand on Labor's affirmative action legislation, resigned from shadow cabinet and parliament. Ian Macphee opposed Howard on market deregulation, immigration, affirmative action, was sacked from shadow cabinet, and lost pre-selection. See Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.320; Christopher Puplick, Liberal Party feminist network member, lost his Senate pre-selection to right-wing Bronwyn Bishop.

[163] Robert Manne, "The Howard Years: A Political Interpretation", *The Howard Years,* ed. Robert Manne, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2004, p.3.

reconcile people to economic changes by assuring them that fundamental social change can be restrained or reversed.[164]

The first systematic account of Howard's attempt to synthesise his own orthodox social views and economic reform was *Future Directions.*[165] When Howard lost leadership in 1989, he said he welcomed the new leader's "formal enshrinement" of the values and beliefs contained in the document, for it "marks the philosophic Bible of the modern Liberal Party and … brings together the varying strands in the Liberal Party".[166] Although largely ignored by the new (and later) leaders, *Future Directions* displayed Howard's preoccupation with charting a policy course that melded his social conservatism with economic change.

Future Directions

Future Directions was a 109-page document subtitled, *It's time for plain thinking,* authored by Howard and the National Party's leader, Ian Sinclair, published in 1988 with a cover depicting a suburban house with a picket-fence and white Anglo-Saxon family, and, for strategic reasons, launched in a Labor heartland electorate.[167] Its accompanying jingle, "Son, You're Australian", praised plain-thinking men in a changing world of "silver tongues and fancy dressers".[168] Howard joked in 1994 when he had ostensibly forsaken any idea of renewed leadership that while it was a document ahead of its time, it

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[164] Carol Johnson, *Governing Change. From Keating to Howard,* Network Books, 2nd ed., Perth, 2007. p.155.
[165] Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class,* pp.184-186.
[166] Howard, Media Conference, quoted in "A legacy of 'substance'", *The Australian,* 10 May, 1989.
[167] Brett, "Future Directions. New Conservatism's manifesto", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* 66, 1, June, 1989, pp.11-17.
[168] Bryce Courteney, "Son, You're Australian", Liberal Party of Australia, 1988. For verses and discussion on its anti-elitist message, see *Us and Them. Anti-Elitism in Australia,* eds. Barry Hindess and Marian Sawer, Network Books, Perth, 2004, pp.3-4.

was "tomorrow's man yesterday".[169] It was a record of his ideas and the first Coalition

roadmap for government, labelled "One Australia", where social conservatism and

economic radicalism blended at a time of changing domestic and international trends.[170]

It was also, as Kelly wrote in 1992, an attempt to distance the Coalition from Labor,

where Howard

> aspired to chart a new position for the Liberal Party that would endure into the twenty-
> first century – to create a model beyond the Menzies mould, a task the Liberals had never
> attempted. This was the position of the drys. For all Howard's faults as communicator,
> manager and politician, he possessed a redeeming virtue – he had a Liberal vision and the
> courage to articulate it.[171]

The contradictions between the social and the economic were evident.[172] As Brett says,

the most fundamental one was its call for a return to the social certainties of the past,

while supporting radical economic policies which would "disrupt the institutional

arrangements upon which many people's economic and social security depends".[173] It

contained the anomaly of government cuts alongside the Nationals' protectionism in rural

industries.[174] It was, therefore, a difficult document for Howard – with limited leadership

authority – to "sell" to moderate colleagues and the electorate. As Kelly wrote, the

[169] Howard, quoted by Don Greenlees, "Howard's End", *The Australian,* 31 May, 1994.
[170] Christopher Puplick said with the "fatally flawed exception of John Howard's 1988 *Future Directions* statement, [Liberal leaders have] failed to articulate with any clarity their vision for the future of Australia, their fundamental beliefs about what we should be co-operating to achieve". *Is the Party Over?* p.9.
[171] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* pp.246-247.
[172] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.430. See also Chris James *et al., A Defence of Economic Rationalism,* p.119.
[173] Brett, "Future Directions", pp.11-17.
[174] Brett, "Future Directions", pp.11-17.

challenge for the Liberals in the 1980s and beyond was to synthesise free market economics with a political ethic of caring, responsible liberalism, a synthesis which they failed to achieve then and had still not reached in the early 1990s.[175]

Howard remained faithful to the ideas behind *Future Directions,* returning in a 1995 pre-election campaign context to talk about the "synthesis between the best of our past and the desirability of positive change for the future".[176] On the anniversary of his tenth year as Prime Minister, his judgement appeared to be vindicated:

> Having suffered overwhelming ridicule back in late 1988 when as opposition leader he lassooed his political manifesto "Future Directions" to the vision of the white picket fence, he is here to tell you he was right all along.[177]

Twelve years after it was released, Michelle Grattan wrote that the thrust of *Future Directions* "could be found in the Coalition policies of the following decade".[178] Carol Johnson saw it contained a "blueprint" for the Howard government, on which he had built leading up to the 1996 election.[179] Fiona Allon considered the package of family values, individual home ownership and "one united nation" ideas instrumental in consolidating Howard's political agenda over the next decade.[180] John Tate claimed, "to the very end of his political career, Howard reiterated views on multiculturalism entirely consistent

[175] Kelly, *End of Certainty,* p.246.
[176] Howard, "The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach", 6 June, 1995.
[177] Tony Wright, "A decade at the pinnacle of Australian politics", *Bulletin,* 7 March, 2006.
[178] Michelle Grattan, "John Howard", *Australian Prime Ministers,* 3rd ed., ed. Michelle Grattan, New Holland, Sydney, 2003, p.455.
[179] Johnson, "Australian political science and the study of discourse". Paper presented at Disciplinary History of Political Science Stream of Jubilee Conference of Australasian Political Studies Association, Canberra, October 2002. See also Johnson, *Governing Change,* p.41.
[180] Fiona Allon, *Renovation Nation. Our Obsession with Home,* New South, Sydney, 2008, pp.88, 103.

with the position articulated in *Future Directions*".[181] Journalist Malcolm Farr felt it

delivered a broad, at times specific, idea of what Howard stood for when he won

government eight years later.[182] The Labor government mocked it, but Bob Hawke

apparently was the "first to perceive its potential appeal, white picket fence an all".[183]

Journalist Max Walsh saw "more than a touch of the absurdity" in its presentation and felt

"a party's philosophy deserves a sense of history, not nostalgia", but conceded it was

"very much the embodiment of Howard's political beliefs and agenda for a Liberal

Government".[184]

Howard's key themes – then, and in government – remained consistent. Woven

through the text of *Future Directions* are calls for financial deregulation, limited

government, reduced tariff protection, competition, wage bargaining, and voluntary

agreements, meshed with virtues relating to thrift, initiative, family, self-sufficiency,

independence and national pride. Pride in national history and identity would be restored.

Taxation reform would give Australians the "incentive they need to work, save and invest

and a more competitive, more productive economy".[185] Aborigines would flourish when

integrated into the Australian economy, while new citizens would commit to Australian

values and contribute to the nation, a precursor to later citizenship tests.[186] As journalist

Tony Wright observed of *Future Directions* after Howard had been in government for a

decade:

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[181] John Tate, "John Howard's 'nation' and citizenship test: multiculturalism, citizenship, and identity", *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 55, 1, March, 2009, pp.97-120.
[182] Malcolm Farr, "Howard's Agenda", *Howard's Race. Winning the Unwinnable Election,* ed. David Solomon, HarperCollins, Pymble, 2002, p.13.
[183] Labor Minister John Kerin called *Future Directions* a policy of "jumping forward into the 1950s", CPD, Representatives 7 March, 1989, p.511. For Hawke's comment, see Graham Freudenerg, *A figure of speech. A political memoir,* Wiley, Milton Qld, 2005, p.248.
[184] Max Walsh, "Howard Seals the Lib philosophy – in More Than One Way", *SMH,* 5 December, 1988, quoted by Chaples, "'Future Directions' or Tales of Politics Past?".
[185] *Future Directions,* p.36
[186] *Future Directions,* pp.92-93.

Socially, the traditional family had to be strengthened, education standards improved and

a homogenous Australian culture embraced more robustly. Professional purveyors of

guilt had attacked Australia's heritage and people. There had to be a return to common

sense and traditional values. Sound familiar?[187]

For Howard the document encapsulated key values, beliefs and policies, weighed against

three questions: "Does the proposal strengthen the family unit within the community? …

give individuals more incentive and hope? … [and] give a preference to private enterprise

over government enterprise and government monopoly?"[188] Although he tapped into a

"sympathetic vein in the Australian community" in relation to rebalancing immigration

and resettlement policies, there were adverse reactions from some Liberals on his attacks

on multiculturalism, and his construction of traditional family life redolent of the

Menzies' era.[189] Later, some could not recall the document at all.[190]

Future Directions risked being a political gymnastic act of moving forward while

simultaneously looking backwards, or, as Fiona Allon says, "shaking up society while at

the same time promising greater stability".[191] Brett criticised the document for failing to

convey the personal voice of a leader, its "tortured, clumsy prose" and lack of the

vividness and power that Menzies had made about similar points.[192] It attacked Labor's

economic reform programme, but once in government, it intended to accelerate

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[187] Tony Wright, "The house of Howard", *Bulletin,* 7 March, 2006.
[188] Howard, CPD, Representatives 13 April, 1989, p.1634.
[189] See Kelly, *End of Certainty,* pp.430-432.
[190] Neither key "dry" Jim Carlton nor "wet" Baden Teague could recall the document; interview 21 June, 2006 and 24 August, 2009 respectively.
[191] Allon, *Renovation Nation,* p.89.
[192] Brett, "Future Directions", pp.11-17.

"economic liberalism".[193] Howard did not resile from his views, especially when Liberal Party research indicated it was "starting to bite". [194] He had not drifted from this strategy in 2005:

> Contemporary Australian society understands that we do live in a world of change … that globalism is with us forever … they therefore want a government that delivers the benefits of globalisation and not one that foolishly pretends Canute-like it can hold back the tide …. But they also want … reassurance and they want to protect and defend those institutions that have given them a sense of security and a sense of purpose over the years.[195]

When asked by a *Bulletin* journalist in 2005, Howard admitted the document was a radical departure for the Liberals in the 1980s, but "quite similar to his current approach".[196] Indeed, he saw it as a true reflection of his values.[197] His first international speech when out of office harked back to those views: economic reform against "consistency and reassurance in other aspects of people's lives; the sense that not everything is changing".[198]

Future Directions is important for locating its 1980s context as the Coalition's first attempt under Howard's leadership to formally express political policies at a time of cultural and economic change, philosophical divisions and leadership tensions. Today, its value as a political document is often overlooked or trivialised and remembered more for

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[193] See Tom Conley, "The Domestic Politics of Globalisation", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 36, 2, 2001, pp.223-246: "the electoral alternative up until the 1996 election was an Opposition that offered a more comprehensive and rapid embrace with economic liberalism".
[194] Barnett, *John Howard,* p.546.
[195] Howard, Address at Launch of *The Conservative,* Canberra, 8 September, 2005.
[196] See Wright, "The last laugh", *Bulletin,* 19 October, 2005.
[197] Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006.
[198] Howard, Address to American Enterprise Institute, "Sharing Our Common Values", Washington DC, 5 March, 2008.

its perceived 1950s nostalgia. Nonetheless, it is a valuable document to measure the

extent of the continuity of many of Howard's policies.

Conclusion

Howard in the 1980s possessed formidable persistence and ambition, and the

Liberal Party policies he formed and took into government were formally shaped in that

decade. From 1975 and his stellar promotion as a Fraser protégé, whatever pretensions he

harboured about changing Australia's economic systems were stifled by being locked into

Cabinet confidentiality, and an apparent lack of authority to substantially change major

decisions.[199] He floundered in his attempts to bring in his preferred broad-based tax, to

stem the flow of asylum-seekers, to rescind decisions on sanctions against South Africa or

the formation of the multicultural SBS. His reputation as Treasurer was tainted through

unsustainable pre-election tax concessions and the government's inability to contain

budget deficits, unemployment, industrial strikes and high inflation. Even though his

tabling of the Campbell Report indicated the beginning of a new direction of financial

deregulation and reform, he did not openly join the "dries" within the Liberals, or defy

Cabinet decisions. Yet he was always ambitious, and was prepared to wait for more

propitious circumstances.[200] He later represented – fairly or unfairly – the Fraser

government as lacking policy courage, and was determined not to repeat the same mistake

when he formed government, particularly when he too controlled the Senate.   The extent

of the Coalition's defeat in 1983 forced an inventory of its situation, but the Valder

Report recommendations to improve organisational structure and electorate credibility

were largely ignored by a party riven with philosophical differences and leadership

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[199] For "rapid promotion", see Patrick Weller and Michelle Grattan, *Can Ministers Cope. Australian Federal Ministers at Work,* Hutchinson, Richmond, 1981, pp.29, 177.
[200] When Fraser on the night of the election defeat in 1983 rang Howard to say he was resigning, Fraser said when he put down the telephone, "I don't think that he was sorry"; Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser,* p.607.

rivalries (but not entirely by Howard, who later adopted its recommendation about partisan staff in ministerial offices).

Howard's basis for change involved limited welfare structured around mutual obligation, personal responsibility, lower tariffs, privatisation, and getting government out of the lives of individuals. He was opposed to centralised wage fixing (unlike Menzies), to compulsory union membership and what he saw as the powerful role of the trade union movement within the Labor government. From 1983, Howard's policies crystallised, while his political fortunes declined. His lack of leadership and interpersonal skills, the clash of "dries" and "wets", the absence of established debating forums within the Liberal Party structure, together with the sheer enormity of rebuilding the Party after years of Opposition and leadership bitterness, exacerbated his difficulties in shaping a new political direction. Howard failed in the 1980s to present himself as a credible, efficient, inclusive leader with policies presented in *Future Directions* that would win elections, as well as alienating himself from colleagues in a vast new Parliament House that lent itself to secrecy and plotting. Howard's first attempt at leadership was marked by conviction, doggedness in pursuing policies regardless of opposition, set-backs, ridicule, humiliation and ultimate loss of leadership.

Future Directions encapsulated Howard's economic policy trajectory but gave the impression of a 1950s social world. This criticism gained traction, although the document stands as the Liberal Party's first attempt to consolidate its new policy directions. His political ingenuity then, and later, was never to abandon old conservative social ideas, but to meld them with (often) radical, economic reforms. On this, Howard was remarkably consistent: he never fundamentally altered his views on industrial

relations, the traditional family, welfare, pride in Christian heritage and national heritage, Aboriginal commitment to the Australian mainstream economy, for new citizens to adopt Australian values, and the nation's sovereign right to protect its borders.

The Liberals' defeat in 1993 and further leadership turmoil cast the Liberal Party deeper into the political wilderness. At the same time, it renewed Howard's ambitions. He learnt from the experiences of the 1980s and what emerged in the 1996 election was a leader honed by adversity, betrayal, disappointment and failure, with sharp recall of old foes and allies. [201] In government, with memories of 1980s personal failures and duplicities, unity became an "overriding political principle". [202] Significantly, leading up to the 1996 election he had most of his policies in place. Prior to the campaign, he delivered a series of Headland speeches that reprised many old policies and offered a preview of the Howard government. They capitalised on the electoral exhaustion from Labor's reforms and the 1990-1991 recession, and appealed directly to Howard's "battlers", fitting his strategy of being "ordinary" and a "battler", while promising economic adventures against the certainty of old social manners. The next chapter, "The Headland Speeches" discusses how Howard picked up his 1980s narrative to win the 1996 election.

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[201] Henderson likened Howard to ALP "tribal political leaders" where "qualified supporters get government funded positions; qualified opponents do not". "John Howard: 10 Years On", Speech to New South Wales Fabian Society, 22 March, 2006.
[202] Malcolm Schmidtke and Gay Alcorn, "Being John Howard", *The Age,* 21 August, 2004.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HEADLAND SPEECHES

"[The Headland speeches] had a timeless quality …. They did not attempt to promise a utopian state of affairs. Instead, they referred to continual processes which are as valid now as they will be in twenty or fifty years from now".[1]
Howard, 1998.

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[1] John Howard, "The Government's Goals for 1998", Address to Australian Institute of Company Directors (SA Division), 28 January, 1998.

Introduction

This chapter discusses the policy continuities revealed in the Headland speeches delivered by John Howard prior to the 1996 election, and compares them with his 1980s policies and many he introduced in government. The Liberal Party re-election strategy was to limit policy detail to minimise errors or controversy, and framed public statements for broad appeal, but, despite this, it can be seen that a clear policy direction emerged.[2] After thirteen years in Opposition from 1983, spent in internecine leadership and philosophical conflicts, the Liberals had no tangible achievements to offer the electorate.[3] It relied on Howard as recycled but familiar leader, attacks on Paul Keating and the Labor government, and general electorate discontent. Howard concentrated on issues of importance to him: families, trade unions, Australia's place in an Asian region, Commonwealth/ State relations, welfare, immigration, history, national identity and his aversion to "political correctness". This chapter first outlines the pre-election context and then discusses each speech under its title, with a supplementary election document, "The Australia I Believe In".

Although the Headland speeches were crafted to suit the political climate and to position Howard as credible leader, the policies they contained were familiar and reflected his economic directions and social conservatism. Some gestures were designed to correct past perceived errors, and in what former Liberal Senator, Baden Teague, described as pre-election "clearing the decks", Howard expressed regret for comments he

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[2] After the 1993 election failure, Coalition research cautioned against radical policy commitments and recommended confining itself to "directions" and "general views". See Andrew Markus, *Race, John Howard and the remaking of Australia,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 200l, p.95. See also Pamela Williams, *The Victory. The Inside Story of the Takeover of Australia,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1997, p.99.

[3] Howard admitted that "One of the reasons for Labor Party successes federally in recent years has simply been its greater capacity to boast about its past achievements and current virtues". See "Some Thoughts on the Liberal Party Philosophy in the 1990s", *Quadrant,* July-August, 1994, p.21.

made in 1988 relating to Asian immigration.[4] It did not deter him from *stressing* cultural differences in the Headland speeches, and reinforcing his belief that while Asia was a valuable trading partner, Australia's heritage and future was European-centred, with a Western culture aligned to the United States or Britain.   Much of his narrative, therefore, concentrated on re-establishing pride in Australia's history, and in settling what he considered the "perpetual seminar" about national identity.[5] In these speeches, Howard exploited Keating's "big picture" portrayals of "Asianisation", Aboriginal reconciliation and multiculturalism, and conjured with the imagery of a nation confused about its national identity and history. The other themes were national economic dislocation and neglect from a Labor government in thrall to vested interests and élite or privileged groups. While Howard appealed to voter disaffection on many issues, the politics of grievance were not new for him, or created for the 1996 election.

The election strategy ostensibly was for the Headland speeches to build the "new image John Howard wanted".[6] Yet, the policies he presented differed little from those formed in the 1980s. His views on welfare policies returned, alongside the role he envisaged for families and voluntary organisations, which fitted with his preference for small government, freedom of choice, and outsourcing of welfare delivery services. A comparison of these speeches and some welfare policies he established in government shows close continuity.   On industrial relations reform, he stressed once again the need for flexible employer/ employee workplace negotiations, the eradication of central wage fixing systems, and the abolition of compulsory unionism.

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[4] Interview with Baden Teague, 24 August, 2009, Adelaide..
[5] Quoted by Robert Garran, *True Believer. John Howard, George Bush & the American alliance,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2004, p.52.
[6] Williams, *The Victory,* p.98.

Adviser and co-author of the first Headland speech, Michael L'Estrange, considered it was a "keystone in Howard's thinking".[7] Gerard Henderson, on the other hand, dismissed it as "vacuous, cliché-ridden and lacking detail.[8] Michael Wesley saw in Howard's later foreign policy speeches "the same values and formulations that are peppered through his 1995 headland speeches".[9] Each speech stresses identity and history, and, as Carol Johnson notes, Howard's 1995 vision of Australian identity would seem "very familiar to readers today – as it would have been to readers of 1980s Coalition policy documents".[10] Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen claim the speeches were meant to show that Howard "stood for something".[11] Paul Kelly wrote in 2009 that the 1996 election created a "governing model" that guided Howard throughout his eleven years of office.[12] This chapter will argue that Howard had always stated his values and policy directions, and that the Headland speeches were not a "creation" to show what "he stood for", but an old model that had found its time and place.

The pre-election context

The timing of the 1996 election, the declining fortunes of the Labor government, and Howard's second term as Opposition leader, lend some prescience to his prediction in 1986 that the "times would suit him".[13] Many of the economic and social ideas he had talked about throughout the 1970s and 1980s were now presented in 1995/ 1996 as a

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[7] Williams, *The Victory,* pp.323-324.
[8] Gerard Henderson, *A Howard Government? Inside the Coalition,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1995, p.106.
[9] Michael Wesley, *The Howard Paradox. Australian Diplomacy in Asia 1996-2006,* ABC Books, Sydney, 2007, p.36.
[10] Carol Johnson, "John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June 2007, pp.195-209.
[11] Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen, *John Winston Howard. The Biography,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2007, p.218.
[12] Paul Kelly, *The March of Patriots. The Struggle for Modern Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2009, p.238.
[13] Howard interview with Anne Summers, *Australian Financial Review,* Washington, July 1986. See also Summers, "The times do suit the PM: he moulded them", *Sydney Morning Herald,* 18 August, 2003.

forerunner to the kind of government he would lead, and in contrast to the Labor incumbent. The mid-1990s were marked by what social commentator, Hugh MacKay, called "The Big Angst", when the nation was fatigued with reform.[14] Howard did not promise a cessation of economic reform, but, as premised in *Future Directions,* it would be set against a return to traditional social values, and pride in national history and identity.

Howard accused Keating of privileging minority groups and élite interests at the cost of traditional "battlers", and promised to govern "for all", and in so doing engaged in what Johnson identified as a "revenge of the mainstream" discourse which "set the parameters" for his later terms of office.[15] In a spirit of identifying himself as "one of them", he appealed to "real" or "mainstream" Australians, described as "sensible, pragmatic, small-business people and workers interested in national unity and traditional values".[16] These were battling taxpayers depicted as being "ripped off" by Keating's vested interests.[17] This imagery of "victims" battling "Canberra's 'power games'" suited Howard's combative style, his "ordinary" persona, and his ability to grasp political opportunities, but was not a new approach. In Opposition in 1988 he used similar language, when he appealed to ordinary Australians who

> resent making sacrifices when those in privileged positions abuse their privileges to give favours to their mates. The Prime Minister's conduct, in abusing the coercive office that

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[14] Hugh MacKay, *Reinventing Australia. The mind and mood of Australia in the 90s,* Angus & Robertson, Pymble, 1993, pp.1-20.
[15] Johnson, *Governing Change. From Keating to Howard,* API Network, 2nd ed., Perth, 2007, p.54.
[16] Howard, quoted by Williams, *The Victory,* pp.95-96.
[17] See also Johnson, "Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", pp.195-209, and "Anti-Elitist Discourse in Australia", in *Us and Them. Anti-Elitism in Australia,* eds. Marian Sawer and Barry Hindess, Network Books, Perth, 2005, p.124.

he holds to help one of his mates, is deeply etched in the resentment of hundreds of

thousands of Australians who have been called upon to make monumental sacrifices.[18]

Like *Future Directions,* the Headland speeches had a pattern of "crisis" and

grievance followed by reassurance. They reflected Liberal Party research that showed

voters felt alienated by Keating's reforms.[19] In particular, Labor voters felt that Keating

was removed from traditional Labor roots, and Howard's target was therefore Labor's

working heartland that had "habitually voted Labor all their lives".[20] He mocked that

people could "hear Mr Keating noisily insisting that the sun is shining and the sky is blue,

but their own personal situations and prospects tell them a different story".[21] The

campaign slogan "For All of Us" appeared an anodyne phrase, encapsulating Howard's

promise of inclusion, but was, as Tim Dymond wrote in *Us and Them,* a "potent source

of appeal by choosing to fight the culture of the 'elites' in the name of 'real Australia'".[22]

This was an evident strategy throughout the speeches.

Although the risk-averse Liberal strategy was to make Howard a "small target",

he admitted it was

more a strategic retreat than disappearing act. There was a limit to how small I could

make myself as a target because I had some very well defined positions like IR and

[18] Howard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives) 22 March, 1988, p.1122.

[19] According to Williams, *The Victory,* p.97, Liberal Party research showed "increasingly large groups of voters felt excluded by Keating".

[20] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 November, 1995, p.4248.

[21] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In. The values, directions and policy priorities of a Coalition Government outlined in 1995", Liberal Party of Australia (n.d.) p.13.

[22] Tim Dymond, "A History of the 'New Class' Concept in Australian Public Discourse", *Us and Them,* p.73.

family tax, and generally being seen as a socially conservative person. That, I was never going to change.[23]

The Liberals' 1996 election campaign was fought against the perceived background of an electorate fatigued with reform, suspicious of further change, and aggrieved by the neglect of an unpopular and élitist Prime Minister. This suited Howard's personality and politics, for he appeared to be the antithesis of an élite and the personification of ordinary Australians who, he claimed, wanted economic security, a return to traditional social values, and pride in their national history. The Headland speeches show that Howard exploited the mood of the Australian electorate, while not fundamentally changing his 1980s economic views, or the socially-conservative values of an earlier era.

"The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach"

John Howard delivered the first Headland speech, "The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach", on 6 June 1995. It inaugurated the Menzies Research Centre's National Lecture Series, and provided an opportunity to praise Menzies, the liberal tradition, leadership, freedom of choice, families and industrial relations reform. Howard spoke about Australia's place in an Asian region, and stressed Australian values, and what he considered the quintessential national identity. The title suggested the Liberals' aim to be seen as a modern political party, keen to re-establish trust in government and its place in Australian life. Howard's recurrent theme was that the Liberals would govern for "mainstream Australians" in contrast to Keating, whose decisions were driven by "the noisy, self-interested clamour of powerful vested interests

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[23] George Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade,* Scribe, 2nd ed., Melbourne, 2006, p.170.

with scant regard for the national interest".[24] This provided contrast between styles of leadership, and the familiar theme of comparison between treatment of "battlers" and privileged élites.

In an earlier 1994 parliamentary debate, Howard had criticised Keating for catering to specific interest groups, saying:

> you govern on the interest group principle. You think politics is all about maximizing the needs and wants of interest groups, not about serving the overall national interest. You can see that thread running through every piece of legislation and policy that you characters put down. It is never the aggregate national interest; it is always the individual interest group that you are trying to serve.[25]

This was repeated in the first Headland speech where, by contrast, a Howard government would make

> decisions in the interests of the whole community … which have the effect of uniting, not dividing the nation, drawing upon the numerous community-based organisations which are the natural expression of the sense of neighbourhood which so many Australians have.[26]

Noted here was Howard's connection of themes of unity over division and safeguarding that "sense of community" raised in his 1974 maiden speech.

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[24] Howard, "The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach", Menzies Research Centre, 6 June, 1995.

[25] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 November, 1994, p.3045.

[26] Howard, "The Role of Government".

Integral to Howard's strategy was an appeal to Australians who, as research showed, had lost faith in "being Australian".[27] He likened Keating to a "modern day Marco Polo", who alone had discovered the region's economic importance to Australia's future, and ignoring the 1957 Australia-Japan Trade Agreement forged by the Menzies and Jack McEwen Coalition government.[28] However, while Asian trade was important, it was essential to stress Australia was not an Asian country. In a 1993 speech to the Samuel Griffiths Society, Howard had criticised Keating on many issues – Australia becoming a republic, changes to the Constitution, the flag, and rewriting Australian history – but he emphasised that

> In cultural, historical and political terms, Australia is a European nation. It is firmly part of the western world, sharing its democratic ideals and liberal values …. Nothing can, or will, alter that. To pretend otherwise is to deny reality, and to be ashamed of something of which we ought not to feel ashamed.[29]

In his Samuel Griffiths speech, Howard claimed that involvement with Asia carried with it recognition that many countries in the region did not, and perhaps never would, share "all of our democratic beliefs or our instinct for personal liberty".[30] Essentially, "involvement in Asia must not be at the cost of our deep links with Britain, the rest of Europe and the United States".[31] This emphasis on Australia's heritage as a European nation, with its Western culture and security interests aligned to traditional allies, was carried through to Howard's first Headland speech. He was uneasy about nations whose

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[27] F L Jones, "National Identity and Social Values", *People and Place,* 4, 4, 1996, pp.17-26.
[28] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[29] Howard, "Mr Keating's Mirage on the Hill: How the Republic, Like the Cheshire Cat, Came and Went", Samuel Griffith Society, Vol.3, Chapter 7, 1993.
[30] Howard, "Mr Keating's Mirage on the Hill".
[31] Howard, "Mr Keating's Mirage on the Hill". Cf Howard's later comment in "The Role of Government": "our association with the nations of the [Asian] region must be built on both realism and mutual respect".

values he did not share, and suspected many Australians felt the same way. Robert Garran describes Howard's approach to Asia as combining

> his political needs and his deep-seated personal beliefs …. As Howard saw it, Keating was damaging Australia's security interests by playing down the importance of the US alliance. And by promoting the importance of a group of outsiders – Asians – he was undermining the unity of Australia society and thereby damaging Australia's social fabric. Howard knew instinctively that many Australians were uneasy about Asians.[32]

In another 1995 document, "The Australia I Believe In", Howard stated that Australia should not make new friends in the world by "abandoning or insulting old ones for the sake of it".[33]

This first Headland speech stressed the theme that "our society" was different from those of geographic neighbours, but suggested that difference may lead to a more positive relationship if it rested heavily on a "comfortable acceptance of Australia's past, a confident assertion of its on-going values and traditions.[34] This consolidated Howard's beliefs – and his willingness to enter the debate on history and culture – of Australia as a democratic country with national characteristics that should not be subordinated. His argument was precise:

> strident and often factually ignorant repudiation of past Australian associations and traditions betrays an unseemly desire to ingratiate rather than a capacity to present Australia as an honourable, different but nonetheless wholehearted participant in a new

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[32] Garran, *True Believer,* p.17
[33] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In", p.25.
[34] Howard, "The Role of Government".

partnership carrying mutual benefit to all. Once we start disavowing our history, or disowning our values or changing our institutions simply because we think regional countries will respect us more for doing so, then we will be badly mistaken.[35]

Even when out of office in 2008, and to an American audience cautious about China's rising power, Howard described the pragmatic partnership Australia had built with China, with "no illusions on our part that we don't still deal with an authoritarian nation with scant regard for the democratic values of our societies".[36] As a private citizen and friend of the US President, he promised that China would never share the "intimate strategic relationship" that marked the US/ Australia liaison".[37]

Howard expressed pride in Australia's national identity by stating what he believed – Australia was not an Asian country – but suggested that after thirteen years of Labor governments there existed some national confusion.[38] Johnson has written about the emergence in the 1980s and 1990s of a trend of "citizen identity" politics, where governments encouraged a kind of citizenship that suited their economic outcomes.[39] Howard wanted to erase Keating's version of cultural history or nationalism and replace it with one that suited his views and preferences, a contradictory exercise considering his claim of impatience with politicians who used nationalism for political purposes, or who appointed themselves as "cultural dietitians".[40] Keating had, in his own words, "pressed the starter's pistol on the history wars", and opened the debate on Asia, the flag,

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[35] Howard, "The Role of Government".

[36] Howard, Address to American Enterprise Institute, "Sharing our Common Values", Washington DC, 5 March, 2008.

[37] Howard, "Sharing our Common Values".

[38] Howard agreed "he brought back pride in being Australian". Interview with Howard, 24 March, 2006, Melbourne.

[39] See Johnson, "Reconstructing Australian Identity", *Journal of Australian Political Economy,* 39, June, 1997, pp.48-54. See also "Shaping the Social: Keating's Integration of Social and Economic Policy", *Just Policy,* 5, February 1996, pp.10-16, where Johnson quotes Paul Keating as seeing "policy as a process of national reinvigoration and reinvention. …. Of national character building".

[40] Howard, "The Role of Government".

Aboriginal reconciliation, republicanism, sentiment for Britain and Robert Menzies, and the ANZAC mythology. [41] Howard rejected Keating's version of history and culture, for it mocked everything he valued, was not the "truth" as he saw it, and he recognised it as "electoral poison". [42] Drawing on his understanding of "ordinary" Australians, Howard selected national symbols with sentimental appeal that resonated with his own ideas of historical pride and relevance, and which had, he said, "emerged either after long years of usage and acceptance or, in the case of the Anzac legend, from a cataclysmic event in our nation's history". [43]

Consolidating fears that social and historical traditions important to Australians had been dismantled or abused by Labor, Howard warned the institutions of parliament and democracy were under attack, with contempt for parliamentary processes causing public mistrust and cynicism. [44] As he complained:

Question Time has been debased, parliament relegated to second best through major statements often made outside parliament even when in session …. The absurd and cowardly Question Time roster for Ministers will be discontinued. As Prime Minister I will attend all Question Times when Parliament sits. Australia will no longer have a part-time Prime Minister. [45]

It was not a central issue in the election campaign, but fitted the depiction of Keating as a leader neglectful and disdainful of Westminster conventions and Australian people. It

[41] Keating, quoted by Kelly, *The March of Patriots,* p.65.
[42] Kelly, *The March of Patriots,* p.74.
[43] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[44] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[45] Howard, "The Role of Government".

also highlighted what Howard identified as community disappointment in the "apparent inability of governments to cure social ills".[46]

"Choice" was a key word in this first Headland speech. Howard considered it was the government's responsibility to "expand and enhance freedom of individual choice".[47] The concept of "choice" appeared frequently in Howard's earlier statements, particularly in his maiden speech, *Future Directions,* and in parliamentary debates on industrial relations, childcare, health, education and employment. As Treasurer in 1980 he had claimed to share Menzies' belief that "politics was about choice, a choice between a liberal and a socialist way of doing things, a choice between public and private command over the nation's resources".[48] Reflecting on that speech eighteen years later, Howard believed that "nothing much has changed".[49] In terms of his views on compulsory unionism, expressed in this Headland speech, nothing at all had changed:

> These ought to be simple unarguable rights in a free society, yet incredibly enough advocating such basic freedoms continues to draw fierce resistance. That is because there are some who still believe there should be no choice. They think that the only way is the union way.[50]

In moving the topic of "choice" to industrial relations, Howard maintained that the "essence" of the Coalition's policy was an

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[46] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[47] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[48] Howard, "The Australian Economy", The 1980 Sir Robert Menzies Lecture, in *The Menzies Lectures. 1978-1988,* ed. Alan Gregory, Sir Robert Menzies Lecture Trust, Melbourne, 1999, p.37.
[49] *The Menzies Lectures,* p.47.
[50] Howard, "The Role of Government".

unswerving belief that individuals should have the right to decide. They should be free to

join or not to join a union. They should be free to choose their own workplace

arrangement …. to conduct any negotiations on workplace arrangements …[51]

Once in government, Howard introduced legislation to outlaw compulsory unionism, and

with *WorkChoices* claimed to offer the employer/ employee the flexibility he believed

would reform industrial relations culture, increase productivity and choice, and provide

women with the work/ life balance they sought.

This Headland speech, as with *Future Directions,* placed traditional families as

vital community institutions. Howard argued that family policies should be subjected to

a comprehensive and integrated approach, not a "footnote" to industrial negotiations or

policies relating to taxation, welfare or health. He promised a pro-family industrial

relations policy that considered the demands of working parents through benefits for sole-

income families who chose to have one parent at home with young children.[52] This

preference was repeated in "The Australia I Believe In" where he stressed those families

would be given both choice and priority under a Coalition government, as a correction to

what he saw as Labor's discrimination against homebound parents caring for children

during early formative years.[53] None of this was novel, as support for traditional families

through positive taxation measures was a consistent policy approach for Howard then,

and in government.[54]

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[51] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[52] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[53] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In", p.36.
[54] For example, the way "family assistance is targeted to young children under the new tax system gives greater freedom for a parent to stay at home when children are very young". Howard, Keynote Address to ACOSS National Congress, Adelaide, 5 November, 1998.

Although a peripheral issue in this Headland speech, gun ownership played a tragic and unexpected role once Howard was installed in government. His first day in Parliament House as Prime Minister was marred by earlier events in Tasmania when a single gunman killed thirty-five people. Howard had signaled his distaste for guns by saying in this first Headland speech

> it would be a cardinal tragedy if Australia did not learn the bitter lessons of the United States regarding guns …. Whilst making proper allowance for legitimate sporting and recreational activities and the proper needs of our rural community, every effort should be made to limit the carrying of guns in Australia.[55]

Howard told a sombre parliament that Australia had to learn from the folly of freely-available guns.[56] His first actions in government were to restrict gun ownership and impose a national ban on automatic and semi-automatic weapons.

"A Competitive Australia"

A month after his first Headland speech, Howard delivered his second speech, "A Competitive Australia", subtitled, "The Government's role in generating the conditions to make Australia a better place to do business and create jobs".[57] This allowed full rein to outline the economic reforms that would create jobs and restore Australia's economic stability, and included reconsideration of the role of State/ Federal relations and improved co-ordination of infrastructure policy.[58] In his maiden speech Howard had hinted at a centralised government approach, and in government this was evident with his taxation

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[55] Howard, "The Role of Government".
[56] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 April, 1996, p.24.
[57] Howard, "A Competitive Australia", Address to the Committee for Melbourne, 13 July, 1995.
[58] Howard, "A Competitive Australia".

and industrial relations policies. Robyn Hollander concludes in her analysis of how Howard's values shaped his approach to federalism, that it was "informed by the goal of building a single nation, with a single, national economy and a single, national identity".[59]   In this Headland speech, Howard's overarching views emerged as workplace reform, free trade and competition, with ramifications for centralist policies. Only through national industrial relations reform, he repeated, could enterprise and initiative flourish within the globalisation and technological revolutions of the past two decades.[60]

Returning to the perception of electorate grievance, Howard complained that Keating had squandered Australia's fortunes through economic mismanagement, high unemployment and spiraling foreign debt.[61]   He likened Australia's economic situation to the parlous state of Mexico, and warned that even Hong Kong and Singapore, with their limited resource bases, had passed Australia in per capita income. New Zealand, on the other hand, having embraced economic rationalism, enjoyed skyrocketing economic performance and national pride. To encourage prosperity and productivity, Howard promised to establish a Productivity Commission

> to emphasise our commitment to a more competitive and productive Australia. When we
> win government we will merge the functions of the Industry Commission, EPAC and the

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[59] Robyn Hollander, "John Howard, Economic Liberalism, Social Conservatism, and Australian Federalism", *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 53, 1, 2008, pp.85-103. See also Andrew Parkin and Geoff Anderson, eds., "Reconfiguring the Federation?" *Howard's Fourth Government,* Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall, NSW Press, 2008, pp.95-113.
[60] Howard, "A Competitive Australia".
[61] Howard in "A Competitive Australia" said: "When I left office [1983] our foreign debt stood at a manageable $23 billion. Today, our foreign debt burden is a crippling $167 billion".

Bureau of Industry Economics in a single entity which will be re-named the Productivity Commission.[62]

The Commission would be comprised of experts in micro-economic issues and social policies, with authority to examine restrictive labour market practices. [63] By removing rigidities and impediments between employer and employee, Howard again argued that productivity, greater economic returns, efficiency and wealth production were possible. As promised, in his first year in office, Howard introduced the Productivity Commission Bill, which focused on international competitiveness.[64]

In this Headland speech, Howard maintained his hostility towards unions. Defeating the union movement was "the greatest single economic and attitudinal change", to be achieved by giving more power to individuals through negotiated workplace agreements.[65] In government this appeared as Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs). To stress who would be the beneficiaries of those reforms, he acknowledged the "battlers" betrayed by unions and Labor, and who had borne the brunt of the Accord-based industrial relations system, falling wages, widening income disparities, industry rationalisation, and lowered tariff protections. [66] This was a direct appeal to Labor/ union voters, and he instanced the union's folly of creating "Super Unions", which he claimed were huge conglomerates removed from workers' needs and

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[62] Howard, "A Competitive Australia".

[63]"The first role of any government in securing the welfare of its people is to provide for sound economic foundations", Howard said at ACOSS in 1998. However, as Johnson points out in "Shaping the Social: Keating's Integration of Social and Economic Policy", the Hawke and Keating governments strove for more positive balance in economic and social policies. See Kim Beazley's comments in Labor's 1995 election document *Shaping the Nation,* where the government had no option to implement a free market economy, but "in a way that safe-guarded the interests of the less well off or, at least, made Australian society no more unequal than it had been before". Quoted by Johnson, *Just Policy,* pp.10-16.

[64] See CPD, Representatives 4 December, 1996, p.7720.

[65] Howard, "A Competitive Australia".

[66] Howard, "A Competitive Australia".

which straddled a diverse range of occupational interests, often with little in common.[67] A year before in 1994 in a (perhaps unwitting) amusing parliamentary remark, he cited the "ludicrous amalgamation" of a union that "embraces both clowns and journalists".[68]

This second Headland speech was also directed to a business and community audience for whom Labor's protective dismissal laws were unpopular. Howard made a "hard and fast" promise to ensure an "unfair dismissal provision which is fair to both employers and employees".[69] This prefaced the unfair dismissal laws that he almost immediately introduced into parliament, and it is noteworthy that much of Howard's language in this Headland speech in relation to industrial relations was used in 2005 when he introduced his *WorkChoices* legislation.

"A Fair Australia"

For his third Headland speech on 13 October 1995 Howard addressed the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) and outlined his vision of a "Fair Australia". His message was that it was not the government's role or its responsibility to assume full responsibility for social security. Families, he declared, provided the "best welfare support system yet devised".[70] This contained no surprises, for when Howard was Treasurer in 1980, the then government had talked about using the "unpaid labour of their womenfolk, rather than depend on services from the state".[71] In his 1995 "The Australia I Believe In" document, Howard reiterated that social responsibilities must

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[67] Howard, "A Competitive Australia".
[68] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 June, 1994, p.1782.
[69] Howard, "A Competitive Australia".
[70] Howard, "A Fair Australia", Address to ACOSS, Sydney, 13 October, 1995.
[71] See Marian Sawer, "Political manifestations of Australian libertarianism" *Australia and the New Right,* ed. Marian Sawer, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1982, p.10.

properly be shared with families and charitable organisations.[72]   It was his belief, with

policies in government giving it full expression, that community, welfare, charitable, or

faith-based organisations were best placed to provide advice and manage assistance "at

the coalface".[73]   This echoed his 1985 statements about "privatising" some government

activities, specifically citing the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul.[74]   Significantly,

Philip Mendes notes that the church-based non-government bodies that Howard preferred

over peak (political) welfare bodies such as ACOSS had in common

> a moral or religious framework, were willing to cooperate with government policy, were
>
> only minimally involved in political advocacy and did not espouse left-wing views, were
>
> willing to form partnerships with the corporate sector, were attached to deserving rather
>
> than undeserving disadvantaged groups, and were part of a longstanding charitable
>
> culture.[75]

As an organisation committed to serving its constituency through advising government

policy on welfare issues, ACOSS found its influence curtailed in 1996 when Howard

became Prime Minister. This moved away from the social liberalism practised by

previous leaders, when, as Sawer points out, peak groups like the Australian Council of

Trade Unions (ACTU) and ACOSS had, for example, argued for formal arbitration

processes that assured decent and living wages to ensure people's full participation in the

community.[76]   Howard had always made clear his intolerance of collective interests and

"political advocacy" that ran counter to his agenda, citing "choice" and flexibility as

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[72] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In", p.23.
[73] Howard, "A Fair Australia".
[74] Quoted by Mike Steketee, "The Howard way to better welfare", *SMH,* 24 May, 1985.
[75] Philip Mendes, *Australia's Welfare Wars Revisited, The Players, the Politics and the Ideologies,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.132. See also Ruth Phillips, "Tamed or Trained? The Co-option and Capture of Favoured NGOs", *Third Sector Review,* 13, 2, 2007, pp.27-48.
[76] Marian Sawer, *The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2003, p.67.

preferable processes, and, crucially, welfare delivery in the hands of private, charitable or religious organisations under tender to the government.

In this third Headland speech, Howard again appealed to a sense of grievance that Australia was a less fair and secure place under Labor, where not everyone enjoyed the benefits of an ostensibly prosperous nation:

> Australians are now being told that they are enjoying the longest period of economic growth in decades. But for millions of Australians, these claims have a very hollow ring to them. They are quite rightly asking themselves: "after all the pain and hardship we have gone through – supposed to secure our future – what have we gained, and is our future any more secure as a result?"[77]

He cited the widening gap between rich and poor, and claimed that, despite workers' honest efforts, their security, fairness and reward for effort had dissipated under Labor.[78] Families were again celebrated as the wellspring of welfare and community cohesion. To followers of his public statements, it induced a sense of oratory déjà vu. The family was

> and will continue to be, the foundation and most important stabilising influence in our society. Protecting and strengthening the family unit is the key to maintaining social cohesion and economic stability in the future.[79]

In "The Australia I Believe In" document of 1995, he had spoken about a future where greater opportunities existed for strengthening "the great building block of our society –

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[77] Howard, "A Fair Australia".
[78] Howard, "A Fair Australia". He claimed that since the 1970s the annual income gap between poorest neighbourhoods where unemployment was sometimes higher than 20 per cent and the richest where unemployment was in the vicinity of 5 per cent, had widened by 92 per cent.
[79] Howard, "A Fair Australia".

the family".[80] And when his new government assembled in parliament in 1996, the

Governor-General's speech reiterated that a strong family life offered the "best support

and welfare system yet devised".[81] When Howard returned to ACOSS in 1998 as Prime

Minister, he repeated this theme, stating unnecessarily that it was "as true today as it has

ever been [that] I passionately believe that the family is and always will be the best

welfare system ever devised". To emphasise his priority, he promised a new portfolio of

Family and Community Services to take care of the "broad array of family assistance

programmes" he had established in government.[82]

In "A Fair Australia" Howard acknowledged that some Aborigines lived in

conditions akin to a Third World Country, and in six paragraphs outlined the steps he

planned to ameliorate their circumstances. Consistent with views outlined in *Future

Directions,* this would be achieved through health care and housing infrastructure, and in

providing resources and training to equip Indigenous people with skills to manage their

lives within mainstream Australia. He stressed the legacy of previous Coalition

governments in providing social and humanitarian assistance to those in need, and how

they had "extended the humanitarian hand which saw so many refugees received into this

country".[83] To new migrants and refugees from "non-English speaking backgrounds",

he promised government assistance to learn English, for that was the "passport to greater

opportunities in our society".[84] The theme of new citizens adopting Australian values to

fit within their new environment was touched upon. This was later converted to

government policy in 2007 as compulsory citizenship tests and knowledge of Australian

[80] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In", p.21.
[81] Governor-General's speech, CPD, Representatives 30 April, 1996, p.17.
[82] Howard, Address to ACOSS, 5 November, 1998.
[83] Howard, "A Fair Australia". This was probably an appeal to Asian or migrant constituencies as part of his "regret" for his 1988 Asian immigration statements.
[84] Howard, "A Fair Australia".

history, customs and values, in what was interpreted as distaste for multiculturalism and preference for assimilation.[85]

As an indication of how far Howard had diminished social liberalism and moved towards the harsher elements of neo-liberalism, critic Francis Castles noted in 2001 that it was "highly appropriate" that Howard tendered welfare delivery services to religious charities "since the government is well on the way to restoring the conditionality of payment which makes welfare a charity rather than a right".[86] Clement Macintyre points out in his paper, "From Entitlement to Obligation in the Australian Welfare State" that "genuine" mutual obligation was always part of the Australian welfare system, with then Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, claiming that the Coalition government had purloined Labor policies.[87] Nevertheless, Howard, in language and actions, went further and his address to ACOSS in 1995 was an indication of where he intended to take a Coalition government, set against the dichotomy of the old social liberal/ New Right, neo-liberal influences. His preference, as always, was to privatise welfare delivery to religious or charitable organisations and to encourage personal responsibility and mutual obligation. When Howard returned to ACOSS in 1998, he stated that governments had a role to play in ensuring dignity for the individual and strengthening families and local communities, but repeated his earlier assertion that governments could not act alone. Responsibility, he said, rested with individual self-reliance and a "sense of moral obligation and duty". [88]

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[85] See John Tate, "John Howard's 'nation' and citizenship test: multiculturalism, citizenship and identity", *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 55, 1, March, 2009, pp.97-111. See also Richard Kerbaj, "Learn English, PM tells Muslims", *The Australian,* 1 September, 2006.
[86] Francis G Castles, "A farewell to the Australian welfare state", *Eureka Street,* 11, 1, January-February, 200l, pp.29-31.
[87] Clement Macintyre, "From Entitlement to Obligation in the Australian Welfare State", *Australian Journal of Social Issues,* 34, 2, May, 1999, pp.103-118.
[88] Howard, Address to ACOSS, 5 November, 1998.

There was no distance traveled from his 1995 Headland speech to the later ACOSS speech; rather, the pathway was paved for later welfare reform,

In government, as well as the mutual obligation processes he implemented, and touched on above, Howard outsourced many welfare delivery services, but retained power over those agencies, and, of course, policy formulation. He closed the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) and replaced it with Job Network that comprised private, charitable and religious organisations on contracts. [89] The "no criticism" clause written into those contracts was a contentious issue, as some church and voluntary agencies felt their independence and social advocacy roles were being compromised.[90] Some operating agencies refused to implement what they considered harsh penalties for beneficiaries who breached the government's job-seeking regulations.[91] Research undertaken by the Parliamentary Library showed that when funding was cut in the 2005-2006 Budget because of a buoyant economy (and ostensibly more jobs), not-for-profit providers were placed in the invidious situation of being committed to vulnerable jobseekers, but whose alignment with government policies inferred they legitimised its policies.[92] In the context of competition, choice, and private sector involvement, it followed trends preferred by Howard, and from which he never resiled.

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[89] See Tony Eardley, "Mutual obligation and the job network: the effect of competition on the role of non-profit employment services", *Australian Journal of Social Issues,* August 2002, 37, 3, pp.301-315. For discussion on "Job Network: What can it offer?" and Howard's employment placement services being regarded as a "show case internationally" see Elizabeth Webster, *Just Policy,* 17, December, 1999, pp.32-42

[90] Marion Maddox, ABC Radio National, *Encounter,* "Faith in Politics", 16 November, 2008. See also Mendes, "The Churches, Faith-based Welfare and Social Justice", *Australia's Welfare Wars Revisited,* p.223.

[91] See Eardley, "Mutual obligation and the job network": "Job Network represented a significant challenge for non-profit, community-based agencies …. accustomed to working in partnership with government on a grant-for-service basis …. they were faced with full-scale competition …. There was also resistance to taking on responsibility for policing the activity test, which community-based agencies in particular saw as inimical to their traditional advocacy role".

[92] Matthew Thomas, "A review of developments in the Job Network", Parliament of Australia Library Research Paper, 24 December, 2007, 15, p.26.

In 1995, "A Fair Australia" concluded with a promise to provide a balance between delivering a modern, efficient economy and the "moral obligations of the civilised society to care for its less fortunate".[93] Howard repeated his government priorities would be to assist traditional, one-income families, to tighten eligibility for benefits, and to extract return for those who received them. He presented a welfare map that was premised on, as far as possible, self-reliance, mutual obligation, and a diminished role for government in welfare delivery.

"Politics and Patriotism: A Reflection on the National Identity Debate"

This fourth speech on "Politics and Patriotism" was delivered in December 1995 and purported to be a "Reflection on the National Identity Debate". It gave Howard further opportunity to castigate Keating for politicising the debate on national identity in a "crudely self-serving way".[94] This omitted, as noted earlier, Howard's own ambition to re-engineer language, history and nationalism.[95] Also as noted, many of Howard's cultural and historical ideas reflected family influences, and this Headland speech encapsulated many long-standing biases relating to traditional allies like Britain and the US, ANZAC as the touchstone of Australian nationhood and identity, and Australia as a Christian country proud of its legacies.

To stress the power of using history in politics, Howard recalled George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and warned that Keating was "living proof of the Orwellian dictum that those who seek to control the future first try to control the past by distorting it

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[93] Howard, "A Fair Australia".

[94] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism: a reflection on the national identity debate", Melbourne, 13 December, 1995.

[95] See Johnson, "Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", pp.195-209.

for their own particular narrow purpose".[96] Again, this was not a new idea: a year before

this Headland speech, Howard had written in a *Quadrant* article:

> In fighting the battles of history with the Labor Party, the Liberals must remember
>
> George Orwell's proposition: "Who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls
>
> the present controls the past". There are still far too few Liberals who fully comprehend
>
> just how committed Paul Keating and many in the Labor Party are to the quite ruthless
>
> use of history – or more particularly their version of it – as a political weapon.[97]

That year (1994) he had complained that Labor used history as a political weapon to

marginalise the liberal or conservative side of Australian politics.[98] In this fourth

Headland speech, he cited Keating's derisory remarks about Australia's traditional

connection with Britain, its perceived servility to a colonial power, and therefore lack of

nationalism and independence. By contrast, Howard outlined his views on Britain's

legacy, the value of the monarchy, and the validity of the conservative tradition. This

was his perpetual story of Anglo-Celtic heritage, national courage, egalitarian values and

achievement. [99]

Howard placed Australia's past, its identity and self-image against the politics of

the so-called "history wars", but it was predominantly based on personal conviction. He

again argued that Keating had striven to rewrite history, and to "intimidate all those

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[96] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".

[97] Howard, *Quadrant,* July-August, 1994, p.21.

[98] Howard, "Australian liberalism. Grappling with the 1990s", *Sydney Papers,* 6, Summer, 1994, p.37,
quoted by Sean Brawley, "A Comfortable and Relaxed Past: John Howard and the 'Battle of
History'", *Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History,*
http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/brawley.htm.

[99] See Johnson, "John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", pp.195-209.

Australians who still feel strong ties to Britain".[100] He followed this up within months of

being in government when he delivered the 1996 Sir Thomas Playford Lecture and

criticised Keating's approach to Australian history, and for stifling "voices of dissent";

Howard, on the other hand (with obvious irony) believed that history was "a story for all

our people" and "owned by no-one".[101] Of a piece with this narrative, and a forerunner

to the 1996 campaign slogan, "For All of Us", in this Headland speech Howard promised

inclusion on the basis of those "lively traditions and values which bind us together as a

people".[102] In "The Australia I Believe In" document, he accused Labor of dividing

> Australians in the hope of short-term political advantage … rather than to unite
>
> Australians in a common cause. This is highlighted in its attempts to distort Australian
>
> history, to demean the values of previous generations and to manipulate Australian
>
> nationalism – all in the interests of Labor's narrow partisan cause.[103]

Howard constructed a national identity based on a proud form of national identity

and history, but which was under threat from Labor's "big picture" agenda that neglected

mainstream Australians. Importantly, it reflected his views and desire to restore a past

that paid tribute to Britain's legacy, set against the Australian experiences of his parents'

generation. In this speech, he displays contempt for the government's overlooking of the

contributions of earlier generations:

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[100] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism". See also Mark McKenna, "Different Perspectives on Black Armband History" Parliament of Australia Parliamentary Library Research Paper 5, 1997-1998.

[101] Howard, Sir Thomas Playford Lecture, Adelaide Town Hall, 5 July, 1996. See also Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2003, p.137. "This speech was most notable for its prosecution of the History Wars …. It was perhaps inevitable that Howard would return to the same theme when he gave the Sir Robert Menzies Lecture on 'The Liberal Tradition' later in the year".

[102] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".

[103] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In", p.14.

Listening to the Government you could be forgiven for thinking that it is only in the year 2000 that Australia is, finally, going to throw off the last vestiges of 200 years of troubled adolescence. This is to underrate not only the sacrifices of preceding generations but also their sophistication and it insults us all ….[104]

In this last Headland speech, Howard attacked Keating for what he called "minority fundamentalism", and complained of being accused of intolerance towards minorities because he valued mainstream practices or values.[105] He referred back to *Future Directions* and challenged those who accused him of prejudice against other forms of family to "find any public utterance of mine over the past 20 years to support an allegation of such a prejudice".[106] He omitted reference to *Future Directions* that had, indeed, promised to restore balance between alternative life styles, with family the core unit of society.[107] He nonetheless positioned himself as a leader of a diverse nation who would "heal and unite, not wound and divide".[108] His strategy blended several aspects: the mood of a restless electorate, his wish to restore a positive sense of history and national identity and the promise of inclusive government as opposed to Keating's "vindictively exclusivist one".[109] These were Howard's interpretations and his belief in speaking plainly, as opposed to the "political correctness" which he ridiculed under Labor, and the use Keating made of it in portraying Australian history:

Tolerance has been one of our distinguishing virtues for a very long time. It's easy to lose sight of that fact because there is a school of "history" which ignores or trivialises all

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[104] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".
[105] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".
[106] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".
[107] *Future Directions,* p.11.
[108] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".
[109] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".

those parts of the past which can't be conscripted into glorifying a politically correct version of the present.[110]

Howard repeated his belief that migrants should speak English as an essential entry point into the community and finding employment, and in the context of national identity, admitted the difficulties *for all concerned* in accepting post-war migrants. Of importance was the newcomers' "participation in the body politic" and their overriding and unifying commitment to Australia".[111] In 2005, following terrorist attacks in the United States, these sentiments were unequivocally repeated:

> My view, very simply, is that you come to this country, you have the incredible privilege of living in one of the best societies in the world and you have rights. But you also have the responsibility to endorse and imbibe and embrace the values of our society.[112]

Howard's restated his views that Australia's relationship with, and in, the Asia-Pacific region, would not be subordinate to, or at the expense of, Australia's sense of identity, history or character. As he declared, "Australia must meet the regional challenges of the future, in Asia and elsewhere, to adapt to changing circumstances but with constant pride in our history, our values and our institutions".[113]

Under this Headland speech's subject of patriotism and politics, Howard wove through other familiar subjects: unions, workplace relations and families. He again

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[110] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".
[111] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".
[112] Howard interview with Barry Cassidy, ABC TV, *Insiders,* 7 August, 2005. Then Treasurer Peter Costello said those unprepared to accept Australian laws or values should be denied citizenship; see "Worth Promoting, Worth Defending – Australian Citizenship", *Sydney Papers,* 18, 2, Autumn, 2006, pp.76-83.
[113] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".

targeted Labor voters and warned that unions would become "expensive anachronisms" and – as a forerunner to later workplace agreements – urged that mutual trust be built between employer and employees. In a gesture towards women in the workforce, he predicted that school hours and childcare would be modified to reflect increasing participation of both parents in the workforce. He remained committed, however, to

> an Australia where the cohesive, stabilising and supporting qualities of families were given greater encouragement, not only for the emotional worth that would bring but for the contribution it would make to the aggregate good of society.[114]

Howard's views on the traditional Australian family remained an idealised construction, and underlined his determination at a policy level that it was paramount within *his* version of a fair, competitive, secure liberal nation built on *his* version of Australian cultural values and historical interpretations.

"The Australia I Believe In. The values, directions and policy priorities of a Coalition government outlined in 1995".

"The Australia I Believe In" policy document was prepared to frame Howard's personal beliefs. Considering his leadership difficulties in the 1980s and the residual resistance from his social-liberal-orientated colleagues, it was imperative to rebuild his credibility within the Party, and to offer policies suitable for a modern Australia. It was based on extending the economic reforms of the Labor government, while simultaneously challenging its wider picture encompassing Asia, reconciliation and republicanism. Howard's welfare policies on self-reliance and mutual obligation originated from early family years, but fitted with neo-liberal ideas. Ideas expressed in this document about

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[114] Howard, "Politics and Patriotism".

traditional marriages, and the value of ANZAC in the story that Australia told itself about its national identity and nationhood, remained unaltered from those outlined before, and later in government.

The rhetoric of "The Australia I Believe In" followed the four Headland speeches. It echoed the theme of striving for a united community rather than one where divisions were widened through different treatments between "insider" interest groups and the "broad Australian mainstream".[115]   Howard again identified impediments to Australia's progress and prosperity as rigid labour markets, militant union leaders, unfair dismissal laws, political correctness, élite, privileged interest groups and class divisions. In short, he believed

> in an Australia whose national government embodies the decency, pragmatism, integrity and down-to-earth commonsense of the great mainstream of Australian society … [where] people's aspirations are not limited by phony concepts of class warfare and archaic labour market rules which serve the self-interest of trade union leaders.[116]

It was a summary of Howard's beliefs: the plain man's exhortation of commonsense and aspiration, mainstream interests, self-reliance and limited welfare, where choice, traditional families, workplace flexibility, and deprivation of union power and influence were essential for a cohesive, English-speaking, productive society where Australian values prevailed. It was a minor document, but relevant for policy continuity when read against the previous four Headland speeches.

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[115]Howard, "The Australia I Believe In", p.17.
[116]Howard, "The Australia I Believe In", p.24.

Conclusion

The Headland speeches were important in rebuilding Howard's leadership credibility and in providing coherent Liberal Party policies. He had honed his political prowess, but did not fundamentally vary the policies he took into the 1996 election from those he attempted to "sell" in the 1980s, but strongly inserted the "battler" image to appeal to Middle Australia whose votes he courted. He also tailored his own long-held views on values, history, Australia's place in an Asian region, and its traditional allies, to counter a prevailing mood that he identified (and promoted) as national confusion about identity, nostalgia for social stability, and lack of pride in historical achievements.

Although the heading of each speech indicated a particular topic, Howard repeatedly returned to policies and ideas important to him. By 1995, the majority of the Liberal Party had adopted the neo-liberal direction that he and fellow "dries" argued for in the 1980s, with the traditional family the core of community life and, as Howard frequently said, the source of welfare. Much of his rhetoric dwelt on Keating's perceived failures and unpopularity, yet Howard intended to extend many of Labor's economic reforms. He veered from Keating in the areas of too-close association with Asia, Aboriginal land rights, multiculturalism, changing the Australian flag, and the projected image of Australia's cultural and historical past, all issues that fitted within Howard's construction of a fractured nation where mainstream values were neglected.

The Coalition was reluctant to release detailed policies lest misinterpretations, controversies and errors occur, but Howard's views on most policy issues were clear, and, as he admitted, he could not change his views on social conservatism or industrial relations. Nor did he dilute his hostility towards trade union power and privilege; his

favouring of financial assistance for traditional, one-income families with children at home; support for small business; the need for migrants to absorb Australian values and speak English; his ambition for negotiated workplace agreements; or his distaste for political correctness and minority groups (by 2006 they had become "boutique interests of the few").[117]   He insisted on recognition of Australia as a European nation in an Asian region, and for those disenchanted with wastage of taxpayers' money on undeserving welfare recipients, he promised to tighten eligibility, promote self-reliance and lessen demands on the public purse. He promised, and delivered, social welfare delivery by commercial, religious or charitable organisations, and ventured into centralism and State and Commonwealth relations, later seen through his goods and services tax, and national workplace awards.

Howard's first speech as Prime Minister-elect in March 1996 promised to carry out his agenda "with resolution and without qualification.[118]   A decade later in 2006 he addressed the Menzies Research Centre where he had given his first Headland speech, and referred to the series of speeches in 1995 that had set out "the principles, values and policy direction which the Liberal and National Parties would follow in government".[119] Like *Future Directions,* the Headland speeches signpost Howard's policy convictions and intentions, and, in particular, the priority he placed on industrial relations reform. The next chapter, "Industrial Relations and the Australian Public Service" discusses his long-standing and abiding ambition to change the workplace culture in factories, universities and the Australian Public Service.

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[117] Howard, "Taxation: Keeping faith with Australian families", Address to Menzies Research Centre, Canberra, 18 April, 2006.
[118] Howard, Election victory speech, 3 March, 1996, Sydney.
[119] Howard, "Taxation: Keeping faith with Australian families", 18 April, 2006.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND THE

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

"I make no apology for believing that markets are infinitely better able to make economic decisions than government".[1] Howard, 1981.

"As soon as John Howard nails his IR changes, the jewel in the crown of his lifelong political agenda, he'll call it a day ..."[2] Laurie Oakes, 2005.

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[1] Howard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives), 30 April, 1981, p.1896.
[2] Laurie Oakes, 'Exit stage right", *Bulletin,* 18 October, 2005.

Introduction

This chapter follows John Howard into government and the start of reforms outlined in Opposition, in *Future Directions, Fightback!* and the Headland speeches. As noted earlier, a major commitment throughout his public career was to change industrial relations laws to discourage union interference, to allow flexibility in contracts negotiated between employee and employer, and to abolish compulsory unionism, ideas that were equally applied to factories, university campuses and the Australian Public Service (APS). Howard's hostility towards the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) was entrenched, and he was convinced the public service should not be involved in activities that could be assigned to the private sector. Combined with his neo-liberal trends towards smaller government, and the outsourcing of some service deliveries, these policies had significant ramifications for public service culture. Many of his ideas stemmed from childhood influences, with the Howard family disdainful of unions and the public service, but supportive of small business and private enterprise. As a parliamentarian and Minister, Howard considered advice from public servants, but as Treasurer and increasingly in his own government, he surrounded himself with partisan advisers. He further distanced himself from public service traditions by establishing a Cabinet Policy Unit (CPU) within the Office of the Prime Minister, staffed by political personnel, thereby centralising more authority in that office than attempted by any previous Prime Minister.[3]

From the 1970s Howard's policy concentration was on curtailing trade union power and influence; it was, for example, the subject of his first parliamentary Question Without Notice (QWN), and when Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs in the

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[3] Paul Kelly, "PM's power of one", *Weekend Australian,* 23-24 November 2002.

Fraser government he changed the *Trade Practices Act* ("Section 45D") to cover penalties for secondary union boycotts (which was repealed by the Labor government, then reinstated by the Howard government).[4] In Opposition, Howard's policies were designed to outlaw compulsory unionism, abandon centralised wage-fixing, and to substantially remove unions from workplace negotiations. *Fightback!* in Opposition and *WorkChoices* in government contain substantial elements of these ideas. He intended to privatise many of the APS responsibilities, and bring it into line with corporate practices.[5] His first Prime Ministerial decision was to dismiss six Departmental Secretaries, place the remainder on reduced contracts, and appoint his own Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and in so doing, challenged the neutrality of the public service.[6] Far from being surprising, studies show that he had always intended to rid the bureaucracy of what he called "social engineers or cultural fanatics" trying to "reconstruct society according to their own mode".[7] Howard's ambition to revolutionise the workplace environment to exclude union power and influence reflects an ingrained preference for individualism over collective rights, choice over compulsion, and markets over state bureaucracies. His willingness, when necessary, to compromise, delay, or abandon aspects of some policies, is already noted, but on workplace reform he

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[4] As Opposition leader, Howard's first question related to Labor's repeal of Section 45D of the Trade Practices Act; CPD, Representatives 12 September, 1985, p.862. Howard claimed "no justification at all for giving trade unions in this country an immunity which is not available to other sections of the community …. we charge the government with being … led by the nose by the trade union movement"; CPD, Representatives 16 December, 1993, p.4251.

[5] Duncan Macdonald described it as "rampant managerialism", "Public Sector Industrial Relations Under the Howard Government", *Labour & Industry,* 9, 2, December, 1998, p.43,

[6] See Brian Toohey, "The Lone Ranger. John Howard's Concentration of Power", *Monthly,* April, 2007, p.26: "The rest could hardly mistake the message: serving the political needs of the government has precedence over the commitment of the neutral public service. Departmental heads are now on short-term contracts, and stay in the job only for so long as they enjoy Howard's approval".

[7] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 March, 1994, p.2008.

was intransigent. As he said, in the event of losing government, industrial relations

would be the "policy loss I would grieve about most".[8]

As promised in Opposition, Howard moved his government to decentralised

wage-setting systems, and removed the Liberal Party from the social liberal principles of

conciliation and arbitration processes.[9] As observed in Chapter One, he rejected Robert

Menzies' views on wage arbitration, and did not echo his claim that he "continually

sought industrial and trade union cooperation" (but not where communism existed in

unions).[10] Howard sought no accommodation with unions, and although he claimed no

antipathy towards them, it can be seen that his actions belied his statements. From 1996

he continued reforms within the APS started by previous Prime Ministers, but went

further in introducing elements to ensure a more managerial and politically "responsive"

culture. Of all Howard's policies, it will be shown that he invested greater authority and

"fidelity" to industrial relations reform, and in his efforts to emasculate the trade union

movement.

Industrial relations/ unions

The negative connection between unions and their influence on the Labor Party

were lodged in Howard's childhood memory, particularly as he came from a State

dominated by Labor politics and government.[11] Marian Sawer points out in *The Ethical*

State? that trade unionism "meshed well with the social-liberal idea of the importance of

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[8] Howard, "Australian Advancement and the Liberal Inheritance", Address to 100th Anniversary Dinner
for Australian Women's National League, Melbourne, 16 July, 2004.
[9] See Marian Sawer, "Conciliation and Arbitration", *The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia,*
Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2003, pp.50-67.
[10] Quoted by Cameron Hazlehurst, *Menzies Observed,* George Allen & Unwin, Hornsby, 1979, p.336.
[11] See Norman Abjorensen, *John Howard and the Conservative Tradition,* Australian Scholarly
Publishing, North Melbourne, 2008, p.66.

active citizenship and community development".[12]   It was not a group activity, though, that the conservative and community-orientated first Howard family supported. They had chafed at the Federal Labor government under Ben Chifley, and when Menzies defeated Chifley after the coal-miners' strike in 1949, Howard recalled

> listening to the policy speeches on the radio with my father … the talk around the house, which was very anti-Labor. It had a particular bias because of petrol rationing; my father wanted to see the end of rationing, and we had just gone through a very difficult coal strike, all those blackouts … [13]

In February 1996, one month before he became Prime Minister, Howard admitted the family's distaste for unions:

> … we didn't like 'em, we thought they were hopeless. My dad was a small businessman. Anybody who was in small business thought the Labour [sic] Party was the pits …. Dad had a very small business, and therefore the Unions didn't bother him. He only had two or three employees, and whether they were Union members or not, I wouldn't know, but it's not something that bulked very large in our lives …[14]

According to Bob Howard, however, his father was a "classic small business man [and] [u]nion activity was perceived as being a nuisance. And John imbibed all that …. He believes unions are a problem for the Australian economy. It's the view he grew up

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[12] Sawer, *The Ethical State?* p.62.
[13] Howard interview with Craig McGregor, *National Times,* 14 March, 1982, quoted in Gerard Henderson, *A Howard Government? Inside the Coalition,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1995, p.23. See also Milton Cockburn, "What makes Johnny run?" *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7 January, 1989.
[14] Howard interview with Liz Jackson, ABC TV, *Four Corners,* "An Average Australian Bloke", 19 February, 1996.

with".[15] This was evident in Howard's later industrial relations policies. But he had a special priority for small business in his policies, and once in government introduced measures to protect them against "predatory union conduct".[16]

Howard's first parliamentary question in 1974 related to a union dispute that interrupted mail deliveries in his electorate of Bennelong, querying whether it had been caused by a "black ban placed on the post office by the Amalgamated Postal Workers Union of Australia on account of the employment at that post office of 4 persons who refused to join the union?"[17] Abolition of compulsory unionism was a key and central feature of Howard's later industrial relations reforms. In 1981 he lodged a parliamentary petition on behalf of constituents

> completely fed up with the various unions' attitude and lack of consideration for the other citizens of Australia by their continual strike actions. We would request that Parliament takes steps to put an end to this madness once and for all. It is adversely affecting the lives of every Australian citizen and will eventually bring our wonderful country to complete ruin if permitted to continue.[18]

Howard cannot be responsible for his constituents' views, although they echoed his criticisms in parliament about the union movement's capacity to cause community and economic chaos. In Opposition he warned the

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[15] Quoted by Michelle Grattan in "John Howard", *Australian Prime Ministers,* 3rd ed., New Holland, Frenchs Forrest, 2003, p.442.
[16] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 October, 1990, p.3109.
[17] Howard, CPD, Representatives, 25 November, 1974, p.3940.
[18] Petition lodged by Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 March, 1981, p.327.

great economic reform needed for this country is a radical overhaul of our outdated, anti-

productive and archaic industrial relations system. This change will involve a major

reduction in the unreasonable power held by trade union bosses. It will also require that

unions and union officials alike, like the rest of us, be made subject to the ordinary courts

of this country.[19]

According to former Howard minister, Jim Short, Howard was more interested in

industrial relations issues, but "sold them badly".[20] Fraser Minister, Neil Brown, in his

memoirs wrote that Howard had an "overwhelming passion" to change workplace

conditions after the 1983 election to differentiate the Coalition from the incumbent Labor

government. [21] When Howard eventually introduced his *WorkChoices* legislation, *The*

Australian noted this "grand obsession since the 1980s".[22] Howard agreed:

I have been accused of having an ideological obsession with workplace relations reform.

It is true that I … have argued long and hard the cause of industrial relations, but I have

done it in the belief that industrial relations reform will lift the living standards of the

Australian people.[23]

After the 1983 defeat, Howard declared he wanted "a vigorous debate within the Liberal

Party.[24] As outlined in the earlier chapter on his first stint as Opposition leader, however,

he struggled with poor persuasive and leadership skills to convince his moderate

colleagues that the industrial relations system he advocated was "the most important

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[19] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.499.
[20] Short said Howard "cranked that area up too high and 'sold' it badly". Personal communication, 26
February, 2008.
[21] Neil Brown, *On the other hand. Sketches and Reflections from Political Life,* Poplar Press, Woden
ACT, 1993, p.213.
[22] *The Australian* Editorial, "Reform race is still to run", 11 October, 2005.
[23] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 November, 2005, p.52. See also 26 May, 2005, p.38.
[24] Howard, "Industrial Relations", *The Heart of Liberalism. The Albury Papers,* eds. Ken Aldred,
Kevin Andrews and Paul Filing, McPherson's Printing Group, Mitcham, 1994, p.247.

challenge in the whole economic area".[25] Former Industrial Relations Minister under

Fraser, Ian Macphee (and so-called "wet") "fought ferociously" against the new

policies.[26] Howard's direction included shifting from the centralised wage fixing system

that was "unchallenged since before World War I" to an enterprise-based approach.[27] On

this, as noted, he made a clean philosophical break with Menzies, who had always

defended the arbitration system and saw its retention as a "great task".[28] While Howard

acknowledged Menzies' "strong views", he rationalised his decision as part of the

evolution of a dynamic political party to suit the times.[29] His system

> took greater account of capacity to pay, one that recognised the value of enterprise-based
>
> agreements, and one that essentially rejected the notion that unions are entitled to a
>
> privileged position above the law. [30]

The centralised models of industrial relations and awards under Labor, with their

Accords and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) were, as Howard

said in 1991, contrary to workplace equity, and an "almost insufferable paternalism".

"Like oil and water", he said, "a centralised wage fixing system and true enterprise

bargaining simply will not mix", adding superfluously he had always wanted to change

that model.[31] In 2005 he addressed the Sydney Institute and praised Gerard Henderson's

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[25] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 September, 1986, p.1213.

[26] Chris James, Chris Jones and Andrew Norton, "The Liberal Party and economic rationalism", *A Defence of Economic Rationalism,* eds. Chris James, Chris Jones and Andrew Norton, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1993, p.115.

[27] Howard, *The Heart of Liberalism,* p.247; see also CPD, Representatives 23 September, 1986, p.1213 and his wish to put enterprise bargaining "beyond the union structure".

[28] James *et al.,* "The Liberal Party and economic rationalism", p.114, quoting I McAllister and R Moore, *Party Strategy and Change: Australian Political Leaders Policy Speeches Since 1946,* pp.170, 182. For "clean break with the past", see Judith Brett, "Future Directions. New Conservatism's manifesto", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* June, 1989, 65, 1, pp.11-17.

[29] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 June, 1999, p.7695

[30] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 September, 1986. He later claimed, "the tide of history is against a centralised approach". CPD, Representatives 17 October, 1990, p.3082.

[31] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 April, 1991, p.2833. See also 15 May, 1991, p.3804.

1983 *Quadrant* comments about abolishing the "industrial relations club", with its support for centralised wage-fixing, and its idea that trade unions were above the law, and "simply part of the Australian way".[32] According to Howard, Henderson had "stripped away layers of mythology from a system that was failing our country … it certainly struck a chord with me given my own experiences as Treasurer in the Fraser Government".[33] Labor in government *had* moved towards a new direction, although not to the same degree that Howard had planned. In 1993 Labor simplified wage-setting processes between employers and unions and provided for agreements to be settled between a group of workers and an employer without union interference (the Enterprise Flexibility Agreement) but with ratification by the Commission.[34] In Opposition, Howard said his plans included permanently altering the AIRC and vowed to abolish compulsory arbitration.[35] In 2005 he introduced legislation to change the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, saying its role would

change to keep pace with the needs of the modern economy. Australia's current

workplace relations system is still extensively based on an adversarial and outdated view

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[32] Howard, "Workplace Relations Reform: The Next Logical Step", *Sydney Papers,* 17, 3-4, Winter/ Spring, 2005, pp.78-92. See also Laurie Oakes, *Bulletin,* 18 October, 2005: "If it was not apparent earlier, the seriousness of John Howard's commitment to industrial relations reform became starkly obvious in October 1985 …. [h]e advanced the view that the 1904 Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act had been the start of Australia's declining competitiveness. It led to the appointment of Justice Henry Higgins as first president of the commission …. Howard said, wages should not be determined by the 'haggling of the market' but by what was 'fair and reasonable'".

[33] Howard, "Workplace Relations Reform", *Sydney Papers,* pp.78-92.

[34] See Charles Livingstone, "The Workplace Relations Act", *Arena Magazine,* 24, August-September, 1996, pp.20-22; Carol Fox, "Union Democracy and Collective Bargaining: Public Policy in Transition", *Journal of Industrial Relations,* 41, 3, September 1999, pp.393-416..

[35] Howard, CPD, Representatives 4 May, 1992, p.2324: "I have never disguised my desire to reduce the role of the Industrial Relations Commission … what this nation needs is an industrial relations system that elevates the direct contract between the employer and the employee above all other industrial arrangements". Also CPD, Representatives 29 April, 1992, p.1983: "We will ask the Parliament … to reduce [the AIRC] role …. to create a situation which effectively abolishes compulsory arbitration …. We are not coy about it".

of workplace relations. It is a product of a bygone era of crippling nationwide disputes and a small, inward looking economy.[36]

Waterfront reform was integral to Howard's plans to change industrial relations culture and that "bygone era". He was a Cabinet Minister in the Fraser government when the Costigan Royal Commission was set up to investigate waterfront activities.[37] When the later Labor government moved to set up an employees' register to recruit waterfront labour, Howard ridiculed it on the basis of discrimination because they would "be the only people in Australia who will be guaranteed a job for life …. If the government is prepared to do that for the wharf labourers, why is it not prepared to do it for the cab drivers?"[38] In 1994, he attacked the monopoly of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and its workplace tactics.[39] In his 1995 Headland speech he warned that "transport and communication infrastructure cries out for reform …. Efficiency and productivity in our ports remains well below best practice".[40] A year into office, he declared union control of the waterfront a "sectoral interest".[41] When Patrick Partners attempted to remove its entire waterfront workforce, with the Howard government underwriting redundancy payments, circumstances were created for conflict, forced changes, and the end of any possibility of negotiation or consensus.[42] Although he

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[36] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 May, 2005, p.38.

[37] See Steve O'Neill, "Outline of the Waterfront Dispute", Parliament of Australia Library Current Issues Brief, 15, 1997-1998. Fraser instigated the Costigan Royal Commission on the Activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union to investigate crime, money laundering and tax evasion.

[38] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 March, 1994, p.1989.

[39] Howard said in 1994 when debating the Industrial Relations Legislation Amendment Bill: "There is no area of industrial behaviour so etched in the Australian consciousness … with abuse of privilege, union inspired rorts, bullying tactics and privileges being claimed and conceded by governments over the years as the Australian waterfront". CPD, Representatives 5 May, 1994, p.313.

[40] Howard, "The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach", Menzies Research Centre, 6 June, 1995.

[41] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 September, 1997, p.7675.

[42] See Helen Trinca and Anne Davies, *Waterfront. The battle that changed Australia,* Doubleday, Milsons Point, 2000, p.xv: "Unable or unwilling to negotiate changes to the nation's waterfront, the government led by Prime Minister John Howard joined with business in a 'big bang' exercise to

claimed "no desire to destroy the MUA", when in 2007 he looked back at the event, he

saw it as an "epic battle to modernise the Australian waterfront". [43]

While promoting choice, flexibility, and national productivity, it was clear from

Howard's actions that his main motive was to reduce the role and influence of the trade

union movement in workplace negotiations and agreements. In 1990 he imagined a

situation where

> individual employees and their employers sit down together and work out the way in
>
> which they, working together, can best lift the productivity of their enterprise to their
>
> mutual benefit and to the national economic benefit. That ought to be the goal and the
>
> objective of any industrial relations system. [44]

Howard conceded this move away from the old adversarial system was "quite radical"

(but never considered his *Workchoices* legislation "extreme" or "radical"). [45]   In 1990 he

argued for a process that cut across traditional trade union processes, and claimed that

national productivity (however contested later) would occur only at an individual-

enterprise level where firms and employees were "liberated from the straitjacket of the

overturn a century of workplace practice. This was a new way of introducing policy and managing change. It marked the end of consensus".

[43] Howard, CPD, Representatives 20 May, 1996, p.822; his "epic battle" comment was made in an Address to the Ryde Business Forum, Sydney, 5 April, 2007.

[44] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 May, 1990, p.282.

[45] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 May, 1990, p.282. In 2005 Howard claimed that *WorkChoices* would leave Australia "with a more highly regulated market than New Zealand or the United Kingdom"; see "Why our unfair dismissal laws aren't working", Address to Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, Perth, 29 September, 2005. A month later, in a Media Release of 9 October, 2005, "Workchoices – a new workplace relations system" was described as "major but not extreme". Ken Phillips, Director of Work Reform Unit, Institute of Public Affairs, wrote "WorkChoices *is* radical; and that's a good thing", *IPA Review,* July 2007, pp.5-6. See also Richard Hall, "Australian Industrial Relations in 2005 – the WorkChoices Revolution", *Journal of Industrial Relations,* 48, 3, June, 2006, pp.291-303.

accord and the chloroforming effects of the centralised wage fixation system".[46] He

asked in 1992 how "can we ever have a self-reliant work force in this country unless we

are prepared to trust people with the right to make decisions about their own futures".[47]

Even earlier in 1988, he promised in government to correct Labor's industrial relations

flaws through what could be seen to be an encapsulation of later government policies:

> voluntary work agreements at the enterprise level: provision for small firms to opt out of
>
> the existing arbitration system; the principle and practice of voluntary unionism; a more
>
> comprehensive employee share ownership and profit sharing scheme; and, finally,
>
> infinitely more flexible awards. Our commitment to voluntary unionism is unequivocally
>
> based on our commitment to freedom of choice. Under our industrial relations policy we
>
> intend to bring trade unions fully within the laws of Australia.[48]

Howard was implacably opposed to compulsory unionism because he considered

that voluntary membership of any group was an expression of non-discrimination. He

attacked Labor for what he considered *selective* discrimination:[49]

> We are lectured from day to day about the need to eliminate discrimination from our
>
> society. We are told that any form of discrimination based on gender, race or religion
>
> properly is abhorrent to what Australians stand for. But, when it comes to discrimination

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[46] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 May, 1990, p.281. For the "contested nature" of *WorkChoices*
see Group of 150 Australian Academics, Submission to the Inquiry into the Workplace Relations
Amendment (WorkChoices) Bill, 2005, "Research Evidence About the Effects of the *WorkChoices*
Bill, November 2005.
[47] Howard, CPD, Representatives 7 October, 1992, p.1655.
[48] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 May, 1988, p. 3145.
[49] Howard's principle was, "those people who decide to join unions in this country are to have a free
choice, not only … about joining or not joining but … able to join any union they want".   CPD,
Representatives 5 November, 1991, p.2331. See also CPD, Representatives 14 December, 1993,
p.3931, when "amazed" at Labor's concern about discrimination on grounds sex, race, gender, and
religion, but not trade union membership.

by reason of membership or non-membership of a trade union, the government develops a great amnesia.[50]

In an earlier 1994 *Quadrant* article, he ridiculed compulsory unionism as being beyond the "designer" form of discrimination – race, gender and sexual preference – that the Keating government preferred.[51] This had earlier been expressed as Labor preaching "from the mountaintops about discrimination when it comes to sex, religion and all sorts of other things …. But there is one thing they will never suffer telling people about: the compulsion to join a trade union".[52]

During debates on the Racial Discrimination Bill in 1975, Howard described the capacity and sometimes the desire of trade unions to prevent employment to people on the basis of difference. He wanted to insert a sub-clause that made it unlawful for trade unions to refuse employment "by reason of the race, colour, or national or ethnic origin of that person".[53] Labor disallowed the amendment, but only because it did not go *far enough,* and replaced it with a modified version, with the Attorney General expressing indebtedness to the Member for Bennelong for drawing the government's attention to the oversight.[54] It evidently had not corrected employment anomalies based on union membership, for in 1994 Howard railed against the preference for unionists in

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[50] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 November, 1994, p.3045.
[51] Howard, "Some Thoughts on Liberal Party Philosophy in the 1990s", *Quadrant,* July-August, 1994, p.22: "If I told you that, say, voluntary redundancies within Australia Post or Telecom were not available to Australians of Chinese descent employed by those bodies you would be … properly offended and demand the immediate elimination of such a discriminatory practice. No such discrimination, to my knowledge, exists within either body. I do know … that discrimination on the grounds of non-membership of a union does exist within both bodies in respect of voluntary redundancy arrangements".
[52] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 June, 1994, p.1782. See also *Quadrant,* July-August, 1994.
[53] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 April 1975, p.1398
[54] Kep Enderby, CPD, Representatives 9 April, 1975, p.1398.

government-advertised positions. One notes his aversion to "political correctness", and its apparent breeding-grounds, universities and bureaucracies, when he grumbled:

> if we use the wrong word with some of these cultural fundamentalists who lurk in government departments and academic establishments, we are hounded for being some kind of out of date sexist …. The government of this country and, I regret, the bureaucracies of many governments of this country, *are now riddled with social engineers or cultural fanatics who are trying to reconstruct society according to their own mode.* But when it comes to something that really matters, and that is people trying to get a job, it is not a question of merit – people who belong to a union get a preference.[55] [Emphasis added.]

He later went on to ask, what was the difference

> between saying to a person, "You may not have a job because you are a Catholic or a Jew", or "You may not have a job because you don't belong to the union"? …. They have never been able to explain that moral double standard …. [or] justify discriminating against people by reason of their conscientious and genuine objection to belonging to industrial organizations. They smugly go about maintaining this double standard. Until the Australian Labor Party comes to terms with its moral duplicity on that issue, it will never be convincing advocates of a discrimination-free Australian society.[56]

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[55] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 March, 1994, p.2008.
[56] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 November, 1994, p.3045.

He ridiculed the lockstep he saw between unions and Labor governments by conjuring

with the image of the government (the monkey) dancing to the tune of the ACTU (the

organ-grinder).[57]

Noted earlier was Howard's objection to government-backed compulsory student

unionism, originating in part from his university experiences. He protested when Labor

intended to use Commonwealth power to prevent the Liberal Victorian and Western

Australian governments legislating to

> outlaw the nefarious practice of compulsory student unionism. Both of those
>
> governments were elected with a mandate to abolish compulsory student unionism. [It] is
>
> an affront to the individual liberty of Australian university students. For years it has been
>
> the policy of the federal parliamentary Liberal Party.[58]

Howard extended his opposition to compulsory membership to professional bodies,

including the Law Society (where he was still a certificated lawyer).[59] As he said, union

(or other) non-compulsory membership was, for him, a fundamental question of non-

discrimination, liberalism, and freedom of association.[60] When in 1999 he launched the

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[57] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 June, 1994, p.2078. He taunted, on banks having no role in collecting superannuation payments provided for awards because unions would not tolerate their involvement, he asked: "Is this not yet another case of the government playing 'super' monkey to the union organ-grinder?" Earlier, "The organ-grinder is the Maritime Union of Australia, and the monkey is the Minister for Industrial Relations", CPD, Representatives 5 May, 1994, p.313.

[58] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 March, 1994, p.1989.

[59] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 May, 1992, p.2823. Howard thought forced membership as a precondition to practising was "equally odious", but vitriol was reserved for union membership that "had destroyed … the building industry".

[60] Howard, Address to Australian Liberal Students' Federation Federal Convention, Canberra, 7 July, 2003.

publication, *The Menzies Lectures,* he boasted he would fulfill his promise of non-compulsory student unionism in line with "genuine Liberal freedom".[61]

Industrial relations reform also included dismantling the unfair dismissal laws brought in under Labor that Howard claimed disadvantaged small business and caused vexatious litigation from disgruntled former employees. In government he argued that an important factor in achieving and maintaining a buoyant economy was the need to change laws that slowed the "entrepreneurial pulse of nation" and "trapped small entrepreneurs in a legal minefield".[62] He had signaled this in 1986 when predicting huge benefits by removing legal or financial difficulties to enable dismissal of non-productive staff:

> Over a period of three years in our first term of office, if we can deregulate and free up all the firms in Australia that employ fewer than 50 people, we will have brought about an industrial relations revolution which will literally transform the economic outlook of the entire community.[63]

Unsurprisingly, in government he overturned the Keating government's "job destroying unfair dismissal laws", and introduced legislation to exempt businesses with up to 100 employees from the unfair dismissal system.[64]

While the trade union movement was a central target in Howard's industrial relations reforms, he denied he was motivated by anti-union hostility.[65] In 1990 he

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[61] Howard, launch of *The Menzies Lectures 1978-1998,* Parliament House, Melbourne, 27 October, 1999.
[62] Howard, Address to Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA, 29 September, 2005.
[63] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 September, 1986, p.1213.
[64] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 May, 2005, p.38.
[65] Mike Steketee said Howard's attacks on union power were "constants in [his] long years in public life"; see "Built-in contradictions may hamper Howard's reforms", *The Australian,* 1 December, 2005.

dismissed accusations of having a "primeval hatred of unions and all they stand for", and claimed he was protecting individual interests against the privileged position of Labor as a monopoly power.[66] In 1991, he complained that

> One of the great myths spread about our approach to industrial relations is that we, as a future government, wish to shut out trade unions …. I will go on arguing … on every available opportunity … the [Coalition approach] to industrial relations does not rest on some kind of primeval hostility to trade unions, some lustful political desire to destroy the organized union movement of this country, but on the simple proposition that in a free society the right to associate also implies the right not to associate …[67]

On the contrary, Howard had always warned about his intentions in relation to unions, a fact long recognised by union officials.[68] At a Young Liberal conference in 1986 he spoke about Liberal principles based on individual freedom, national and family security, encouragement of enterprise and self-reliance, pursuit of success and excellence, and compassion for those in need. The *keystone,* however, of Liberal policy was its determination to break the power of the trade union movement, which he saw as a threat to civil liberties, and to economic and political freedom.[69] In parliament that year, he warned that Australia's economic fortunes would not improve until the "excessive power of certain militant trade unions is reduced and until all sections of the community are

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[66] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 October, 1990, p.3109.

[67] Howard, CPD, Representatives 5 November, 1991, p.2331. He claimed 31 per cent of workers were union members but 100 per cent "were forced to have their award conditions determined according to the whims … of unions".

[68] Leigh Hubbard, Secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, said: "For nearly 20 years three men in the inner sanctum of the new Liberal government (John Howard, Peter Reith and Peter Costello) have waged a none too secret campaign to destroy Australian trade unionism, and the industrial relations system …. Those rights and the fragile balance of power that is democracy are about to be undone in a most serious way by the restriction and/ or removal of the role of unions and the Industrial Relations Commission from the new Workplace Agreements". "After the Accord: Industrial Relations Policy under a Howard Government", *Just Policy,* 6, May, 1996, pp.8-11.

[69] Howard, Speech to Young Liberals, Brisbane, 6 January, 1986, quoted in David Barnett with Pru Goward, *John Howard. Prime Minister,* Viking, Ringwood, 1997, p.350,

made equal before the law".[70] In 1987, he repeated that the industrial relations system needed "less trade union power" and greater emphasis on enterprise-based agreements.[71] He sustained the argument, with supporting legislation, once in government, and cautioned before the 2004 election that a return to Labor meant holding "a dagger to the throat of many of our great export industries".[72]

When Howard won the 2004 election and gained a majority in the Senate, he could now introduce his *WorkChoices* legislation. He struck a conciliatory note with unions, but his message remained clear. There was

> no objection to the proper role of trade unions in the Australian economy, people have a right to join a trade union, they have a right if they choose to have their interests represented by a trade union and a trade union has a right to negotiate on behalf of its members.[73]

Nonetheless, while Howard had no objection to employer groups representing business, mineral and farming sectors, he was averse to union or union-related groups close to the previous government. As Carol Johnson observed, Howard before the 1996 election hesitated to disaffect "battler" voters by spelling out that unions were a "special interest".[74] Once in government, however, as John Warhurst notes:

> In sectors such as health and education the new government moved to lessen the influence of unions and those consultative arrangements associated with them. For

[70] Howard, CPD, Representatives 1 May, 1986, p.2898.
[71] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 May, 1988, p. 3145.
[72] Howard, Address to Liberal Party State Council, Adelaide, 21 August 2004.
[73] Howard, Address to National Small Business Summit Opening Dinner, Sydney, 16 May, 2005.
[74] Carol Johnson, *Governing Change. From Keating to Howard,,* 2nd ed., API Network, Perth, 2007, p.45.

instance, on nursing-related issues the Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA), a

professional body, slowly regained influence alongside nursing unions. In school

education the minister, David Kemp, moved to undercut the Australian Teaching Council

(ATC), which was seen to be union dominated, and to replace it with a National Forum

for Teacher Professional Associations (NFTPA). The new government also removed all

funding from the Consumers' Federation of Australia (CFA), effectively causing its

demise.[75]

And, as noted in the previous chapter, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)

saw its influence diminish.[76]

When Kevin Rudd became Opposition Leader in December 2006 and kindled

Labor's prospect of winning government, Howard's strategy was to refer back to the

inseparability of Labor and unions. He invoked the threat of loss – of prosperity, security

and stability – in choosing the "old" union-dominated, strike-risky "mob rule" of Labor.

While Australians would form their own judgements, he said,

> it is very much a choice … between the past and the future. Do you want to go back to a
>
> past dominated by the unions or do you want to go forward with a guarantee of the
>
> prosperity that we now have built on the efforts of striving, achieving, aspiring individual
>
> Australian men and women?[77]

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[75] John Warhurst, "Changing Relationships Between Government and Interest Groups", *Policy and Change. The Howard Mandate,* eds. Scott Prasser & Graeme Starr, Hale & Iremonger, Marrickville, 1997, p.123.

[76] Philip Mendes, *Australia's Welfare Wars Revisited,* NSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.193; see Rose Melville, "The State and Community Sector Peak Bodies: Theoretical and Policy Challenges", *Third Sector Review,* 5, 2, 1999, pp.25-41, for Coalition approach to peak bodies, which "ushered in an era of politics which challenges the legitimacy and practice of collective political action in the policy-making arena".

[77] Howard, Media Conference, Canberra, 4 December, 2006.

The 2007 election became the platform for debate on *WorkChoices,* and Howard was warned his ideology and approach to politics would face the ultimate test.[78] Reportedly he was initially hesitant about the full scope of *WorkChoices,* with two close advisers offering conflicting advice about whether to proceed with it.[79] When he (unsurprisingly) chose the path of industrial relations reform he had advocated throughout his career, *The Australian* editorialised that *WorkChoices* was "quintessential John Howard reforms".[80] Howard agreed it was the end-product of a process begun in 1996 (but in fact, long before that) which embodied "one of the great pieces of unfinished business in the structural transformation of the Australian economy".[81] After eleven years in government, though, polls revealed the Coalition's unpopularity and the electorate's suspicion of the disadvantages contained within proposed workplace changes.[82] Critics pointed to the "unintended consequences" of more power slanted towards employers, the transfer of power from unions to government, lower wages and greater demands on welfare, disadvantages for women in part-time jobs and unskilled and young workers.[83] Church groups expressed concern about the effects on families.[84] Bradon Ellem, Marian Baird, Rae Cooper and Russell Lansbury concluded after their research that it remained unproven that the legislation would address complex economic and social problems.[85] In response, Howard set up a government taskforce to counter what he complained was an

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[78] Shaun Carney, "The Howard payback revolution", *The Age,* 15 October, 2005.

[79] Private communication.

[80] *The Australian* Editorial, "This is quintessential Howard", 10 October, 2005.

[81] See Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 May, 2005, p.38, and Joint Media Conference with Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra, 26 May, 2005.

[82] Peter Costello admitted that "From the time Rudd became leader, there was something like 50 polls that showed Labor would win …. Not a single poll showed … the Government would". ABC TV, *Four Corners,* "Howard's End", 18 February, 2008.

[83] See for example, Richard Hall, pp.291-303. According to Ken Phillips, "WorkChoices removed union legal authority over workers, but rather than delivering power to bosses, it transferred power to government"; see "Fighting the last war. The construction reforms – not WorkChoices – were the real industrial relations issues in the 2007 campaign", *IPA Review,* January, 2008, pp.19-21,

[84] See Warhurst, "Religion in 21st Century Australian National Politics, Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Parliament House, Canberra, 5 May, 2006.

[85] Bradon Ellem, Marian Baird, Rae Cooper and Russell Lansbury, "WorkChoices: Myth-making at work, *Journal of Australian Political Economy,* 56, December, 2005, pp.13-31.

ACTU-driven "campaign of fear and misinformation", but when it was claimed that

WorkChoices contributed to the State Labor victory in New South Wales, he agreed to

some changes.[86]   Nonetheless, Phil Lewis, in his paper on industrial relations and the

labour market queried why – when the amendments failed to meet employers' needs and

remained unpopular with many employees – did a politically-astute Prime Minister make

such a "political miscalculation of such magnitude?"[87]   Howard's "blind spot" was noted:

> Howard's political antennae, normally in tune with public sentiment, haven't served him
>
> well on this issue. Maybe industrial relations is a psychological blind spot, an issue he
>
> finds unacceptably difficult to change tack on. After all, IR reform has been an article of
>
> faith during his many years in public life.[88]

Howard's aversion to unionism and its place in the industrial landscape generally, as

noted earlier, had gone further back than his public life. Judith Brett notes his motives

and their origins, as well as the reality that trade unions had diminished over the years of

his battles with it:

> Howard claims that WorkChoices is about the future, guaranteeing the flexibility of
>
> Australia's workplaces so that employment and prosperity can grow. But it is also about
>
> the past, about defeating a union movement which Howard rails against as if it were the
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> powerful militant force of his youth in the 1950s, rather than the much-diminished
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> movement of today.[89]

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[86]According to Kevin Rudd, CPD, Representatives 26 March, 2007, p.23, NSW Liberal candidate Pru Goward said "working people were telling her that their shift loadings were being cut and that their incomes were going down".

[87] Phil Lewis, "Industrial relations and the labour market", *Howard's Fourth Government,* p.169.

[88] Steve Lewis, "Howard refuses to heed IR angst", *The Australian,* 8 August, 2006.

[89] Judith Brett, "Comment", *Monthly,* 23 May, 2007, p.10.

It is ironic, then, that the analyses of Ben Spies-Butcher and Shaun Wilson suggest that Howard's actions led to an emergence of a revitalised trade union movement.[90]

While he agreed to some changes, Howard stressed he had *not* retreated from the fundamental underpinnings of a law he had believed in all his political life, and which he still considered good policy, because *choice* and *negotiation* remained. [91] Yet when Joe Hockey replaced Kevin Andrews as Workplace Relations Minister to repair political damage, it was conceded the government had underestimated the ramifications of trading away penalty rates.[92] Under earlier Labor and Coalition governments, workers had already traded away some rights and had bargained for flexible contracts under individual contracts or award simplification.[93] But Howard again went further, for as Shadow Industrial Relations Minister in 1993 he stated a "strong view" that

> if anyone in this country makes a capital investment then it ought to be possible to run that capital investment 24 hours a day, seven days a week, *without penalty or additional costs* as to the time of the day or night that that capital investment is run.[94] [Emphasis added]

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[90] Ben Spies-Butcher and Shaun Wilson, "Election 2007: Did the union campaign succeed"? *Australian Review of Public Affairs,* February, 2008. http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2008/02/spies-butcher_wilson.html.

[91] Howard, doorstop interview, Tokyo, 12 March, 2007; doorstop interview, Brisbane, 16 April, 2007. See Labor Penny Wong, CPD, Senate 18 June, 2007, on Second Reading Speech on Workplace Relations Amendment (A Stronger Safety Net) Bill 2007: "When the Prime Minister says he is not for turning on the fundamentals of Work Choices he is actually being truthful. This is his creation. It is his political labour of love, and he wants it to continue".

[92] Joe Hockey, quoted in Denis Peters, "We got it wrong on WorkChoices, says Hockey", AAP, 22 May, 2007.

[93] See Peter Waring, Alex de Ruyter and John Burgess, "Advancing Australia Fair: The Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard", *Journal of Australian Political Economy,* 56, March, 2007, pp.105-125.

[94] Howard, *The Future of Work,* Australian Council of Social Service, Pluto Press, Darlinghurst, 1993, p.123.

A year before in 1992 in parliament he had claimed that when penalty rates were up for negotiation, more jobs would be created, and under certain circumstances penalty rates added to unemployment and destroyed jobs.[95] The same year he stated that penalty rates, the length of the working week, overtime, holiday loadings, and "all of those things that are holding back the needed flexibility in Australia's industrial relations system ought to be a matter for negotiation between employers and employees".[96] The following year in 1993, he was again precise about his goal: "My view about penalty rates is very simple. They ought to be a matter of negotiation. They should not be a compulsory minimum standard".[97]

Howard's refusal to significantly retract or retreat in the face of opposition was a singular example of his policy consistency on industrial relations reform. His views were deeply rooted in experience, conviction, and hostility towards trade unionism and compulsory membership, and he found it impossible to abandon or modify those views to any significant extent, even when they contributed to his government's defeat.

The Australian Public Service

The Protestant Howard family was disdainful of the Australian Public Service and public servants. As Bob Howard said, "Our family in the 1940s and 1950s was very anti-public service …. It saw [it] as Catholic or somewhere where people didn't want to work much. If [John] has a grudge … it's the public service".[98] Margaret Thatcher's political development had followed the line of Conservative Minister, Keith Joseph, who felt that the "inexorably" rising size of the British Civil Service gave great power to civil servants,

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[95] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 November, 1992, p. 2873.
[96] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 April, 1992, p.1983.
[97] Howard, CPD, Representatives 14 December, 1993, p.3931.
[98] Quoted in Grattan, *Australian Prime Ministers,* pp.452-453.

and choked the "private sector and individual freedom".[99] She complained in her

biography that the ethos of civil servants in her Education portfolio had been that of

"self-righteous socialists".[100] As Howard admired Thatcher, and saw himself in her

mould, these ideas bear some similarity. He was suspicious of a public service that had

worked for thirteen years under a Labor government, and in government appointed senior

public servants and board members of his own choosing.   In 1985 he said it was the

"mark of a foolish and careless Minister or Prime Minister that he [sic] thinks he is so

good he never gets the advice of the experts who are available in government".[101]   Yet

his relationships with Treasury officials and Treasury Secretary, John Stone, had been

fractious to the point of having broken down completely, and he turned to advice from his

own political staff.[102]   In the 1980s, Stone chafed at being ignored, and at the level of

influence the ministerial staff had over Howard (and Fraser) on economic and Budget

deliberations.[103]   In his government, Howard continued to surround himself with trusted,

partisan staff for advice, increased their numbers and influence in his Prime Ministerial

office and in other ministerial offices, and repaid past loyalties.[104] He based himself and

his family in Kirribilli House in Sydney, effectively distancing himself from the culture

of Canberra bureaucracy.

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[99] Anthony Seldon and Daniel Collings, *Britain Under Thatcher,* Longman, Harlow, 2000, p.2.

[100] Margaret Thatcher, *Path to Power,* HarperCollins, London, 1995, p.166.

[101] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 October, 1985, p.1686.

[102] Kelly, *The Hawke Ascendancy. A definitive account of its origins and climax 1972-1983,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2008, p.214.

[103] For account of Howard's determination to impose authority on Stone, see Kelly, *The Hawke Ascendancy,* especially, "The Victor", pp.204-205. Stone said in the *SMH,* 11 November, 1982, "Public servants – perhaps because they have a continuing responsibility to provide advice and stay on to live with its consequences – have longer memories than the more meretricious players who flit across the private ministerial advisory stage" (quoted by Kelly, p.214).

[104] On the appointment of Grahame Morris, former Chief-of-Staff, as consultant, Howard said: "I never run away from associations with people who have demonstrated a loyalty and commitment to me on a personal basis over the years"; CPD, Representatives 5 April, 2000, p.15283. For increase in staff numbers in the PMO, see also Anne Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility. Ministerial staffers in Australian governments from Whitlam to Howard,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007, p.125.

In John Halligan's study of Howard's terms of government and their impact on the APS, he notes that the fourth term "was notable for a continuation of trends that emerged in the previous term".[105] As well, Howard's mode of governing was "producing discontent at senior levels, and more generally within the nation".[106] Critics complained that he reduced, dismantled, or consolidated advisory bodies, representative and consultative organisations, and made greater use of outside market consultancies.[107] He vetted or selected appointments to the boards of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Australian Heritage Council, the National Museum, the Fair Pay Commission, and led to criticism that he conferred board membership on a partisan basis in return for conveying or consolidating government views.[108] As Anne Tiernan writes

> Personalisation is the hallmark of the Howard prime ministership … evident in his staffing decisions, both the sackings and appointments, and across the system of advice more generally, including advisory boards, statutory bodies and other strategic government appointments.[109]

Implicit in these observations and accusations is the idea that Howard was systematically politicising the APS. Also, however, as Richard Mulgan notes, "politicisation" can be

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[105] John Halligan, "The search for balance and effectiveness in the Australian Public Service", *Howard's Fourth Government,* p.13. Also Halligan, "Public Sector Reform", *Howard's Second and Third Governments,* eds. Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005, pp.22-41.
[106] Halligan, *Howard's Fourth Government,* p.13.
[107] See Raewyn Connell, "Chicago Values: The Neoliberal Dream and Howard Government Politics", *Overland,* 183, 2006, pp.32-38. Howard spent an estimated $2.3 billion on consultants from 1996 for work related to media, opinion polling, research and advertising. See also S Young and J C Tham, "Political Finance in Australia: A Skewed and Secret System", *Democratic Audit of Australia Report,* 7, 154, 2006.
[108] See Scott Prasser, "Providing Advice to Government", Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Parliament House, Canberra, 24 February, 2006; *Silencing Dissent,* eds. Clive Hamilton and Sarah Maddison, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2007, particularly Andrew Macintosh, "Statutory authorities", pp.148-174, and Geoffrey Barker, "The public service", pp.124-147. See also Greg McCarthy, "Postmodern Discontent and the National Museum of Australia", *Borderlands ejournal,* 3, 3, 2004, for discussion of Board membership.
[109] See Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility,* p.134.

extended beyond appointments made on partisan grounds to include decisions made contrary to the "principles of a politically neutral or impartial public service".[110] Howard's first action as Prime Minister in dismissing six departmental heads obviously impugned the idea of public service neutrality and tenured service, as did allowing public servants to contribute to Cabinet discussions. Yet, personnel and cultural change within the APS when the government changed, particularly one in office for many years, was not a new idea, but a relatively new practice. Donald Horne in 1985 suggested that when a "reform government takes over an administration, it is wise to move in new bureaucrats".[111] Menzies, on the other hand, retained advisers left by Ben Chifley, against "internal pressures, and made clear his respect for their position and his reliance on their capacity and integrity".[112] John Bunting, head of Menzies' Department of Prime Minister, recalls in his memoirs the collegiate code amongst Commonwealth public servants, and the change in the post-Menzies era.[113] Although he went further, Howard simply extended the process begun by previous governments after the Menzies era.

When Howard established the Cabinet Policy Unit (CPU) within his own office and staffed it with political appointments, he achieved a long-held ambition first mooted in the 1987 election campaign.[114] He had said then that he wanted a new Cabinet office, comprised "of people from the private sector, plus public servants, a group of people around me who give good advice", and who would be personally responsible to him.[115] Earlier in 1983, the Liberals' Valder Report had recommended an Office of Strategic

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[110] See Richard Mulgan, "Politicising the Australian Public Service?" Parliament of Australia Library Research Paper 3, 1998-99, 10 November, 1998.
[111] Donald Horne, "Who Rules Australia?", *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium,* ed. Stephen R Graubard, Angus & Robertson, London, 1985, p.185.
[112] John Bunting, *R G Menzies. A Portrait,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p.106.
[113] Bunting, *R G Menzies,* p.109.
[114] Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility*, p.88.
[115] See Craig McGregor, *Social Portraits,* UQP, St Lucia, 1990, p.152.

Priorities staffed by the government's political staff, outside the public service, with "principal responsibility of supporting Cabinet".[116]   Howard in government appointed political confidante, Michael L'Estrange to head the CPU, and as Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister, chose Max Moore-Wilton, a bureaucrat known for his Liberal connections, experience in privisatising government utilities, and his confrontational approach to unions.[117]   With Howard's imprimatur, Moore-Wilton broke with public service tradition by attending and taking part in Cabinet discussions, and advising on the political ramifications of border protection and refugees.[118]

Howard had always advocated that many public service functions could (and should) be privatised or handed over to private enterprise. As he said in 1985, "I think there are no limits at all to what can be privatised".[119]   Earlier in 1981 while in Fraser's Cabinet, he approved the Review of Commonwealth Functions ("The Razor Gang") report that found "those things which might be more efficiently done by private enterprise ought to be done by private enterprise activities".[120]   He claimed then that these findings gave "eloquent expression" to the Fraser government's philosophy about small government (even if accused of not achieving it).[121]   Spending cuts meant

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[116] John Valder, *Facing the Facts. Report of the Liberal Party Committee of Review*, Canberra, September 1983, p.108.

[117] Moore-Wilton was nicknamed "Max the Axe" because of his reputation for cutting staff numbers in government departments, particularly in the Sydney Maritime Services Board. Private communication.

[118] Michael L'Estrange, former Liberal staff member, became Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, then Ambassador to the US. Moore-Wilton was accused of "corrupting standing traditions of public service impartiality" by attending Liberal Party functions; see Tiernan, *Power Without Responsibility,* p.116. David Marr and Marian Wilkinson claim Moore-Wilton's brief was "to shake up the nation's bureaucracy, slash its ranks and bring the ethos of the commercial world into the public service", *Dark Victory,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003, p.38. See Peter Mares and David Marr, "Messing about in boats", *Meanjin,* 62, 3, September, 2003, pp.6-16, for Moore-Wilton's involvement on border protection and asylum seekers.

[119] Quoted by Mike Steketee, "The Howard way to better welfare", *SMH,* 24 May, 1985. "It is clear he has very comprehensive ideas for the withdrawal of Government facilities and that they imply long term reductions in Government funding".

[120] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 April, 1981, p.1896.

[121] Fraser's "record on limiting the size of Government outlays is excellent and it is fair to say that he has not been given adequate credit for what was an achievement of significance … [it] gives the lie to

turning our back on those areas which involve waste and duplication … on areas of

unnecessary expenditure, applying far more rigorously the principle of directing welfare

assistance to those who need the help most. It aids the vulnerable and the weak in our

community little if we are to hitch our star to the concept of universal benefits. [122]

In Howard's policies, there were certainly no universal benefits, but a programme based

on self-provision and initiative, which, he claimed, formed the basis for individual and

national benefit. That

type of society and that type of approach will more likely provide to the great majority of

Australians the sort of incentive and the sort of climate for self-endeavour, self-fulfilment

and self-achievement which are the basis of national economic prosperity.[123]

An over-arching recommendation of the Review was to remove government from

private enterprise activities, and to provide the economic climate for private enterprise to

manage its affairs efficiently with minimum interference.[124] This fitted well with

Howard's ideas. In 1989 he adopted the policy that what could be done by the private

sector "ought not be done by the Government", which meant privatising some public

utilities and outsourcing welfare delivery.[125] Raewyn Connell saw these actions as

breaking down the institutional and collective service characteristics of the public service,

marked by a general hostility against public sector institutions and traditions of service,

and by a ruthless use of organisation power to destroy their character as institutions with

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the claim that Fraser never delivered the smaller government he promised". Phillip Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser. A Biography,* William Heinemann, Victoria, 1987, pp.404-405.
[122] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 May, 1981, p.2034.
[123] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 May, 1981, p.2034.
[124] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 April, 1981, p.1896.
[125] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 May, 1989, p.2115.

a collective rather than a market rationale. Public sector management is reshaped on private sector models, by performance contracts and sharply higher salaries. Everything is, after all, for sale.[126]

As noted above, the process of altering the APS culture had been under way for decades.[127] After Gough Whitlam's structural reform, successive changes had occurred under the Fraser, Hawke and Keating governments.[128] Fraser had placed staff ceilings in departments, bolstered his own department, and generally "attacked the 'cosy' norms of the public service".[129] Hawke introduced The Public Service Reform Bill 1984, which enjoyed broad bi-partisan support for a Senior Executive Service (SES), with the more "insistent and general justifications given for the reforms to the senior public service" being the government's right to a "more 'responsive' higher public service".[130] In line with this "right" was the initiative whereby public servants could be transferred to ministerial offices as advisers, then return to their departments at higher career levels. This meant, according to Howard's first biographer, that political service became an incentive, "rather than an interesting experience for which they paid by losing seniority".[131] In 1991, when debating amendments to legislation affecting the APS, Howard found merit in restructures that offered flexibility to senior executives.[132] However, amendments included twelve months maternity leave for women and the option of returning to their old position, to which he objected, describing the move as

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[126] Connell, *Overland,* pp.32-38.
[127] Lewis, "Industrial relations and the labour market", p.169.
[128] Paul Strangio writes that the 1970s under Whitlam were the point "at which a revolution in governance models also started to take shape". Suspicious of the public service after 23 years of Coalition government, Whitlam began the expansion of ministerial staff ranks. "Incumbency Dominance: an Unhealthy Trend?" Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Parliament House, Canberra, 25 August, 2006.
[129] Elaine Thompson, "The Public Service", *From Fraser to Hawke,* eds. Brian W Head and Allan Patience, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1989, p.214.
[130] Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra. A Nation-building State Changes its Mind,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1991, p.114.
[131] Barnett, *John Howard,* p.771.
[132] Barnett, *John Howard,* p.771.

"contrary to sound management practice" (an aspect of Howard's attitude towards women and families which is discussed in Chapter Six).[133]

Howard argued in Opposition that the public service capacity to retain high quality people was undermined by fixed salaries. He claimed that flexible workplace arrangements would operate equally well in the bureaucracy, and suggested in this 1990 speech that,

> Instead of trying to cobble together a deal … or trying to prop up a failing system, what this Government should be doing in relation to the Public Service is to say to individual permanent heads, "We will give you a cash limit. You have this amount of money and you go away and work out how many employees you want in your Department and what their levels of remuneration will be". [134]

The year before (1989) he complained that the public sector remuneration system was inadequate, caused low morale and staff shortages, and concluded that the "real problems of a centralised wage fixing system … is that it leads to an increasing impoverishment of the quality of people who are needed in the public sector.[135] This continued an old argument, and provided another rationale for a corporate, flexible, public service:

> I have said on a number of occasions recently that it is absurd that we have such rigidity in our approaches to pay in this country – that some of the brightest and best people are

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[133] Howard, CPD, Representatives 5 November, 1991, p.2331.
[134] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 May, 1990, p.281.
[135] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 May, 1989, p.2115.

leaving the Public Service and going into private industry. The levels of pay which are provided are still significantly below what those people are worth.[136]

Contracts and bonuses were, therefore, an expected part of Howard's public service reforms once he was in government.

Ridding the public service of union interference or influence was an imperative reform. In Opposition, he had mocked it as a place where unionists enjoyed a privileged level of positive bias from Labor, and once sought a guarantee that he was "mistaken in that belief that there exists a significant degree of preference for trade unionists in the Commonwealth Public Service".[137] He accused Labor of refusing to offer voluntary redundancies to public servants who did not belong to unions, referencing the example of one public servant who had served for twenty-nine years, yet who had to pay ten years back union fees in order to benefit from a voluntary redundancy package.[138]

While removing union influence was an essential element of APS reform, Howard in government also had wider aims. In 1997 he delivered the Garran Oration – named after the Commonwealth's first public servant, Robert Garran – and announced the expectation of a public service job for life were over:[139]

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[136] Howard, CPD, Representatives 1 June, 1990, p.1061.
[137] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 June, 1994, p.2185. "It has been documented … advertisements … published by the Commonwealth Public Service inviting people to apply for jobs … state quite openly that preference will be given to people who are members of unions ". (p.2186). See CPD, Representatives 9 June, 1994, p.1782, quoting newspaper advertisements for job applicants where "preference will be given to people who belong to the Public Sector Union".
[138] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 June, 1994, p.1782.
[139] Howard, Sir Robert Garran Oration, National Conference of Institute of Public Administration Australia, Canberra, 19 November, 1997.

There are, of course, those who believe that it is an option for the public service to return to some idealised, comfortable past in which it was quarantined from the winds of change blowing through the rest of Australian society. Those who hold out such an option for the public service deny the forces that are transforming Australia …. There are ways in which the public service might change – and some in which it must.[140]

He acknowledged the concept of public service impartiality, but weighed it against the supremacy of government as final decision-maker, a self-evident fact but nonetheless stressed:

One of my very firm views on government is that, while it is most important to seek and take full account of public service advice, ultimately decisions must be for government to make, and responsibility must lie with government.[141]

Howard revealed in his Oration that his "firm views" were that governments reserved the right to "adapt the administrative structure of the public service to best achieve the policy priorities on which it was elected".[142]

Howard's changes to the public service structure to achieve his policy objectives brought accusations of interfering in senior appointments, and of pressuring public servants to give politicians the advice they wanted, rather than needed.[143] He baulked at criticism that he had "somehow destroyed public service traditions", and denied politicising the public service, but admitted there were people "he didn't re-appoint".[144]

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[140] Howard, Sir Robert Garran Oration.
[141] Howard, Sir Robert Garran Oration.
[142] Howard, Sir Robert Garran Oration.
[143] See Scott Prasser, "Providing Advice to Government", 24 February, 2006.
[144] Malcolm Schmidtke and Gay Alcorn, "Being John Howard", *The Age,* 21 August, 2004.

The effects on public service culture were significant, but predictable. Geoffrey Barker, in *Sexing it up,* warned about the dangers of public servants responding to whatever they felt the government wanted to hear, knowing that advancement goes to those who please their ministers.[145] He also noted that the Public Service Commission's 2004-05 *State of the Service* report revealed that a climate of "profound uncertainty, if not fear, pervades much of the Australian Public Service".[146] The studies of Jenny Stewart and Maria Maley show Howard as a political leader who "used values as a way of driving change", with a highly managerial and personal style in policy processes resulting in many public servants dealing with ministers and ministerial offices feeling that APS values were challenged.[147] Howard's new departmental head, Peter Shergold, seemed to capture the essence of a new direction when he stated that "a public service which is *apolitical* is not entitled to ignore the political agenda of elected representatives: rather it should be *responsive* to the directions set by government".[148] [Original emphasis.] On the other hand, Andrew Podger, former Public Service Commissioner, lamented the trend of departmental heads referring to their ministers in market/ outcome language as "primary customers", because it "promoted excessive responsiveness and even obsequiousness to ministers".[149]

Ultimately, however, Howard's concentration of power and policy decision-making resided within his Prime Ministerial office. This was criticised within the Liberal

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[145] Geoffrey Barker, *Sexing it up. Iraq, Intelligence and Australia,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003, p.81.
[146] Quoted by Geoffrey Barker, "The public service", *Silencing Dissent,* p.129.
[147] Jenny Stewart and Maria Maley, "The Howard Government and Political Management: The Challenge of Policy Activism", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.277-293, quoting Australian Public Service Commission, "State of the Service Report 2005-06", 2006, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
[148] Peter Shergold, "Managing the Modern Public Service", *Sydney Papers,* 18, 1, Summer, 2006, pp.211-212.
[149] Andrew Podger, "The Role of Departmental Secretaries. Personal reflections on the breadth of responsibilities today", ANU EPress, Canberra, 2009, p.29. http://epress.anu.edu.au/dep_secs_citation.html.

Party, when former Minister, Nick Minchin, admitted that, "after 12 years of government … the government made decisions without being able to or fully consulting the party room".[150] Treasury Secretary, Ken Henry, complained to his department that he wished the government had listened more attentively to his advice over past years, particularly on water reform and climate change policy.[151] Henry's view was that superior policy outcomes would have been achieved had Treasury's advice been taken into account, a view, apparently, "increasingly widely shared" in Canberra, but an indiscretion for which he paid with a reduced bonus. [152] Brian Toohey raised the question of conservatism in the context of Howard's concentration of executive power, by warning

> to flagrantly disregard long-established safeguards against abuses of power is no way for the leader of a government, whether conservative or liberal, to behave. True conservatives have always warned that, in the absence of effective checks and balances on executive power, politicians would do this. John Howard, we now see, is no exception.[153]

Howard's determination to hold power closely within his own office, and the accountability of political staff generally became a contested issue, particularly when advice from political staff and public servants clashed, and emerged as controversial issues which attracted a great deal of criticism. The 2002 Senate Select Committee on A Certain Maritime Incident investigated ministerial claims that refugees had thrown children overboard (the "Children Overboard Affair") but the Prime Minister's Office

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[150] Nick Minchin, quoted by Samantha Maiden, *The Australian,* 7 February, 2008.
[151] Ken Henry, "Treasury Effectiveness in the Current Environment", Address to Staff, Canberra, 14 March, 2007.
[152] John Stone, "Our Greatest Prime Minister", *Quadrant,* 52, 3, March, 2008, pp.12-21, claims that Ken Henry's "performance pay" for 2006-2007 was cut from at least 15 per cent to 5 per cent. In a different context, he says, "such procedures might be seen as blackmail".
[153] Toohey, "The Lone Ranger", pp.24-30.

refused permission for ministerial advisers who had been liaising between departmental officers and ministers, to give evidence. As Patrick Weller notes in *Don't Tell the Prime Minister,* public servants have little control over how the information they proffer is used.[154] Political appointees, by comparison, are contracted employees who act as partisan advisers, gatekeepers or filters, who often ensure that *no* unwelcome information reaches the relevant Minister or Prime Minister. Yet they remain unaccountable to parliament, while possessing substantial power and authority. The Senate Enquiry found a "tendency of ministerial staff to act as quasi-ministers in their own right, and the lack of adequate mechanism to render them publicly accountable for their actions".[155]

The structure of the chain of advice from public servants to the Prime Minister and his Ministers became controversial political issues during the *Tampa* episode, the "Children Overboard Affair", as well as the intelligence advice used to deploy troops to Iraq, and the AWB Ltd. bribery scandal. Subsequently, *The Australian* editorial in 2006 claimed Howard had crippled the concept of ministerial accountability. When in 2007 the Cole Enquiry released its AWB findings, it again criticised the Howard government, this time for failing a "test of governance", and suggested the "public sector should be held to the same high standard as private industry on corporate governance".[156] Clearly, there were misgivings about aspects of ministerial accountability, the role played by ministerial staff, and the administration and culture within the public service.

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[154] Patrick Weller, *Don't Tell the Prime Minister,* Scribe, Melbourne, 2002, p.87.
[155] Parliament of Australia Senate, Senate Select Committee on A Certain Maritime Incident, Executive Summary, 23 October, 2002. The Committee was denied access to ministerial advisers, and found itself "deeply disturbed by many of the actions and omissions attributable to them".
[156] Terms of the Cole Commission of Enquiry precluded investigation into the government's actions or knowledge, although it criticised the Foreign Affairs and Trade Department for inadequate procedures for handling allegations of corruption. See *The Australian* Editorial*,* "Government fails test on governance", 30 November, 2006.

When he left office, Howard largely achieved his goal to restructure the senior ranks of the public service as a corporate entity, responsive to political masters. As seen, he had planned many decades before that he would structure his own office to reflect a more partisan system of advice, drawing into that sphere Cabinet and policy-making appointments normally reserved for senior public servants. His penchant for placing on boards and statutory authorities also reflected his caution and suspicion of those individuals or groups – particularly if union-related or orientated – were also based on past performance, and unsurprising. As well, he had long stated that he wanted to outsource services that he considered could best be handled by the private sector. Most particularly, however, was Howard's idea that the public sector, even with its traditional, unique status as a collective public service that offered "frank and fearless" advice on a non-political basis, could be drawn within his mainstream industrial relations reforms.

Conclusion

When Howard left government in 2007 the Australian workplace culture was substantially changed. If, as he said, he would grieve for the loss of his industrial relations policy, he would lament its dismantling by the incoming Labor government *and* his own Coalition colleagues. It had represented a constant ambition in his public career, and encapsulated many strands: privatisation, small government, removing centralised wage-fixing and implementing mutually-agreed workplace agreements between employer and employee, while diminishing and preferably undercutting completely the influence of the trade union movement. The APS was caught in his overall industrial relations reform, for he saw no reason to preclude it from "mainstream" policies. While changes had already moved in his direction, he went further than any other Prime Minister. It changed from one where tenured bureaucratic mandarins were powerful providers of neutral, non-

partisan advice, as in Menzies' days, to one where senior ranks were increasingly modeled on corporate practices, with contracts and bonuses rewarded for loyalty, enterprise and initiative.

After over eleven years in government and with control of the Senate, Howard finally brought to life his "obsession" with industrial relations through *WorkChoices,* but still claimed the industrial relations "lemon" was not "squeezed dry".[157] The bitter waterfront dispute had ended any prospect of negotiation or cooperation with the trade union movement, and set the parameters for later legislative attempts to legislatively curtail their workplace involvement. Although he came to parliament with an unsympathetic attitude towards unions, and his position as Treasurer and Minister meant an enforced and symbiotic arrangement with the public service, his repeated argument for reform was that change was in the national interest. Individual choice, flexibility, freedom from compulsory unionism and restrictive dismissal laws were, Howard contended, based on principles of economic productivity, liberalism and non-discrimination. These were constant refrains in his statements and actions over several decades.

Howard's industrial relations policies spilled into the public sector because he believed that workplace reform, negotiated contracts, reward for effort, exclusion of union demands, and a corporate, managerial, reward-for-effort mentality worked as well within the public sector as on the factory floor, university campus, or business board room.   With his penchant for "mainstreaming", his constant ambition for workplace reform, and his persistence in Opposition to formulate policies that reflected those aims,

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[157] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 May, 2005, p.38.

one should not have been surprised when in government he put in place legislation to achieve his goals. Given the tensions with Treasury staff, betrayals from colleagues in the 1980s, and his own cautious and distrustful nature, it was predictable he would continue the preference shown in government in the 1970s for being surrounded by trusted staff.   Increasingly, as Prime Minister he enlarged the size and authority of his personal office by surrounding himself with sympathetic partisan advisers to replace policy posts once held by public servants. Howard evolved authority and power from, and within, that office, with decisions often taken without reference to parliament or executive.[158] In a remark (albeit from a Labor stalwart) that highlighted the extent of change in the public service under the Howard governments, Graham Freudenberg considered it was "social engineering on a scale that would have left old conservatives aghast and old socialists speechless with envy".[159] But Howard showed by his actions, as Brian Toohey notes above, and Marian Sawer remarked in an earlier context, he was never conservative in that sense.

What this chapter reveals is the extraordinary continuity of Howard's views on industrial relations, unions and the public service, starting from the attitudes he learnt at home and taken into parliament. Judith Brett locates many of Howard's ideas on unions as being lodged within his 1950s memory, and although Menzies claimed a wish to work cooperatively with unions, his own legacy remains one that was mired in punitive measures against communists in unions. There was for the ambitious Liberal Party apparatchik, although influenced by the views of his parents and driven by his own observations and experiences, a discernible Liberal anti-union legacy.[160] By contrast to the social liberal measures implemented by successive governments of both stripes –

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[158] Toohey, "The Lone Ranger", pp.24-30.
[159] Graham Freudenberg, *A figure of speech. A political memoir,* Wiley, Milton Qld, 2005, p.273.
[160] See Johnson, *Governing Change,* p.173.

conciliation and arbitration, the state role in safeguarding against the excesses of capitalism and providing a welfare safety net *as a right* – Howard extended the neo-liberal concepts of competition and private enterprise over state involvement.

Howard's ideas on industrial relations and the public service were always evident, as was his repeated wish to outsource government services wherever possible, or where they competed with the private sector. They were defined in *Future Directions, Fightback!,* in the Headland speeches and in government. It reiterates that, among Howard's policies, industrial relations stand almost alone as an example of his tenacity and policy continuity. And yet, ironically, it was unions and the public service that contributed to his downfall: the anti-*WorkChoices* campaign led by a revitalised trade union movement helped to defeat the leader who had made a career out of trying to destroy it, and there was a "blizzard of leaks" from public servants who had been encouraged to operate as competitive, individual, reward-for-effort, enterprise workers.[161]

In the same way that Howard refused to differentiate between the cultures of the market and the traditional, collective nature of the public service in his industrial relations reform, the next chapter, "Cultural Diversity", shows how he followed "mainstreaming" policies in relation to the *difference* he imagined threatened Australia's national values and its way of life. Indigenous people, multiculturalism, migrants and refugees were controversial policy issues for Howard, but, as will be seen, approached with familiar consistency.

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[161] "Blizzard of leaks" was the description used by a former Howard staff member; private communication.

CHAPTER FIVE

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

"[Our] family had a real us-and-them thing. It was the climate we grew up in,

not at all modified by the church".[1] Bob Howard.

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[1] Bob Howard, quoted by Marion Maddox, *God Under Howard. The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, p.22.

Introduction

Previous chapters argued that John Howard had precise ideas about Australian history, identity, traditional families, and governing for "mainstream" Australians. This chapter explores the origins and consistency of Howard's approach to policies relating to cultural diversity. It will argue that he took interpretations from his youth, with its relative insularity, lack of exposure to cultural, racial or religious diversity, and transplanted many of those ideas into later political policies affecting Indigenous people, migrants, and refugees. In 2007 Howard admitted that his difficulties with Aboriginal politics were products of the time he grew up.[2] They also reflected his unease and unfamiliarity with cultural difference, and a belief that social cohesion came from common values. For him, some cultures – not biological race – were less compatible with Australian values and therefore had the potential to threaten community unity.[3] This was evident in his later terms of government when dealing with Muslim and African refugees, and his frequent references to Christianity as a force for good, and Australia's dominant culture.[4] Although often accused of racism or xenophobia, he was offended by such allegations, claiming not to have a "racist bone" in his body.[5] He stressed "as an ethic, racial equality was something I was taught both by my parents and also by the church".[6] As shown in the Headland speeches, Howard stressed cultural differences between Australia and Asia, and talked about his preference for alliances with countries whose "way of life is closest to your

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[2] Howard, "The Right Time: Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous Australians", Sydney Institute, Sydney, 11 October, 2007.
[3] See Jon Stratton, *Race Daze. Australia in Identity Crisis,* Pluto Press, Annandale, 1998, p.14. Also Carol Johnson, *Governing Change. From Keating to Howard,* 2nd ed., Network, Perth, 2007, p.47.
[4] Johnson, "John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June 2007, pp.195-209.
[5] Howard interview with Ray Martin, "Up Close and Personal with Ray Martin", Channel 9 TV, 15 August, 1998.
[6] David Marr, *The High Price of Heaven,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1999, p.30.

own".[7] In so doing, he demonstrated how race or racism could be constructed

through codes or ambiguous language.[8]

The 2001 Federal election was campaigned against the September terrorist

attacks in the United States, the influx of refugees into Australia, the *Tampa* and

"Children Overboard" episodes, with many accusing Howard of appealing to fear and

racism. Yet, as Carol Johnson's studies show, Howard's 2001 election policies

contained significant continuity with those of the 1996 and 1998 elections.[9] This

chapter will show that his actions and statements on immigration, border protection,

trade sanctions against apartheid, and refugees, were consistent over many decades,

even if they invited criticisms of racism, and for using race for political purposes. In

the 1970s Howard objected to Malcolm Fraser's acceptance of Vietnamese refugees,

and when in 1988 he called for reduced migration of specifically Asian people, Baden

Teague, then Chairman of the Coalition Backbench Immigration Committee, warned

that the "public won't wear racism".[10] In government, Howard's silence following

Pauline Hanson's racist remarks on Asians, Indigenous people and multiculturalism

renewed perceptions that he retained racist ideas, particularly by many within his own

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[7] See Howard interview with Ray Hadley, Radio 2GB, 2 October, 2002. See also James Curran, *The Power of Speech. Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2004, p.262: "Australia's bilateral relationships with the English-speaking powers make [Howard] much more comfortable about his and Australia's place in the world".

[8] See Nikos Papastergiadis, "The Invasion Complex in Australian Political Culture", *Thesis Eleven,* 78, 8, 2004, pp.8-27; Martha Augoustinos, Amanda Lecouteur and John Soyland, "Self-sufficient arguments in political rhetoric: constructing reconciliation and apologizing to the Stolen Generations", *Discourse & Society,* 13, 1, 2002, pp.105-142; Danielle Every and Martha Augoustinos, "Constructions of racism in the Australian parliamentary debates on asylum seekers", *Discourse & Society,* 18, 4, 2007, pp.411-436; Nick Dyrenfurth, "Battlers, Refugees and the Republic: John Howard's Language of Citizenship", *Journal of Australian Studies,* 84, 2005, pp.183-261; Carol Johnson, "Narratives of identity: Denying empathy in conservative discourses on race, class and sexuality", *Theory and Society,* 34, 2005, pp.37-61.

[9] Johnson, "The 2001 election campaign: The ideological context", *The Centenary Election,* eds. John Warhurst and Marian Simms, UQP, St Lucia, 2002, p.33.

[10] Interview with Baden Teague, 24 August, 2009, Adelaide.

electorate of Bennelong, which had many Chinese constituents.[11] The few remaining

moderate Liberal colleagues, Petro Georgiou, Russell Broadbent, Bruce Baird and

Judy Moylen, objected to harsh border protection legislation and treatment of Middle

Eastern asylum-seekers, and urged the return of tolerant liberalism.[12]

Howard did not engage with 1970s debates on Aboriginal issues, despite his

earlier exposure to church debates about social justice and restitution of rights.[13] The

brief statement on Indigenous policy in *Future Directions* stated that reconciliation

would be achieved through "mainstreaming" Aborigines into the social and economic

mainstream of the nation, and this became a repetitive theme in Opposition and in

government. Always chary of minority interest groups, he lobbied unsuccessfully in

1988 to have multiculturalism erased from Coalition policy, but succeeded in doing so

in government.[14] He refused to retract his statements about Asian immigration, to

apologise to the Stolen Generations, or entertain any form of reparation or separate

treaty with Aborigines. Howard's aim, under the umbrella of "One Australia" was to

devise policies so that everyone would participate in the "broad mainstream of the

Australian way of life".[15] As will be seen, however, such policies involved elements

of *exclusion* and a lack of empathy for those beyond his milieu. On the other hand, he

could sympathise with those he deemed to have shared, or common, interests and

values. Howard's policies on cultural diversity have been extensively discussed in the

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[11] Labor candidate, Maxine McKew, appealed to Bennelong's ethnic community; see Margot Saville, *The Battle for Bennelong. The adventures of Maxine McKew, aged 50 something"*, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2007, p.91. Saville claims a constituent remarked, "all of a sudden [Howard] has discovered the Asian population … at a time when he knows his seat is marginal. Where were you when we needed you in 1996 … to speak out against Pauline Hanson?"
[12] See Petro Georgiou, "The Liberal Tradition", Inaugural Murray Hill Lecture, 4 October, 2006, Adelaide. Although forced to "soften the edges", Howard claimed not to have changed his policy on asylum-seekers. See interview with Kerry O'Brien, ABC TV, *7.30 Report,* 20 June, 2005.
[13] The 1950s *Methodist* magazine discussed Aboriginal self-determination and National Aborigines' Sunday to remember Australia's original owners; see Maddox, *God Under Howard,* p.12.
[14] Interview with Teague, 24 August, 2009.
[15] Howard and Ian Sinclair, *Future Directions. It's time for plain thinking,* Canberra, 1988, p.1.

literature and elsewhere, and this chapter's discussion under the various headings of empathy and racism, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, immigration and asylum seekers, and multiculturalism, concentrates only on policy origins and continuity.

Howard: empathy and racism

Howard's absence of empathy with migrants, asylum-seekers, Aborigines, or those with whom he does not identify at a personal level, was a noted aspect of his character.[16]   Michelle Grattan considered that he lacked that "special quality of imaginative empathy that would allow him to enter the minds and souls of those whose experience is totally outside his own".[17]   Gerard Henderson attributed the same emotional deficiency to Howard's treatment of asylum-seekers.[18]   Aboriginal leader, Jackie Huggins, noted Howard remained unmoved when Aboriginal women related harrowing stories about the Stolen Generations.[19]   David Marr believed that those "who dealt with Howard on Aboriginal issues don't sense antipathy, just a lack of engaged interest.[20]   Rick Farley, who represented the National Farmers' Federation and the Reconciliation Council, claimed Howard was never comfortable with the reconciliation process or the indigenous agenda, or with social issues in general. He too saw "no dislike, just a very narrow personal frame of reference".[21]   This echoed Marcus Einfeld's earlier noted observation that Howard's disinterest in other cultures or Aboriginal people made him "racially unfamiliar".

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[16] Gerard Henderson considered Howard's lack of empathy to be "the one significant blot on his record in public life. See "Prejudice has tarnished a political legacy", *Sydney Morning Herald,* 25 May, 2004. See also Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen, *John Winston Howard. The Biography,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2007, p.400; Johnson, "Narratives of identity", pp.37-61.

[17] Michelle Grattan, "John Howard", *Australian Prime Ministers,* 1st ed., New Holland, Sydney, 2000, p.458.

[18] Gerard Henderson, "The PM's lack of empathy", *The Age,* 17 August, 2004.

[19] See Andrew Markus, *Race. John Howard and the remaking of Australia,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.106.

[20] Marr, *The High Price of Heaven,* p.41.

[21] Rick Farley, quoted by Marr, *High Price of Heaven,* p.41.

Then Opposition leader, Kim Beazley, wept when the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (*Bringing Them Home*) report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity (HREOC) was tabled in parliament on 26 May, 1997.[22] Howard expressed scant sympathy for the report's contents, and when addressing the Australian Reconciliation Convention the day afterwards, his speech contained what Judith Brett describes as expressions of "anger and a stubborn refusal to listen to what people were really saying … a clear mistrust of spontaneous emotional responses".[23]

Howard as Prime Minister was unusually eloquent in commemoration services after the Bali bombing that killed and maimed many Australians, and extended sympathy to other victims of terrorism ("let us wrap our arms around not only our fellow Australians but … around the people of Indonesia, of Bali … the people of other nations").[24] He pledged government funds and government facilities following the 2004 tsunami to assist those nations that had been stricken by the catastrophe. Significantly, however, he showed strong empathy for those whose values he shared and understood. He was in Washington in 2001 after the US terrorist attacks, and his response was swift and emotional, pledging support and military aid for the American President.[25] After the 2005 attacks in London, he told parliament that Australians identified with London for "most of us have travelled on the very underground rail

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[22]Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2003, p.154. I was in the Chamber at the time, and witnessed the later taunts of "Cry Baby Beazley".
[23]Judith Brett, "Why John Howard Can't Say Sorry", *Arena Magazine,* December, 2000, p.35.
[24] Howard, Memorial Service, Bali, 17 October 2002.
[25]Howard said he understood the "depth of the shock these events exerted on the American psyche", interview with Russell Parkin, *Australian Army Journal,* Vol. III, Number 1, pp.11-16 (n.d.) (recorded 9 June, 2005). See also Donald A DeBats, Tim McDonald and Margaret-Ann Williams, "Mr Howard Goes to Washington", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.231-251.

system that was the subject of these disgraceful attacks".[26]   His most emotional

displays were shown at ANZAC Day services.[27]

In 1975 Howard objected to economic sanctions against the South African

apartheid régime.[28]   This defied the Liberal Party's stand, but was in line with that of

Margaret Thatcher.[29]   In 1986, he stressed his opposition was not on the grounds of

supporting apartheid, merely the method to combat it.[30]   When the Coalition had a

chance of winning government in 1990, diplomat Richard Woolcott warned then

Opposition leader, Andrew Peacock, against appointing Howard into the foreign

affairs portfolio because his earlier statements on South Africa and immigration were

regarded as "having racist overtones [and] might undermine the growing recognition

in Africa and Asia that Australia was no longer racist in its outlook".[31]   When Cabinet

papers were publicly released in 2008, Malcolm Fraser confirmed that Howard

resisted the government's decision to accept Vietnamese refugees into Australia in

1977.[32]   Although denied by Howard, the Director of the Australian Refugee

Association, Kevin Liston, felt it fitted Howard's attitude towards refugees.[33]   His

earlier views and actions on race and immigration, and his later silence on racist

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[26] Howard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives) 9 August, 2005, p.6.

[27] Tony Wright in "Howard's End", *Bulletin,* 22 January, 2003, describes Howard's emotion and "homespun poetry" on ANZAC Day 1998, at Hellfire Pass, Thailand, and ANZAC Day 2000 at Gallipoli.

[28] Howard, CPD, Representatives 5 March, 1975, p. 1126.

[29] Then Foreign Affairs Minister, Andrew Peacock said government policy on apartheid "firmly opposes racial discrimination in sport", CPD, Representatives 19 February, 1976. Anthony Seldon and Daniel Collings, *Britain Under Thatcher,* Pearson, Harlow, 2000, p.74, say Thatcher "was renowned as being unsympathetic to the aspirations of black nations, while her contempt and refusal to support Commonwealth sanctions against South Africa excited widespread hostility among Commonwealth leaders".

[30] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.453.

[31] Richard Woolcott, *The Hot Seat. Reflections on diplomacy from Stalin's death to the Bali Bombings,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 2003, pp.224-5. Errington and van Onselen, in *John Winston Howard,* say Peacock had "pencilled in" Howard for the foreign affairs portfolio (p.181).

[32] See Siobhain Ryan, "Howard leadership 'guided by aversion to boatpeople'", *The Australian,* 2 January, 2008.

[33] Kevin Liston, quoted by Ryan, *The Australian,* 2 January, 2008.

remarks by Pauline Hanson were remembered by many Asian constituents because of "what he said in 1988, and what he didn't say in 1996".[34] His colleague, Peter Costello, remarked that Howard was "still uncomfortable at some level with a prevalence of Asian faces in Australian streets."[35] Even when Cricket Australia in 2010 nominated Howard for appointment as Vice President of the International Cricket Association, he was unsuccessful because he was deemed inappropriate by Asian and African cricket bodies.[36]

Howard had a long record of involvement in racial or racial-related issues. He acknowledged during debates on the 1975 Racial Discrimination Bill the existence of unacceptably high levels of racial discrimination "in certain areas" but felt eradication could not be achieved by "legislative coercion".[37] Rather, he felt that combating racism lay in government-sponsored public education policies.[38] In 1975, he baulked at government interference into the lives of individuals, but agreed a "common ground exists between the Government and the Opposition concerning the abhorrence of racial discrimination. But it is an *extremely tender area*".[39] [Emphasis added.] He accepted that acts inciting racial discrimination ought to be made unlawful, but "to attempt to proscribe the dissemination of ideas … is to get into an area which … is

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[34]Maxine McKew Support Group, quoted by Brett, "Exit Right. The unravelling of John Howard", *Quarterly Essay,* 28, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2007, p.48. See also Tracey Aubin, *Peter Costello. A Biography,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1999, p.261, and Brett, "It's Bennelong Time", *Monthly,* 27, September, 2007.

[35]Shaun Carney, *Peter Costello. The New Liberal,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.277.

[36]See Malcolm Conn, "Afro-Asian bloc rejects John Howard's bid for ICC presidency", *The Australian,* 30 June, 2010.

[37] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 April, 1975, p.1303.

[38] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 April, 1975, p.1303. Pre-government, Howard launched the Liberals' Immigration, Multiculturalism and Settlement Policies, denouncing racism as the product of ignorance, and committed $10 million for educational purposes; 18 months later funds were halved and postponed. In 1998, Cabinet approved the campaign, "Living in Harmony". See Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, *A Place in the Sun. Re-creating the Australian Way of Life,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 2000, pp.241, 282. See also Adrienne Millbank, "An Anti-Racism Campaign: Who Needs It?" Parliament of Australia Library, Current Issues Brief, 20, 1997-1998.

[39] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 June, 1975, p.3249.

dangerous and could infringe on such a basic right that the Opposition very strongly

opposes [it]".[40]   (A statement that resonated with his later comments about Hanson's

right to speak on subjects considered taboo under what he termed "political

correctness".)

Historian Geoffrey Blainey in 1984 ignited the Asian immigration debate

when he denounced the "black armband" view of history, Asian immigration and the

devaluation of British contributions to Australian history.[41]   Howard later adopted

Blainey's views on history and immigration, but at the time responded to the Asian

debate in parliament with what Beazley described as "a genuinely great speech" that

called for a bi-partisan, non-discriminatory approach to immigration.[42]   Four years

later, as Opposition leader, Howard declared the need to slow down Asian

immigration, and, it was claimed, broke with the idea of bi-partisanship on issues

relating to multiculturalism and immigration.[43]   He now claimed Liberal Party

research, the opinion polls, and the 1988 FitzGerald Report on immigration policies

supported his concern, and community unease, about levels of immigration and

multiculturalism.[44]

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[40] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 April, 1975, pp.1408-1409.

[41] Geoffrey Blainey, "The Dilemma of Asian Immigration", *The Age,* 20 March, 1984, reprinted in *Blainey. Eye on Australia. Speeches and Essays of Geoffrey Blainey,* Schwartz & Wilkinson, Melbourne, 1991, p.29. Blainey later warned, "Canberra's prediction that Australia will become part of Asia might be all too true", "50 Years Back, 20 Years On", *IPA Review,* .46, 3, 1993, pp.41-43.

[42] Kim Beazley, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.429, referring to Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 August, 1984, p.278.

[43] See James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera. The Story of Australian Immigration,* Cambridge UP, Melbourne, 2007, p.106, and J Gardiner-Garden, *The Multiculturalism and Immigration Debate 1973-1993,* Parliament of Australia Library, 1993. Gwenda Tavan writes this broken compact caused "public unease about race and immigration issues", *The long, slow death of White Australia,* Scribe, Victoria, 2005, p.229.

[44] Liberal Party research "identified resentment of multiculturalism [and] strong and increasing hostility to Asian immigration". David Barnett with Pru Goward, *John Howard. Prime Minister,* Viking, Ringwood, 1987, pp.509-510. Murray Goot in "Fewer Asians, more votes?" *Current Affairs Bulletin,* September, 1988, 65, 4, pp.30-31, said "[E]vidence of opposition to current levels of Asian immigration is not far to seek; but it is widely exaggerated". The FitzGerald Report found "suspicion" towards immigrants, immigration and multiculturalism. Stephen FitzGerald, *Immigration. A*

In 1996 Howard won government partially by exploiting the electorate's fears about Keating's incursions into multiculturalism, Aboriginal land rights, and Australia's place in an Asian region.[45] He understood that an electorate weary and disadvantaged with reform was receptive to Hanson's spectre of Asians poised to swarm into Australia, and to claims that Aborigines received government benefits unavailable to white Australians.[46] The 1996 election-night victories of Howard and Hanson reflected the potency of those ideas.[47] In government, he championed her right to free expression and celebrated it as a triumph over "political correctness". After Hanson's maiden speech, he said,

> One of the great changes that have come over Australia in the last six months is that people do feel free to speak a little more freely and a little more openly about what they feel. In a sense the pall of censorship on certain issues has been lifted.[48]

In much the same way, he could not condemn the White Australia policy, seeing it as a "mistake" which was

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Commitment to Australia, Report of the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, Canberra, 1988, pp.10-11.

[45]See Johnson's central argument in "Howard, Labor and the Revenge of the Mainstream", *Governing Change,* pp.39-56. Post-1996 ALP research showed immigration, multiculturalism and integration with Asia played a part in its defeat. See Katharine Betts, "Patriotism, Immigration and the 1996 Australian Election", *People and Place,* 4, 4, 1996, pp.27-38.

[46] See *Arena Magazine* Editorial*,* "Hanson, Howard and the Politics of Exhaustion", http://www.arena.org.au/archives/MagArchive/Issue81/editorial81.htm. Verity Burgmann in "Refashioning Australian Racism" says Hanson's biases received different treatment: "whilst racism against Asians will be contested by powerful interests, racism against Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders will continue to be tolerated and even promoted". *Arena Magazine,* 30, August-September, 1997, pp.15-16.

[47] Murray Goot and Ian Watson in "One Nation's Electoral Support: Where Does It Come From, What Makes It Different and How Does It Fit?" shows One Nation's mobilisation did not lie in concerns about economic insecurity but in opposition to "new class" values, particularly race. *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 47, 2, 2001, pp.159-191.

[48] Howard, Speech to Queensland Division of Liberal Party State Council, 22 September, 1996.

inevitable given the history of this country and the attitudes that people had in those days towards people of different races. I don't think we should see our ancestors, our forebears, in many cases our parents or grandparents, *as being any more racist than we are,* just different.[49] [Emphasis added.]

These remarks reflected Howard's perpetual portrayal of Australian history as one of courageous colonial settlement and rejection of what he saw as "political correctness" relating to the race or immigration debates. It also, and consistently, revealed his refusal (or inability) to acknowledge where racism did, or did not, exist.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders[50]

In 2007 Howard confessed his difficulties with Aborigines were a product of his upbringing and his era, yet many of that generation did not share his views.[51] Chapter One showed that while the church magazine, *The Methodist,* urged recognition of Aboriginal rights, the Howard family members preferred the American *Saturday Evening Post.*   There were also paternalistic references to Aborigines at Howard's secondary school. These circumstances were not atypical for the time, for, as Noel Pearson wrote in the letter that reportedly encouraged the Northern Territory intervention, Howard's relationship with Indigenous people was shared with 90 per cent of the population.[52] Not all, however, had Howard's opportunities of a public career to see first-hand the circumstances of Indigenous people, or to fashion remedies for amelioration. Successive governments had not solved the problems of

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[49] Howard, "Interview with John Howard", Paul Kelly, *100 Years: the Australian story,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.250.

[50] "Aborigines", "Aboriginal" or "Indigenous people" are used interchangeably in this chapter.

[51] Barry Cassidy said on ABC TV, *Insiders,* 14 October, 2007: "A lot of people grew up in that period that didn't share that view". He also confirmed that, despite Howard's "mea culpa", Howard did not change his views on how to effect Aboriginal reconciliation.

[52] Noel Pearson, quoted by Kelly, *The March of Patriots. The Struggle for Modern Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2009, p.348.

Indigenous communities, perhaps, as Pearson suggests, because, as a group, they were electorally the least important, or, as Malcolm Fraser said when pressing for compensation for them, there "weren't large numbers of votes" involved.[53] Former Aboriginal Senator, Aden Ridgeway, admitted it was no "secret that Indigenous people in this country do not vote in such numbers to make a difference to any side of politics".[54]

During his Opening Address at the Australian Reconciliation Convention after the *Bringing Them Home* report was released, Howard reacted belligerently when some in the audience protested his refusal to accept all fifty-four recommendations, particularly the one relating to a government apology to the Stolen Generations.[55] He declared "personal sorrow" but, just as *he* did not feel personal guilt, "Australians should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control".[56] This resonated with *Future Directions,* where he singled out "professional purveyors of guilt" who

> attacked Australia's heritage and [told] people … they should apologise for pride in
> their culture, traditions, institutions and history and should feel guilty for wrongs
> committed generations ago. Too often displays of guilt over actions which today's
> Australians would never condone, for which they are not guilty and should not be

[53] Noel Pearson, "Labor's ideas mature", *Weekend Australian,* 9-10 December, 2006. See also Fraser's comment, "[The government is] mostly spending money where they think there are going to be large numbers of votes", AAP , "Compensate Stolen Generation – Fraser", 26 April, 2007. .
[54] Aden Ridgeway, "Quote of Note", *Birra News* Number 30, 28 June, 2004, quoted by Kate Alport and Lisa Hill, "Political Exclusion and Electronic Conduits to Civic (Re-)Engagement in Australia", Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, Newcastle, 25-27 September, 2006.
[55] See Augoustinos *et al*., "Self-sufficient arguments in political rhetoric: constructing reconciliation and apologizing to the Stolen Generations". Also Errington and van Onselen, *John Winston Howard,* pp.263-264: "It was [Howard] concedes, a mistake. He had briefly forgotten the cardinal rule his mother had taught him – always be polite".
[56] Howard, Australian Reconciliation Convention, Melbourne, 27 May, 1997.

made to feel guilty, were substituted for practical proposals to right the consequences of past wrongs.[57]

He never budged from this position, regarding criticism directed at him as an "honest difference of opinion".[58]

Howard's emphasis was on practical measures to effect reconciliation, rather than symbolic gestures that he considered served little purpose. On a motion relating to dispossession of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the new Parliament House in 1988, he said

> I do not hold the view that symbolism is irrelevant in public life, although it is fair to say that the passage of this motion, in whatever form, by this Parliament will not of itself improve the health or the education standards or necessarily lift the horizons of Aboriginal Australians. Anybody who imagines that resolutions and symbolism are a substitute for effective working policies in this or, indeed, any other area is deluding himself.[59]

In 2005 Howard accepted a qualified place for symbols, but grumbled, "if all we do is focus on symbols we will have failed …. Recognition of symbols needs to go hand-in-hand with practical action".[60]

Howard basically eschewed symbolism, argued for practical reconciliation for Indigenous people based on those rights available to *all* Australians, dismissed their

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[57] Howard, *Future Directions,* p.7.
[58] Howard, CPD, Representatives 3 April, 2000, p.15013.
[59] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 August, 1988, p.139.
[60] Howard, National Reconciliation Planning Workshop, 30 May, 2005.

unique status, and overlooked the possibility of the *practical* nature of some symbolism. As Angela Pratt says

> issues which apparently fall into the category of "symbolic", such as native title, are in fact highly *practical* in nature. In other words, the discourse of "practical reconciliation" emphasises a *particular kind* of "practical" – Indigenous people's health, housing, education, employment and economic development – that is, those rights, entitlements and opportunities that Indigenous people share *in common with all Australians,* as against practical issues arising from Indigenous people's unique status as *Indigenous people.* [Original emphasis.][61]

After over a decade in government, Howard did not move from his notion of "One Australia", or from linking reconciliation to mainstream policies, through what Jane Robbins describes as a "uniform national system of government, with no concession to differentiated cultural rights or political arrangements".[62]

Howard declined to participate in the People's Walk for Reconciliation in 2000, described by the Council members of Aboriginal Reconciliation as a tangible expression of the "people's will for reconciliation".[63] For him, this was gesture politics and failed the cause of practical reconciliation that he continued to see as an "ongoing persistent rendition of practical, on-the-ground measures".[64] Two reports – *Towards Reconciliation* – and *Roadmap for Reconciliation,* were handed over at *Corroboree 2000* at the largest gathering of community leaders in Australia's history,

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[61] Angela Pratt, "Practising Reconciliation? The Politics of Reconciliation in the Australian Parliament, 1991-2000, Parliament of Australia Library, 2005, p.139. For discussion on the "false dichotomy" between practical and symbolic reconciliation, see also Sarah Maddison, *Black Politics. Inside the Complexity of Aboriginal Political Culture,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2009, p.11.
[62] Jane Robbins, "The Howard Government and Indigenous Rights: An Imposed National Unity?", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.315-328.
[63] Letter to Senators and Members accompanying Report of Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge,* signed by Council Members, 4 December, 2000.
[64] Howard, National Reconciliation Planning Workshop, 30 May, 2005.

but again he rejected calls for an apology, self-determination or customary law.[65] On

the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 Aboriginal referendum, Howard spoke about

Aboriginal spiritualism but warned yet again of the worthlessness of symbolism if

accompanied by "overcrowding, poor health, community violence and alienation from

mainstream Australian society".[66] On the tenth anniversary of the *Bringing Them*

Home report in 2007, he refused to join then Opposition leader Kevin Rudd and Co-

Chair of Reconciliation Australia, Jackie Huggins, in acknowledging Aborigines as

the nation's first people. Predictably, he considered they should have "access to the

bounty and good fortune of this nation, and that cannot happen unless they are

absorbed into our mainstream".[67]

In Opposition, Howard opposed the establishment of the Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and in government cut its funds to curb

the perpetuation of the "Aboriginal industry", before dismantling the organisation

entirely.[68] Former Liberal Minister, Peter Howson, described ATSIC's demise as

"cleaning out the stables".[69] By contrast, Noel Pearson considered it a "deep-seated

and widespread contempt for … indigenous organisations on the part of the

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[65] Attendees were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, the Governor-General, the NSW Governor, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, National Party Leader, Opposition Leader, State Premiers and Chief Ministers, and the Democrats' Leader. According to the Report, reconciliation had advanced but many issues remained "to be resolved before Australia can be a truly reconciled nation". Report of Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge,* 4 December, 2000, Chapter 7.
[66] See "Their Spirit Still Shines", Howard's speech on 40th anniversary of 1967 referendum, Canberra, 27 May, 2007.
[67] Howard, CPD, Representatives 24 May, 2007, p.69.
[68] Johnson, *Governing Change,* p.45.
[69] Peter Howson, "Breaking out of the museum: the consequences of Dr Coombs", *Quadrant,* 50, 5, May, 2006, pp.39-41. He described the *ATSIC Abolition Act* as "cleaning out the stables built by [Nugget] Coombs and his followers" on policies of separatism and self-determination. Howard's brief condolence motion for Coombs referred to his "very profound influence" on indigenous policy; CPD, Representatives 30 October, 1997, p.10328.

commonwealth".[70] The suggestion that ATSIC was a "marriage between government bureaucracy and Indigenous decision-making" – or just another interest group – partially explained Howard's decision.[71] His other fear was the potential for separatism, or cultural disunity. In 1989 debates *against* ATSIC, he said it would create a "black nation within the nation", and, as he said before, and later, the way to achieve proper accord was to "embrace Aborigines fully within the Australian community".[72] Yet, when he abolished ATSIC without consultation or negotiation with Indigenous people, as Robbins notes again, he imposed a "vision of national unity by unilateral decision".[73]

Based on fears of national division, Howard refused to negotiate any form of treaty. Here he returns to an old theme:

Aboriginal affairs has to be addressed within the concept of a single, undivided nation [where] all Australians, whether indigenous Australians or other Australians, are treated equally. It will never be part of the policy of the Liberal and National parties to see the development of Aboriginal affairs policy within the concept of the triplication or fragmentation of this nation. We are one people and one nation.[74]

On 11 October 2007 and prior to the election, Howard delivered a speech entitled, "The Right Time" at the Sydney Institute and announced his intention

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[70] Pearson, "The politicians and bureaucrats who hold ATSIC as the black scapegoat forget that health, education and employment and training … were the responsibility of mainstream government departments", "Give us help to help ourselves", *Weekend Australian,* 17-18 March, 2007.
[71]See Stuart Bradfield, "Separatism or status-quo? Indigenous affairs from the birth of land rights to the death of ATSIC", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 52,1, March, 2006, pp.80-98, quoting Michael Dodson, *ATSIC Social Justice Commission,* Fifth Report, Canberra, 1997, p.34.
[72] Howard, CPD, Representatives 11 April, 1989, p.1328.
[73] See Robbins, "The Howard Government and Indigenous Rights", pp.315-328.
[74] Howard, CPD, Representatives 2 March, 1995, p.1410.

(subject to referendum) to include a Statement of Reconciliation into the Australian Constitution, to recognise the special ("though not separate") place of Indigenous people within a "reconciled, indivisible nation".[75] Some regarded the gesture as a policy shift.[76] Others, like Johnson in her paper "Howard on Reconciliation: Not Humble Pie but Hubris", notes the links with previous statements.[77] Indeed, this speech echoed *and consolidated* past decisions over decades that precluded an apology, treaty, or compensation to Indigenous people, while reiterating the idea of two separate nations was "always fundamentally flawed".[78] At a media conference the following day, Howard referred to *Future Directions'* philosophy of "One Australia" as a guiding light, and repeated the vision of "one nation and one people":

> I used a phrase last night I first used 19 years ago in a document called *Future Directions ...* one Australia … I have always believed in one Australia. I believe in that passionately. It's influenced my views. In relation to multiculturalism, to settlement policies. I have always supported a multi-racial mix in this country, but I have always believed that we should be one nation and one people.[79]

This was problematical for Indigenous people who originally owned the land, and felt some compensation was owed to them. In 1974, the year Howard entered parliament, the first Aboriginal Senator, Neville Bonner, tabled a resolution that sought formal recognition that his people

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[75] Howard, "The Right Time", Sydney Institute, 11 October, 2007.
[76] See, for example, Mark Kenny, *Adelaide Advertiser,* "Howard referendum in reconciliation backflip", 12 October, 2007.
[77] Johnson, "Howard on Reconciliation: Not Humble Pie but Hubris", *Online Opinion,* 16 October, 2007. See also Barry Cassidy, ABC TV, *Insiders,* ABC TV, 14 October, 2007.
[78] Howard, "The Right Time", 11 October, 2007.
[79] Howard, Media Conference, Sydney, 12 October, 2007.

were in possession of this entire nation prior to the 1788 First Fleet landing at Botany

Bay [and] urges the Australian Government to admit prior ownership by the said

indigenous people, and introduce legislation to compensate the people now known as

the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for dispossession of their land.[80]

Howard much later praised Bonner as a "trailblazer for his own people", but was

opposed then, and later, to the compensation sought by him and his people.[81] In

1981, Labor's D N Everingham tabled an identical resolution, again to no avail.[82]

Howard was cautious about any avenue whereby compensation might occur. When in

1987 the Hawke government authored a preamble to the proposed Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islanders Commission Bill that recognised Aboriginal original

ownership of the Australian landmass, Howard warned it would constitute the "basis

for claims for compensation for past dispossession of land".[83]   In 1988, when the

government again introduced a motion into the new Parliament House relating to

Indigenous land dispossession, Howard tried to amend it by adding after "the

entitlement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to self-management and self-

determination" the words "in common with all other Australians", because, as he said,

any form of separate development was "repugnant to our notions of a united

nation".[84]   In 1999 when in government and debating the Constitution Alteration

(Preamble) Bill, he cavilled at the word "custodianship", concerned that it implied

"notions of continuing ownership".[85] As he said, to reflect the "values and verities"

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[80] Neville Bonner, CPD, Senate 20 February 1974, quoted by Gerry Hand, Aboriginal Affairs Minister
in Hawke government, CPD, Representatives 10 December, 1987, p.3198.
[81] Howard, Speech at Neville Bonner Tribute Dinner, Canberra, 31 May, 2000.
[82] D N Everingham, CPD, Representatives 9 June, 1981, p.3329.
[83] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 December, 1987, p.3198.
[84] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 August, 1988, p.139.
[85] Howard, CPD, Representatives 12 August, 1999, p.8630.

of Australian society, it was preferable to refer to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as the "nation's first people".[86]

Howard did not deny Aboriginal disadvantage, but his solutions lay in "practical reconciliation" alongside mainstream service delivery, tightening welfare benefits, mutual obligation and personal responsibility, first outlined in *Future Directions* under a brief entry titled "Aboriginal Social Priorities".[87] In 1995 he published a document, "After 13 Years. How Labor has failed Australia", that acknowledged large sections of Aboriginal "extreme disadvantage".[88] In government, he admitted

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most profoundly disadvantaged within our midst. That is something I have said not just for the first time and it will not be the last time I say it; it is a view I have expressed before.[89]

In government in 1997 he again conceded injustices had occurred to the nation's first people, as well the "assault on their traditions and the discrimination and violence they endured over many decades".[90] While he promised to ameliorate their circumstances, he returned to familiar territory when he predicted failure if policies were based on symbolic gestures, a sense of national guilt and shame, and different sets of systems or legal accountability on the basis of race.[91]

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[86] Howard, CPD, Representatives 11 August, 1999, p.8426. Although rejected at referendum, Howard wanted "mateship" in his Preamble, because it "expresses a quintessential Australian attitude. I think that millions of Australians love that word" (p.8428).
[87] *Future Directions,* pp.97-98.
[88] Howard and Peter Costello, "After 13 Years. How Labor has Failed Australia", Liberal Party of Australia, p.89 (n.d) released 1996.
[89] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 October, 1996, p.6158.
[90] Howard, Australian Reconciliation Convention, May 1997.
[91] Howard, Australian Reconciliation Convention, May 1997.

This repetition of disadvantage – and improvement by practical means – is explained by Brett on two levels: Howard did not apologise to Indigenous people because he did not feel sorry, but felt responsibility to include them in the material progress inherent within liberalism:

> Again and again Howard says, "Nobody can deny the disadvantage still experienced by many Aboriginal Australians". The word disadvantage tolls like a bell through his statements …. The ostensible reference is always to health, housing, employment – to practical problems amenable to practical solutions. But in its insistent repetition one can hear, I think, another meaning – that the Aboriginal people were and are a disadvantaged backward people who need help to be brought up to our standards and take their place in the modern world.[92]

One sees here a resonance with Howard's Methodist church and school education. As well, his aversion to collectivism derived from his interpretation of liberalism, and the value he placed on individualism, self-reliance and responsibility. His liberalism, or rhetoric of individualism, appeared to ignore the inherent racism in stressing mainstream values that were predominantly resistant to anything other than Christian, Anglo-Celtic values.[93]   This kind of liberalism, as Nikos Papastergiadis suggests, could explain Howard's apparent blindness to actions seen as racist:

> Liberal conceptions of individualism are defined in opposition to collectivist forms of cultural affiliation and this is reinforced by chauvinistic claims that its own internal form of pragmatism is the superior mode of knowledge. These differentiations and

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[92] Brett, "Why John Howard Can't Say Sorry", p.35.

[93] For "Discourse on Anglo Decline", see Ghassan Hage, *White Nation. Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society,* Pluto Press, Annandale, pp.179-208.

hierarchies are invariably articulated through national values and racial concepts. It is

the execution of this value system through the mechanisms of the state that make

liberalism a powerful and *almost invisible form of racism.*[94] [Emphasis added.]

Under pressure from the Australian Democrats and Aden Ridgeway, Howard's

1999 parliamentary motion of reconciliation expressed "deep and sincere regret" to

Indigenous people.[95] He "had come to the view" that reconciliation with the

Indigenous community was an important element of unity in the nation, and admitted

he had "to some degree moved my position, and I do not deny that".[96] However,

another close reading reveals familiar terrain: he reiterated that present generations of

Australians should not be held accountable for deeds of an earlier generation or

become embroiled "in an exercise of shame and guilt". And, he continued, while the

nation's history was blemished, it had achieved "enormous things … has won itself

great repute and great credit around the world".[97] He praised Ridgeway and

Indigenous leaders who had "come halfway" in understanding the genuine concerns

of some Australians who could not accept the "sort of formal national responses"

being asked of them. Howard prefaced the need for such a motion of reconciliation to

be made in the interests of unity, and urged Australians to remain committed to those

"things that unite us … and not … divide or set us apart as Australians".[98] A year

later, in a Menzies lecture entitled, "Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Issues", he repeated that treatment of Aborigines was a "blemish" on

Australia's history, and promised a site and construction within the Parliamentary

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[94] Papastergiadis, "The Invasion Complex in Australian Political Culture", pp.8-27.
[95] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 August 1999, p.9205.
[96] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 August, 1999, p.9205.
[97] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 August, 1999, p.9205.
[98] Howard, CPD, Representatives 26 August, 1999, p.9205.

Triangle to be known as "Reconciliation Place".[99] But he had not moved far from his original ideas. In an essay on reconciliation published in 2000, he wrote it was not

> accurate or fair to portray Australia's history since 1788 as little more than a disgraceful record of imperialism, exploitation and racism. Such a portrayal is a gross distortion and deliberately neglects the overall story of great Australian achievement …. Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control.[100]

His 2007 election year Australia Day citizenship ceremony glossed over mistreatment of Aborigines to extol the redeeming national qualities:

> It's a wonderful nation, it's the greatest on the earth, we think we're pretty good and we are. We've made our share of mistakes, we haven't always treated some of our citizens as well as we should have, and I think particularly of the earlier treatment of the Indigenous people of Australia, but we are in every sense of the word a generous people.[101]

Howard urged Indigenous people to raise their living standards by contributing to, and benefiting from, the Australian economy and entering into a spirit of cooperation with mainstream policies. This was framed explicitly in an Indigenous Agreement with the Northern Territory:

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[99] Howard, "Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues", Menzies Lecture Series, 13 December, 2000. Malcolm Fraser pointed out the irony of the proposed construction in memory of the Stolen Generation showing children "laughing and playing happily", see *Common Ground. Issues that should bind and not divide us,* Penguin, Victoria, 2003, pp.206-207.

[100] Howard, "Practical Reconciliation", *Reconciliation: Essays on Reconciliation,* ed. Michelle Grattan, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2000, p.90.

[101] Howard, Address at Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony, Canberra, 26 January, 2007.

the greatest thing that we in Government can offer indigenous Australians is a share

of the bounty of this country and a share of the success and future of this country.

And the only way in which that can happen is to focus effectively on delivering

practical outcomes in areas so critical to all of us: health, education, employment and

housing … doesn't matter whether you're an indigenous Australian or you're another

part of the Australian community …[102]

This differs little from *Future Directions* where Coalition policy for Aborigines

involved ending duplication of administrative structures and sources of funding

(mainstreaming), and ensuring participation in the democratic system that represented

all Australians, rather than a "separate political process". This included eradication of

"sit down money", the "them and us" attitude, and promotion of self-sufficiency.[103]

Howard was consistent in these views throughout his parliamentary career, despite

Noel Pearson's suggestion of economic development *alongside* cultural renaissance,

or Jackie Huggins' urging of practical *and* symbolic measures.[104]

When launching the Australian Prospectors and Miners Hall of Fame in

Kalgoorlie in 2004, Howard explained:

All the theories in the world will not replace the value of employment … the value of

sustainable economic opportunities … the value of the embracement of the

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[102] Howard, Address at Indigenous Agreement, Parliament House, Darwin, 6 April, 2005.
[103] *Future Directions,* pp.96-97.
[104] See Noel Pearson, "Aboriginal Health. The Way Forward", *Arena Magazine,* 20, June-July, 1995, pp.20-23, and Jackie Huggins, "Two Sides of Reconciliation", International Perspectives on Peace and Reconciliation Conference, 16 July, 2003, Melbourne.

indigenous people as part of our economic future …. that is why my Government has placed such a great emphasis on what I call practical reconciliation.[105]

Howard advocated "local action" as the key to advancing reconciliation, because it would not succeed through "eloquent rhetoric or high level communiqués …. [but] through Indigenous and other Australians taking millions of small steps in the right direction".[106]

At a national level, however, land rights were a major issue in Howard's first term political agenda. His handling of the situation had the potential to register the "deep kinship with the land" he understood Aboriginal people to possess, and to provide tangible means whereby Indigenous people could share the wealth of the nation.[107] However, he concentrated on protecting pastoralists' and miners' rights, and overturned the native title policy gains of previous governments. Howard's problem was that the 1992 Mabo decision negating the concept of *terra nullius* and the clarifying legislation *Native Title Act 1993* left open the question of whether pastoral leases extinguished native title rights.[108] He addressed the issue when the High Court decided in the 1996 *Wik* case to uphold the co-existence of graziers and traditional owners on lands under pastoral leases.[109] In parliament, he admitted to

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[105] Howard, Address at launch of "Trust" Exhibition, Australian Prospectors and Miners Hall of Fame, Kalgoorlie, 5 February, 2004.

[106] Howard, "PM urges local action on reconciliation", *ABC News Online,* 25 July, 2006.

[107] See Ravi de Costa, "Reconciliation as abdication", *Australian Journal of Social Issues,* 37, 4, November, 2002, pp.397-420, on leadership in the reconciliation process. Howard's 1999 proposed Preamble honoured "their deep kinship with their land and for their ancient and continuing cultures".

[108] Ann Curthoys, Ann Genovese and Alexander Reilly, *Rights and Redemption. History, Law and Indigenous People,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.48.

[109] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 May, 1996, p.346.

responding to the concerns of pastoralists and the mining industry. We recognise that

the economic future of this country depends on resource development and upon

getting a set of laws which do not allow people who do not have substantial claims to

stall development for years.[110]

This was prefigured before the 1996 election when he committed the Coalition to

retaining the *Native Title Act* but reserved "the right to amend it to ensure its effective

operation".[111] Howard's first Headland speech contained the same promise, and in

government he created a Ten-Point Plan that extinguished native title rights.[112] This,

he claimed, would eradicate uncertainty, unfairness and arbitrariness, although

overseas evidence showed such decisions produced resentment and bitterness.[113]

When debating the 1998 Native Title Amendment Bill, Howard returned to the

argument about "equality under the law":

it is wrong in principle that there should be a right to negotiate over pastoral

leaseholdings subject to mining applications in the hands of indigenous claimants, yet

that right is not available to farmers and pastoralists. We do not believe that that right

should be available to one group and not available to others. That is the fundamental

reason why we have always said that a bill which contained the right to negotiate was

always going to be unacceptable, not only to the rural community of Australia, not

only to the mining industry of Australia, but indeed to the vast bulk of the Australian

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[110] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 May, 1996, p.920.
[111] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In. The Values, Directions and Policy Priorities of a Coalition Government Outlined in 1995", Liberal and National Parties, Canberra, 1995, p.35.
[112] Howard, "The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach", Menzies Research Centre, 6 June, 1995.
[113] Chris Ingham writes that over 20 years Anglo-Commonwealth jurisdictions have been "faced with the choice of integrating the principle of aboriginal rights into a reconfigured polity or of extinguishing them in the name of 'certainty'. They have found that the latter option has [created] resentment and bitterness". "Stifling Reconciliation", *Arena Magazine,* 30, August-September, 1997, pp.37-38.

community, who believe in a very sacred principle, that is, the equality of all Australians before the law.[114]

Critics pointed to the hollowness of the "equality before the law" argument when one compared the wealthy industrial lobby to the poor financial status of Indigenous groups.[115] When the Senate resisted the legislation and it threatened to become an election issue based on race, Howard returned to an old sore by protesting:

> There will be no race election as far as my government is concerned. We will never embrace the politics of race. We will never seek to exploit a political issue or create a political argument based on race. We do not have in our ranks people who have used racist language.[116]

Howard ignored the legislation's condemnation by the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination for being racially discriminatory.[117] And only after he induced the support of Independent Senator Brian Harradine, did the bill avoid defeat in the Senate.[118]

Through his legislation and welfare/ mutual obligation policies, Howard steered Aboriginal issues towards a new (and mainstream) direction, but accelerated change with control of the Senate. He brought in bureaucratic procedures to end "passive welfare" and encouraged self-reliance, responsibility and better "parenting"

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[114] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 April, 1998, p.2959.
[115] Damien Short, "Reconciliation, Assimilation, and the Indigenous Peoples of Australia", *International Political Science Review,* 24, 4, 2003, pp.491-513.
[116] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 April, 1998, p.2959.
[117] Short, "Reconciliation, Assimilation and the Indigenous Peoples of Australia", pp.491-513, quoting UN Decisions 1 (53); CERD/C/53/Misc.17/Rev.2, 11 August, 1998, 1999, and 2000.
[118] See Margo Kingston's account in *Not Happy, John! Defending our democracy,* Penguin, Victoria, 2004, pp.132-135. Howard conceded he had been "rebuked" for "looking after" Harradine and his State of Tasmania. CPD, Representatives 23 June, 2005, p.87

through combinations of "centralism and localism, sticks and carrots, paternalism and

enhanced individual responsibility".[119] By 2007, impatient with the Northern

Territory government's slow response to the *Little Children are Sacred* report of child

abuse suffered by many (but not all) Aboriginal communities, Howard declared a

"national emergency".[120] With police and military support, he planned to ban alcohol

and pornography, to medically examine all children under the age of 16, and to

quarantine welfare payments to ensure food reached families. Given his pre-election

timing, many were sceptical of his motives, especially when in the past he had

received many reports on Aboriginal circumstances, including his own task force on

child abuse.[121] Concerns had been raised by Premiers and Chief Ministers at Council

of Australian Government (COAG) meetings, and Howard had earlier in 2000

committed "practical assistance and emotional support" to victims of family violence

in Indigenous communities. [122] Naomi Mayers, an indigenous health leader who over

40 years read every report on her people's health, told Howard the fundamental

recommendations contained in them were remarkably similar, but "Australian

governments have avoided their implementation".[123] While this thesis has argued

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[119] Grattan, "Howard's quiet revolution", *The Age,* 24 November, 2004. See also Meaghan Shaw, "Hygiene pact in deal for blacks", *The Age,* 9 December, 2004.

[120]*Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle (Little Children are Sacred)* Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, 30 April, 2007, co-chaired by Rex Wild and Pat Anderson. See also Howard's Joint Media Conference with Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, 22 June, 2007; Howard, "To Stabilise and Protect: Little Children are Sacred", *Sydney Papers,* 19, 3, Winter, 2007, pp.68-76.

[121]See Foreword to *Little Children are Sacred:* Reports in WA (2000), Queensland (2004), Victoria (2004), NSW (2006): "In the Northern Territory, government agencies have been aware of allegations over a long period"; see also Geoff Boucher and Matthew Sharpe, *The Times Will Suit Them. Postmodern Conservatism in Australia,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2008, p.2: "For years, reports had appeared documenting child abuse in Aboriginal communities, together with developing-world living conditions and life expectancy".

[122] See Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, "Statements of Commitments from Government", *Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge,* 4 December, 2000, Chapter 8, noting Howard, all Premiers and Chief Ministers indicated common concern at the effect of violence and substance abuse on many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Also Howard, CPD, Representatives 18 August, 2005, p.83.

[123] Naomi Mayers, quoted in Debra Jopson, "Consult us and respect us: health expert's passionate plea", *SMH,* 23 June, 2007.

continuity in many of Howard's policies, there is no record of him having outlined the measures involved in the Northern Territory emergency. It does, however, bear the hallmarks of his capacity to superimpose Commonwealth powers on the States or Territories, and to trust people like Noel Pearson who share his views on ending passive welfare. He saw no contradiction in terms of human rights or social justice in suspending the *Racial Discrimination Act,* or in imposing without wide consultation with Aboriginal leaders a police- and military-led operation to take control of land, health and security. As Raimond Gaita asks, "Could such disrespect be shown to any other community in this country?"[124]

Multiculturalism

In his first year in office, Howard's parliamentary motion of racial tolerance committed the government to the right of all Australians to "enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin", but did not mention multiculturalism.[125] As James Jupp noted in 1997, the official version of multiculturalism disappeared from national policy, with Australia now a "unified nation in which all are participants as individuals within the mainstream, but not as members of distinct groups".[126] Nonetheless, Howard *had* identified a dominant cultural pattern:

> In Australia's case that dominant pattern comprises Judeo-Christian ethics, the
> progressive spirit of the Enlightenment and the institutions and values of British

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[124] Raimond Gaita, "The Moral Force of Reconciliation", *Coercive Reconciliation. Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia,* eds. Jon Altman and Melinda Hinkson, Arena Publications, North Carlton, 2007, p.299. For Pearson's influence, see Maddison, *Black Politics,* pp.129-130 and Kelly, *The March of Patriots,* pp.344-352.
[125] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 October, 1996, p.6156.
[126] Jupp, "An anxious society fears the worst", *Journal of Australian Studies,* 54-55, September-December, 1997, pp.1-11.

political culture. Its democratic and egalitarian temper also bears the imprint of distinct Irish and non-conformist traditions.[127]

Gerard Henderson suggests that Howard's preference for unity over diversity was the basis for his opposition to multiculturalism.[128] It also reflected his antagonism towards minority groups, and his wish to preserve Australian, Judeo-Christian values and ethics. As Brett suggests, this was not necessarily (in his view) based on racism or xenophobia, but on an idea that liberalism was "wary of supporting particularist institutions that might impose group-based obligations on individuals which constrain their freedom of choice and actions".[129] This does not explain his support for business, mining and pastoralist groups, but highlights his chariness about threats *through difference* to community division, or towards imported cultures and values that competed with the Australian way of life.[130] Jon Stratton suggests that as Howard championed a *particular* kind of national society based on similarity and cultural homogeneity, we could perhaps

> now understand the difference for Howard between "vested interests" and "community-based organisations". The former are part of a political institutional structure which perpetuates and increases division in the national society. The latter … may speak on one issue but do so in the interests of the entire society ...[131]

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[127] Howard, "A sense of balance: the Australian achievement in 2006", National Press Club, Canberra, 25 January, 2006.
[128] Gerard Henderson, *A Howard Government? Inside the Coalition,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1995, p.26.
[129] Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class. From Deakin to Howard,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 2003, p.195.
[130] *Future Directions,* pp.92-93.
[131] Stratton, *Race Daze,* p.79.

Howard was selective about those who could, in an institutional context, make recommendations "for the entire society". In 1997 he commissioned the National Multicultural Advisory Council to prepare a report "aimed at ensuring that cultural diversity is a unifying force for Australia", and to study whether "multiculturalism" should be continued as an official description for certain government policies. The Council's 1999 report, *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness,* found that some people supported multiculturalism, while others believed it denied Australian culture.[132] The report suggested that "Australian multiculturalism" was a term that recognised and celebrated national diversity, and recommended that the government frame its arguments around productive diversity and equal opportunity in economic terms.[133] A year later the Council was replaced with the Council for Multicultural Australia, with representation selected by Howard from business, law and finance but none from unions or the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA).[134] In 2003 the Council presented its report, *Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia: Strategic directions for 2003-2006,* which restated principles of inclusiveness, but took into account the terrorist attacks in the US and Bali, and the "changed global environment in which we live".[135] There was a reprise of economic benefits gained from cultural diversity and immigration, and its concentration on civic duty and social harmony echoed Howard's views.[136]

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[132]*Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness,* Report by National Multicultural Advisory Council, Canberra, April, 1999, p.11.

[133] *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century,* pp.11, 19-20. See also John S Dryzek, "Including Australia", *Australia Reshaped. 200 Years of Institutional Transformation,* eds. Geoffrey Brennan and Francis G Castles, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 2002, pp.133-134. .

[134] Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera,* p.71. "Nobody actively identified with the ALP or the unions was a member of the 2000 Council for Multicultural Australia", p.87.

[135] Howard, Foreword to "Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity", *Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia: Strategic directions for 2003-2006,* Canberra, 2003.

[136] *Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia,* p.6.

Before Howard, the previous Fraser, Hawke and Keating governments had fostered multiculturalism as a national cultural policy that recognised the idea of a British, or Anglo-Celtic nation, could no longer be sustained within a culturally- and racially-diverse Australian population.[137] By contrast, *Future Directions* had warned, "So-called multicultural programs … simply ensnare individuals in ethnic communities, denying them the opportunity to fully participate in Australian society".[138] In 1989, a year after *Future Directions* was published, Howard complained that the adoption of multiculturalism made it impossible for an Australian ethos or common culture: "So we have to pretend that we are a federation of cultures and that we've got a bit from every part of the world …. that is hopeless.[139] Before the 1996 election, his language, if not his core belief, was modified:

> If multiculturalism means that there should be respect for everybody's own individual
> cultural identity then I'm totally supportive. If it means that you're sort of promoting
> the diversity ahead of the unity then I put a couple of question marks over it.[140]

As Prime Minister in 1998 (an election year) Howard claimed an "evolutionary view" of multiculturalism, and was "strongly supportive" of it.[141] But he was nonetheless impatient with suggestions that Australia lacked its own character before migrants arrived:

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[137] Kay Anderson and Affrica Taylor, "Exclusionary Politics and the Question of National Belonging: Australian Ethnicities in 'Multiscalar' Focus, *Ethnicities,* 5, 2005, pp.460-485.
[138] *Future Directions,* p. 89.
[139] Henderson, *A Howard Government?* p.27.
[140] Henderson, *A Howard Government?* p.27.
[141] Howard, *Australia/ Israel Review,* May, 1998, quoted in *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century,* p.51.

I think there's the idea that … until we had multicultural and a lot of ethnic diversity

we really had no identifiable national marks … some people felt uncomfortable with

it because of that sense that we didn't really have an identifiable character until this

came on to the scene.[142]

Clearly Howard was uneasy with multiculturalism, but particularly with what

he termed "zealous multiculturalism".[143]   While hardly "zealous" agencies, his

actions in government were designed to undo official multiculturalism: he abolished

the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, the Office of

Multicultural Affairs, with the latter subsumed within the Immigration Department

without a significant budget, before dropping it entirely.[144] Having unsuccessfully

tried to delete multiculturalism from Coalition policy in 1988, he scrapped it as

official government policy in 2007 when he renamed the Department of Immigration

and Multicultural Affairs to Immigration and Citizenship. This more accurately

reflected his ideas of an integrationist (mainstream) society based on "shared" or

"common" values" and on insistence of citizenship with responsibilities.[145] Shedding

multiculturalism as official policy or bureaucratic responsibility attracted little protest,

although Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister interpreted the move as

Australians not having "changed considerably from their old racist, white supremacy

[142] Howard, *Australia/ Israel Review,* p.51.
[143] Howard interview with Neil Mitchell, Radio 3AW, 8 December, 2006.
[144] See Jupp, "Immigration policy and the attack on multiculturalism", *The Politics of Australian Society. Political Issues for the New Century,* eds. Paul Boreham, Geoffrey Stokes and Richard Hall, Pearson Longman, Frenchs Forest, 2004, p.381.
[145] "Howard drops multiculturalism", *Daily Telegraph,* 23 January, 2007. "This is not designed to kick multiculturalism", he said, but "to better reflect the pathway to becoming an Australian inherent in a vibrant immigration program". Baden Teague said in 1988 he "traded" multiculturalism as Coalition policy by conceding Howard's right to determine "size and determination" of migrant intakes. Teague supported sovereignty, but was dismayed at the "spin" later placed on it. Interview, 24 August, 2009. See also Heba Batainah and Mary Walsh, "From multiculturalism to citizenship", *Howard's Fourth Government,* eds. Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.227.

or racist policies". [146] (One is reminded of the earlier advice from Richard Woolcott

to Andrew Peacock about Asian perceptions of Howard as racist, and his 2010

rejection as Vice President of the International Cricket Association on similar

grounds.) Mark Lopez saw Howard's removal of multiculturalism as government

policy as a

> gradual shift towards integrationism, a migrant settlement ideology, formerly
>
> dominant during the 1960s, that advocated a degree of give and take between
>
> migrants and their hosts. This raises the critical question of whether this trend
>
> will profoundly threaten established multicultural public policy". [147]

Evidence suggests this was Howard's precise policy aim.

In a 2001 pre-election climate, in a marginal seat with a high proportion of

Italian migrant voters, Howard launched "Strength Through Diversity", which

adopted the National Multicultural Advisory Council's idea of *Australian*

multiculturalism. This was the entry point for Howard's revitalised language on

loyalty to Australia.   He touched on the "twin goals of loving Australia, but always

keeping a place in your heart for the land of your birth". [148] Australian values and

unity took precedence:

> I've frequently said in my political career that the things that unite us as Australians
>
> are infinitely greater and more enduring than the things that divide us. And the things

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146 ABC News Online, "Australia still has racist image in Asia: Ibrahim", 25 January, 2007.
147 Mark Lopez, "Multicultural spirit lives on", *The Australian,* 25 January, 2007.
148 Howard, Multicultural Policy Announcement "Strength Through Diversity", Adelaide, 16 October, 2001.

that unite us, tolerance, fair play, call it, in the Australian vernacular, mateship, are

really the principles that underline our approach to multicultural affairs.[149]

The theme of integration and "drawing all Australians together" was framed against

the backdrop of multicultural policy, but aimed at new migrants and refugees

becoming "independent and active participants in Australia's society as speedily as

possible". To this end, he committed government funds to promote Australian

citizenship – in preference to multiculturalism – as the "single most unifying force in

our community".[150]

Howard's policies differed greatly from the 1970s/ 1980s multicultural

initiatives of Malcolm Fraser, who set in place a "bold new course" in multicultural

affairs through the adoption of the Galbally Report.[151]   According to Lopez, this

report was a "culmination of long campaigns … to introduce multicultural policies

and programs into government decisions and outcomes".[152]   Interestingly, Howard as

Treasurer was a member of Fraser's Review of Commonwealth Government

Functions ("The Razor Gang"), which, at a time of financial stringency, reduced

government assistance for new migrant arrivals, and outsourced programmes to

private enterprise.[153]   Later, in *Future Directions* he recommended that multicultural

programmes be curtailed, and, as discussed in the Garnaut and FitzGerald reports

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[149] Howard, "Strength Through Diversity".
[150] Howard, "Strength Through Diversity".
[151] Fraser, quoted by Allan Patience, "Immigration Policies", *From Hawke to Fraser: Australian public policy in the 1980s,* eds. Brian W Head and Allan Patience, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1989, pp.413-414.
[152] Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2000, p.445.
[153] Fraser accepted Razor Gang recommendations to restrict the Commonwealth role in adult migrant and refugee education programs, terminating migrant assisted passage schemes and transferring interpreting services to private agencies. See petition requesting these decisions be rescinded, "Migrant Services", Hansard, HR, 4 June, 1981, p.3102.

below, he shifted the emphasis to pre-arrival language skills, grant-in-aid schemes to community-based groups offering services in welfare, education and family support, and incentives to employers to offer workplace English language training. It signalled then, and carried out later, that entry and citizenship programmes would be directed to skilled migrants who would contribute to "one nation".[154]

Immigration and asylum-seekers

Howard in 1988 suggested that Asian immigration be slowed, and in 2001 deterred a relatively small number of asylum-seekers from reaching Australia.[155] In both cases, there are elements of marked consistency. As Prime Minister he inherited non-discriminatory immigration policies in terms of ethnic origin, race, sex or religion (although, as Lopez points out, *every* immigration selection policy discriminates in terms of health, wealth, skills or language).[156] It has been suggested that Australia's status as a British colony in an Asian region had created a sense of vulnerability that remained within the "national imaginary".[157] Dictation tests in arcane languages were eventually abandoned as criteria selection for "white" or "suitable" immigrants, and Harold Holt began to dismantle the White Australia policy in the late 1960s, even though some believed that Australia's early treatment of non-white people remained lodged within the Australian psyche.[158] Anne McNevin, in her study of the politics of

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[154] *Future Directions,* pp.94-95.

[155] Matthew Gibney, in *The Ethics and Politics of Asylum,* considered Australia "remarkable because so few asylum-seekers were needed to provoke a 'crisis'"; quoted by Kelly, "Detention retreat the first step", *The Australian,* 22 June, 2005.

[156] Lopez contends that immigration programmes discriminate in favour of the wealthy, economically viable skills, English language proficiency, or family connections in Australia. "Reflections on the State of Australian Multiculturalism and the Emerging Multicultural Debate in Australia 2005", *People and Place,* 13, 3, 2005, pp.33-40.

[157] Papastergiadis, "The Invasion Complex in Australian Political Culture", pp.8-27. For perceived legacy of the White Australia policy, see Laksiri Jayasuriya, "The Australian-Asian connection: from Alfred Deakin to John Howard", *Australian Quarterly* 78, 2, March-April, 2006, pp.12-22.

[158] The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* was crafted to ensure "purity" of the "white Australian race" and to deal with Aborigines, Chinese and non-Anglo immigrants; see Anderson and Taylor,

asylum in Australia, for example, discusses how the *performance* of policing asylum seekers and border protection "resonated strongly with Australia's traditional anxieties".[159]

Like practically every nation, Australia never had an "open door" policy for migrants wishing to settle here. The *Migration Reform Act 1992* came into force in 1994, with bipartisan support, and was designed to make detention mandatory for all "unlawful non-citizens.[160] Again, Howard went further: in government he retained the detention centres established by Keating, but transferred Commonwealth control to private operators for security and day-to-day administrative operations.[161] By 2001, with increased numbers of asylum-seekers arriving in Australia, his policies on border control and unauthorised arrivals became more punitive when he refused to allow their status to be processed on Australian soil.   As with his 1988 comments about slowing Asian immigration, he was accused of using race for political, pre-election purposes, of using vulnerable people as election pawns (as with the *Tampa* and "Children Overboard" affairs), and inciting fear of terrorists.[162]   He invited

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"Exclusionary Politics and the Question of National Belonging", pp.460-485. Alfred Deakin opened his 1901 election campaign by favouring "a White Australia, in which the absolute mastering and dominating element shall be British", quoted by Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera,* p.11. For accounts of the dictation test, see Heidi Zogbaum, *Kisch in Australia. The Untold Story,* Scribe, Melbourne, 2004.

[159] Anne McNevin, "The Liberal Paradox and the Politics of Asylum in Australia", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 4, December, 2007, pp.611-630.

[160] Adrienne Millbank, "The Detention of Boat People", Parliament of Australia Library, Current Issues Brief 8, 2000-01.

[161]Millbank, "The Detention of Boat People". Detention centres were contracted to Australian Correctional Services Pty Ltd (AC), a subsidiary of the US-owned Wackenhut Corrections Corporation.

[162] See Carmen Lawrence, *Fear and Politics,* Scribe, Melbourne, 2006, in particular, Chapter 1, "Fear and politics" (pp.7-22) and Chapter 2, "Fear of the other" (pp.23-49). The 2002 Senate Select Committee (A Certain Maritime Incident Committee) Labor and Democrats Senators' report concluded "a clear implication that Mr Howard misled voters during the 2001 election campaign over the children overboard affair". A minority government report rejected the findings. Howard told Ray Martin, *A Current Affair,* Channel 9, 18 August, 2004: "The real reason the Labor Party is pursuing this issue is they can't get over the fact that they lost the last election", and on radio to John Laws the same day, stressed the "children overboard" issue did not determine the election outcome.

further criticism by declaring that he did not want people "like that" in Australia, and by comparing them to post-war potential war criminals.[163]   These were not aberrations or politically expedient statements, but of a piece with his overall ideas on sovereignty and safeguarding the national "home".

When Howard launched the Liberal Party's election campaign in 2001 and declared "we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come", he did not express a new idea.[164] In 1988 he accused the Hawke government of abrogating its responsibilities by placing a caveat on the right of a sovereign nation "to determine who shall enter and remain in Australia."[165] In February 2000, before the *Tampa* appeared, his response to complaints about the cost of illegal immigrants was, "I don't want illegal immigrants coming to this country. I've tried my level best as Prime Minister to tighten the law".[166] During the 2001 debate on asylum-seekers, he declared:

> From the very beginning, Australia has sought on all occasions … to balance against the undoubted right of this country to decide who comes here and in what circumstances, a right that any other sovereign nation has [and] our humanitarian obligations as a warm-hearted, decent international citizen.[167]

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[163] Howard said of allegations of children being thrown overboard, "Genuine refugees don't do that … They hang onto their children". He told Alan Jones, Radio 2UE: "I don't want in this country people who are prepared … to throw their own children overboard". Both quoted by David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, *Dark Victory,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003, pp. 189-190.   Howard claimed "Australia had no way to be certain terrorists, or people with terrorist links, were not among the asylum seekers trying to enter the country by boat …[as with post-World War II] when Nazi war criminals had slipped into Australia": interview with Dennis Atkins and quoted in Peter Charlton, "The Terror Campaign", *Howard's Race. Winning the unwinnable election,* ed. David Solomon, HarperCollins, Pymble, 2002, pp.127-128.
[164] Howard, Liberal Party Campaign launch, Sydney, 28 October, 2001.
[165] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p. 405.
[166] Howard interview with Alan Jones, Radio 2UE, 2 February, 2000.
[167] Howard, CPD, Representatives 27 August, 2001, p.30234.

He claimed that Australia's warm-heartedness did not extend to having its sovereign rights "trampled on", and while grieved at allegations of insensitivity towards genuine refugees, he would not abandon "our right to refuse to allow people to be landed in this country" where Australia's national interest was concerned.[168] Superfluously, he reiterated his determination to defend the "sovereignty of this country …[as a] consistent position".[169] Oddly, part of ensuring sovereignty was excising parts of Australia to ensure that asylum-seekers would be processed offshore, rather than on Australian territory.[170] In his speech introducing this legislation, he invoked "sovereignty" five times, stressed the illegality of boat arrivals, and closed off legal appeals because "the courts of Australia do not have the right to overturn something that rightly belongs to the determination of the Australian people … through their representatives in this parliament".[171]

As noted throughout, Howard consistently rejected allegations of being racially-motivated, claiming instead a candid conversation with Australian people who were "disturbed" about fast social change and "ethnic content". As he said as early as 1984 (with the familiar complaint about "political correctness"):

One of the things that sickens me about this debate on immigration is the way in which we on this side of the House, and others who dare to ask questions about immigration, have been criticised and categorised as racist. Of course it is a sensitive

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[168] Howard, CPD, Representatives 27 August, 2001, p.30234.
[169] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 August, 200l, p.30664.
[170] The *Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Act 200l, and Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) (Consequent Provisions) Act 2001,* excised Christmas, Ashmore and Cartier Islands and Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The Migration Amendment Regulations 2005 legislation contained additional islands prescribed as *excised offshore places.* See Janet Phillips and Harriet Spinks, "Boat arrivals in Australia since 1976", Parliament of Australia Library, Background note, 28 January, 2010.
[171] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 August, 2001, p.30569.

issue and of course there are many people on both sides of the political arena who are disturbed about the possible social implications of fast change in our migrant and ethnic content.[172]

Four years later in 1988, when Hawke lodged in parliament an affirmative action resolution against racism, to formalise the position that no Australian government would use race as the basis for selection, Howard as Opposition leader refused to support it, claiming nothing "racist or neanderthal" in his reasons. [173] Others saw it differently, particularly neighbouring Asian countries that were reminded of the White Australia policy.[174] Some of Howard's moderate colleagues, already restive about his leadership and policy directions, crossed the floor in protest and in support of Labor.[175] His argument remained that border integrity and national sovereignty were paramount, and he seemed puzzled by criticism:

> I find it astonishing that anybody can seriously claim that that is anything other than a reflection of the view held by many people in the Australian community who cannot by any sense of the imagination or any sense of the word be accused of being racist. I know that there are ugly racists in this country, and I deplore as much as anybody else examples of that …[176]

When in government and in responding to criticism that he allowed Pauline Hanson's racist remarks to go unchecked, Howard followed a familiar path:

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[172] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 August, 1984, p.278.
[173] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.405.
[174] David O'Reilly wrote in 1988 that Howard "had let the cat out of the bag" in the "immigration row", quoting the *China Times:* "The White Australia Policy has resurfaced – Asian migrants are the target group and doors will be shut". "Blight Australia policy", *Bulletin,* 18 October, 1988.
[175] Liberals Ian Macphee, Michael MacKellar and Philip Ruddock voted with the government. Peter Baume and Chris Puplick did so in the Senate. Ruddock, then Shadow Immigration Minister, fell out "most spectacularly" with Howard. *The Australian,* 19 May, 1999.
[176] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.405.

In my view there should be robust debate in this country about the size of our

immigration policy. People are entitled to attack the present immigration levels

without being branded as bigots or racists …. If someone disagreed with the

prevailing orthodoxy of the day, that person should not be denigrated as a narrow-

minded bigot.[177]

Howard's 1988 statements about Asian immigration led to acrimonious

parliamentary debates on both political sides, and he was charged with racism and

being poll-driven.[178] Hawke did not accuse him of racism, but of using race for

political gain.[179] He goaded Howard on dividing the nation and following polls:

His polling shows that there is this prejudice in the community and he has unleashed

within his coalition and within the wider community the most malevolent, the most

hurtful, the most damaging and the most uncohesive forces …. Far from guaranteeing

one Australia, he has guaranteed a divided Australia; a hurtfully divided Australia.[180]

It was reported that a recent visit to Margaret Thatcher, who had also

controversially entered the race and immigration debates in the United Kingdom,

reportedly stiffened his resolve.[181] If there were elements of political expediency or

[177] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 October, 1996, p.4858.
[178] Laurie Oakes wrote: "A leader with an IQ only slightly above the moron level would have known that talk of reintroducing race as an element in immigration policy would produce an inevitable backlash in the party. Howard, whatever else may be said of him, is no moron. He knew what the result would be, but went ahead – cynically judging that the political gains would outweigh the losses". "Oxley delivers a message to the Libs", *Bulletin,* 18 October, 1988, p.29.
[179] Bob Hawke, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.402. Hawke accused Howard of "cynical opportunism, in a cynical grab for votes".
[180] Bob Hawke, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.402.
[181] Oakes, *Bulletin,* "Howard's growth", 7 March, 2006, and reprinted in *Power Plays. The real stories of Australian politics,* Hachette, Sydney, p.335: "Even when it was clear the issue was seriously damaging his leadership, he would not back off. 'I am not budging. Definitely not. Is that clear?' He had just returned from a trip to London where, in a tete-a-tete at 10 Downing Street, he had received a pep talk from Margaret Thatcher. The Iron Lady told him the secret of political success was to adopt a policy position and then stick to it no matter what. 'Never waver', she warned. Confidantes said at the

opinion polls influencing Howard's actions, there was also conviction and some evidence of community support. The 1988 FitzGerald Report, set up by the Hawke government to advise on Australia's immigration policies, revealed community resistance to aspects of multiculturalism and immigration.[182] Thus claiming vindication that his stance was not based on race, but on sovereignty, commonsense and community agreement, Howard quoted from *The Australian* editorial that it "must be the role of the elected government … to make the final and absolute decisions on who will or will not be granted entry to Australia on a temporary or permanent basis".[183] Rather than retract his statements, they were repeated for clarity:

> I do … think that the pace of change brought about by the migrant intake is an issue that any government has got to keep in mind and from time to time we've got to take account of the community's capacity to absorb it … I don't primarily see it as a vote winning exercise. I primarily see it as something that is important to the national unity of Australia and to our sense of identity as Australians.[184]

Further,

> I do think it is legitimate for any government to worry about the capacity of the community to absorb change and there is some concern about the pace of change

time it had a profound influence on him". In her biography, Thatcher reported saying in 1978 "if you want good race relations you have got to allay people's fears on numbers …. we have got to look at the numbers who have a right to come in". Although pilloried by colleagues and the church for "making respectable racial hatred", the remarks gave the Conservatives a "large and welcome boost at an extremely difficult time". It was a demonstration to "trust her own judgement on crucial matters", for "somewhere out in the country there would be a following and perhaps a majority for me". Margaret Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher. The Path to Power,* HarperCollins, London, 1995, pp.408-409.

[182] See FitzGerald, *Immigration. A Commitment to Australia,* pp.10-11.
[183] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.405.
[184] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.405.

involved in the present level of Asian migration. I think any government is entitled to

take that into account and it ought not to be accused of being racist.[185]

The *Future Directions'* 1988 immigration policies stated that governments

must "exercise the right from time to time to vary and alter policy, including

adjustments to the size and composition of the immigration programme in response to

changing social, economic, political or humanitarian requirements".[186] In the same

year, Howard declared that no government he led would "abandon the sovereign right

of this country to decide who will be a permanent citizen of this nation".[187]   Indeed,

there was scant difference between this statement, and his later, "We will determine"

election launch declaration of 2001 and beyond.

The ambitious Howard paid a high price for what Donald Horne called those

"suicidal hints" that Asian immigration could be made a political issue.[188] He lost

credibility amongst his colleagues, the media, business, and the church, and the

following May he lost the Liberal leadership.[189] Before the 1996 election, to offset

perceptions of racism, he expressed regret for his remarks (to some scepticism).[190] In

office, he praised Asian values because they were compatible with his own, and that

of the nation:

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[185] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.405.
[186] *Future Directions,* p.94
[187] Howard, CPD, Representatives 25 August, 1988, p.405.
[188] Donald Horne, *Ideas for a Nation,* Pan, Sydney, 1989, p.190.
[189] See Oakes, "Oxley delivers a message to the Libs", 18 October, 1988, p.29.
[190] See Greg Sheridan, "Howard's Big Regret", *Weekend Australian,* 8-9 January, 1995. Labor's
Duncan Kerr said: "[Before the election] [t]here was a major rally at which the Prime Minister spoke.
Consistent with … the way in which he seeks to speak in code …in different ways to different
audiences, that major meeting was organised at night, with the only media … invited being the SBS.
At that meeting, with a large number of leaders of the ethnic communities, he sought to reassure them
that what he had said previously in 1988 about race … was no longer his view ….Did it get a run in the
mainstream, non-ethnic press? No. Because it was not intended to …. He was seeking to reassure and
putting out a false message to the rest of the Australian community that … he was less comfortable
with levels of migration than the then government". CPD, Representatives 3 December, 1996, p.7571.

> People of the Asian communities have contributed very greatly to the enrichment of our life. They have brought their values of the extended family … hard work … commitment to small business and entrepreneurial flair and their infectious vigour.[191]

Howard stated his attitudes towards Asian immigrants had "softened" because of their embrace of Australian culture, small business and family values.[192] George Megalogenis sees this as Howard "changing his mind" and a "conversion", but while Howard welcomed migrants who shared his views, he did not alter his concern about controlled immigration based on *skilled* recruits and their cultural ability to integrate. Later in his government term, for example, he was less accepting of migrants or refugees from Islamic backgrounds whose culture he claimed made it difficult for them to assimilate.[193] And in 2007 he "rebalanced" African refugee intakes because they were not "settling and adjusting into the Australian life as quickly as we would hope".[194]

The key recommendation of the FitzGerald Report was that immigration should offer economic benefits to Australia. The Garnaut report, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy,* tabled in 1989, also recommended that the immigration policy should focus on potential economic contribution and the importance of citizenship.[195] *Future Directions* promised that immigration programmes would be based on national interests, and preclude for settlement those people who would be an

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[191] Howard, CPD, Representatives 30 October, 1996, p.6159.
[192] See George Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade,* 2ⁿᵈ ed., Scribe, Carlton North, 2008, p.275.
[193] See Johnson, *Governing Change,* pp.168-169.
[194] See Jewel Topsfield and David Rood, "Coalition accused of race politics", *The Age,* 4 October, 2007, quoting Immigration Minister, Kevin Andrews.
[195] Ross Garnaut, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy,* Report to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 22 October, 1989, pp.301-302.

economic burden through claims on welfare, health or other national resources.[196]

Within a month of gaining office, the Howard government introduced legislation to

curtail social security claims, and the English-language requirement was extended for

skilled entry.[197]

Howard's actions were not surprising. He had always believed that successful

integration relied on accepting the Australian way of life, an integrationist policy of

the 1960s as noted by Lopez above. Even earlier, post-World War II immigration

advice to migrants was to

> immediately drop previous allegiances and cultural practices …. Only through this
> and the accelerated acquisition of "Aussie" language, attitudes, values and cultural
> practices [could] new Australians … find acceptance and their hosts a sense of
> security during a period of rapid change.[198]

To the extent they encountered migrants at all, this would have resonated with the

Howard family in Earlwood in the 1950s and 1960s. The Garnaut report counselled

Australia to be firm "in maintaining its own values in implementing its own policies

in the face of pressure from foreign states on human rights-related issues … in

relation to immigration, information and education".[199] This accorded with Howard's

views, and by 2006, as shown throughout this chapter, he was unequivocal about

welcoming only those who put "loyalty and commitment to Australia above loyalty

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[196] *Future Directions,* pp.94-95.

[197] See discussion of welfare impacts in Jupp, "Tacking into the wind: immigration and multicultural policy in the 1990s", *Journal of Australian Studies,* 53, June, 1997, pp.29-40.

[198] Andrew Jakubowicz, "Ethnic Leadership, Ethno-Nationalist Politics and the Making of Multicultural Australia", *People and Place,* 2, 3, 1994, pp.20-28. For Howard's "mythic" understanding of the 1950s as encouraging the smooth acceptance of the comparatively large intake of European migrants in the late 1940s to the 1960s, see Stratton, *Race Daze,* p.71.

[199] Garnaut, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy,* p.139.

and commitment to any other country.[200]   Long after the *Tampa* and the "Children

Overboard" affairs, he continued to assure the electorate:

> we are deciding who comes to this country. We're deciding to have a greater
>
> emphasis on skilled migration. We want people who will make an immediate
>
> contribution and through this … enable all people to feel that the immigration
>
> program is now being run in a well and truly effective fashion.[201]

Future Directions contained similar sentiments of allegiance from migrants, with the

implication that anything less meant their loyalty lay elsewhere, and that material

gains in the new nation could be made without commitment.[202] It could be seen as

another form of mutual obligation, and while there is no argument that new citizens

should accept their new country's laws and social values, Howard's insistence on

sameness to ensure social harmony denied the role, and reality, of cultural diversity in

a nation where it had always existed.

Conclusion

Ghassan Hage makes the point in his book, *White Nation,* that tolerance and

intolerance can co-exist, but one can easily dominate the other.[203] Although Howard

was accused of racism by many, all through his public life, of exploiting fear and

racism for political gain, of lack of empathy with refugees or with Indigenous people

seeking symbolic gestures as *part of* the process of reconciliation, he denied these

accusations. In fact, as ambitious as he obviously was, he refused to retract

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[200] Howard, Address to Community Morning Tea, Gosnells, 28 July, 2006.
[201] Howard, Gosnells.
[202] *Future Directions,* p.93. See also Brett, "Future Directions. New Conservatism's manifesto",
Current Affairs Bulletin, June, 1989, 65, 1, pp.11-17.
[203] Hage, *White Nation,* p.85.

statements that cost him his leadership, and made him unpopular with some of his

own colleagues, and many sections of the community and media. He stated that his

difficulties with Aboriginal people were a product of the era in which he grew up, but

did not explain why many of his generation did not share his view, or that probably no

public figure had greater, or wider, opportunities to experience and learn from

different cultures, religions, customs and philosophies. Despite his pre-election

statements in 2007 about recognising the unique position of Aborigines through

Constitutional change, the thrust of his argument remained the same: no treaty, no

apology and no financial compensation. When he incarcerated asylum-seekers,

including families and children, in commercially-operated detention centres, he

satisfied elements of policies he had championed for decades: removing tasks

traditionally undertaken by the public service, protecting sovereign borders and

controlling who entered Australia, and the circumstances under which they did so. As

he had always intended, he extended the pre-requisites for citizenship to not only

include English language skills, loyalty and contribution to the new nation, but

acceptance of Australian values.

A primary responsibility of leadership is to protect national borders against

harm from enemies, or from potential health and quarantine threats. Indeed, as Paul

Kelly says, this goes to the essence of democracy.[204] But Howard went further in his

discourse on border sovereignty in isolating *specific cultures* which had the potential

to threaten Australia's dominant culture and identity, identified by him as white,

Christian and Anglo-Celtic. When Howard abandoned multiculturalism as

institutionalised government policy because of its perceived threats of division and

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[204] Kelly, "Detention retreat the first step", *The Australian,* 22 June, 2005.

fragmentation, he achieved another ambition. His policies on Indigenous people were equally constant, evident by his refusal to acknowledge the significance of symbolic gestures, and his insistence on practical reconciliation through their engagement with the social and economic mainstream Australian life. Over many years, Howard's reactions to Indigenous people, multiculturalism, asylum-seekers, immigration and social cohesion, worked within a predictable and consistent framework. If his policies threatened to tip the balance of tolerance to intolerance, or moved the Liberal Party further from social liberalism, he argued from conviction, and claimed to be operating in the national interests.

The following chapter, "Families and Feminists", shows Howard's similar consistency in protecting and supporting the traditional family and its role within a cohesive, conservative society. In the same way that he resisted multiculturalism and separate ethnic groups, he saw alternative life-styles or feminist movements as corrosive inroads into the traditional family unit. Again many strands of policy continuity and consistency will be shown.

CHAPTER SIX

FAMILIES AND FEMINISTS

"… it is nice to have a lady Speaker. You are a very nice person. We wish you well in your role". [1] *Howard, 1987.*

 "There is no institution, incidentally, which is a more efficient deliverer of social welfare than a united, affectionate, functioning family. It's the best social welfare policy that mankind has ever devised". [2] *Howard, 2005.*

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[1] John Howard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives) 4 June 1987, p.4041 (on election of first woman Speaker in the 34th Parliament).
[2] Howard, Address at Launch of *The Conservative,* Canberra, 8 September 2005.

Introduction

The themes so far developed show Howard's predilection for individualism over collectivism, the market over the state, freedom of choice over compulsion, "mainstream" over "minority", and his overall social conservatism. This chapter continues those ideas through his perennial support for traditional families as the bedrock on which society prospered and the site of moral, educational and national benefit. By contrast, he labelled aspects of radical feminism as "claptrap".[3] Howard came to parliament in 1974 during the second wave of the feminist movement and the establishment of the non-partisan Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), and, if not entirely disengaged from debates on gender equality, he followed a consistent pattern of response. With his "mainstreaming" approach to most policies, he was disinclined to treat women's issues separately, and as an influential parliamentarian and Liberal Party executive in the 1980s, he argued against specific sections for women in the policy platform. As Treasurer, it was not an aim to promote wage parity, and, as already noted, he saw the idea of mandatory paid maternity leave as counter to good management practices. He believed that workplace opportunities for men and women had equal weight, claiming "from time immemorial" the "true state of non-discrimination is a state where people are chosen entirely on merit, without any semblance or suggestion of quotas, coercion, pressure".[4]

This chapter suggests that he took the "template" of family from his childhood circumstances and replicated it within his own marriage, and then used it as the basis for public policy. Most individuals bring personal values to their marriages, but it bears

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[3] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 May 1985, p.1972.
[4] Howard, CPD, Representatives 12 November 1992, p.3342. See also his Address to Federal Women's Committee, Sydney, 1 June 2007 where he praised the number of Liberal women's leadership positions, but which did not "connote a belief by the Liberal Party that there are quintessentially women's issues. All issues are of concern to women. [Just as] the view of a man on the responsibilities and challenges of raising children is as relevant …".

repetition that Howard's views on traditional marriage and family are relevant when seen to influence his political policies. As will be shown, traditional, one-income families with children were favourably biased under those policies, while he saw the feminist movement as another interest group. In government he cut funding to WEL, shifted the Office of the Status of Women from the authority of the Prime Minister's Office, and reduced funding for research on women's issues. Presciently, Marian Sawer in the 1980s predicted that Howard's leadership would be "a serious threat to the future of women's gains in the public policy arena".[5]

Howard's actions in government on family and women's issues followed the directions he had articulated in the Fraser government, and in Opposition. Over decades he displayed a penchant for traditional marriage and impatience with those elements that undermined its importance to individuals and the community. Deborah Brennan's studies of the Howard government policies on work and family show a "substantial retreat from the policies of previous decades and a major turn back towards policies that promote and support the traditional breadwinner family".[6] Where Australia was once a leader on women's issues, Sarah Maddison and Emma Partridge conclude in their *Democratic Audit of Australia,* that its position under Howard was much diminished.[7] Carol Johnson notes that Howard's policies relating to women and gender were complex but never overtly hostile to general equality in employment or childcare issues, yet in denying affirmative action, positive parliamentary quotas or government-sponsored maternity

[5] Marian Sawer, "The Long March Through the Institutions", *From Fraser to Hawke,* eds. Brian W Head and Allan Patience, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1989, p.428, 458.
[6] Deborah Brennan, "Babies, budgets, and birthrates: work and family policy in Australia, 1996-2006", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society,* 14, 1, 2007, pp.31-57.
[7] Sarah Maddison and Emma Partridge, *How well does Australian democracy serve Australian women?* Report No.8, ANU, Canberra, 2007, p.104.

leave, it can be seen that he indicated no particular state-based priority in terms of pathways to gender equality.[8]

While women's increased entry into paid workforce challenged the dynamics of life/ work balance, many women in the twenty-first century considered work and family life incompatible on practical grounds.[9] For Howard, the solution always lay in industrial relations reform that offered women choice to negotiate workplace arrangements tailored to their domestic situations, but which discounted the potential inequality of negotiations between women and employers. Also, as Brennan notes, the thrust of his policies discouraged mothers with young children, with the exception of sole parents, to enter the workforce.[10] With more women seeking work, childcare provision became an important social and political issue, and Howard is shown to constantly argue that commercial childcare centres offered greater choice and flexibility for parents. On the other hand, he stated without reservation that his taxation and welfare benefits were designed to benefit (usually) women in one-income families who stayed at home to look after children.[11]

Neo-liberalism and New Right influences in the Liberal Party in the 1980s affected policies for families, welfare and women, especially when remaining social liberals saw their authority diminish.[12] Some Liberals sympathetic to women's issues

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[8] See Carol Johnson, "Gender and Australian Political Discourse", *Governing Change. Keating to Howard,* 2nd ed., UQP, St Lucia, 2000, especially pp.74-82.

[9] See Belinda Probert, "The Riddle of Women's Work", *Arena Magazine,* 23, June-July, 1996, pp.39-45.

[10] Brennan, "Babies, budgets, and birthrates", pp.31-57.

[11] See Tracey Aubin on Howard's intervention on family tax policy issues in 1994. "Howard began advocating a pet subject: giving tax breaks to single-income families with dependent children so that women would be encouraged to remain in the home and look after the children instead of working". Costello warned the Party to be "careful that we don't overlook the plight of the working mother". See *Peter Costello. A Biography.* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1999, p.149.

[12] Christopher Puplick writes that Howard's "problem in the eyes of many feminists was compounded by the fact that the two most ardently pro-feminist members of his shadow cabinet, Peter Baume and

and gender equality found their position untenable on these and other social issues, and resigned or were forced from parliament.[13] At an economic level, many services once undertaken by women at home, or by government, religious and charitable organisations were now often carried out by commercial enterprises; as David McKnight notes, this commodification of family services meant that neo-liberalism had entered the home.[14] Howard, of course, preferred traditional families, but also supported private enterprise, competition, choice, and removing government from the lives of individuals. He constantly argued that families would benefit from choice, although it will be argued that it was clearly the traditional family, relatively unexposed to the free market (did not rely on childcare, looked after the young and elderly) and bolstered by government benefits, that benefited most from his policies.

Howard's speeches from 1974 show his idealistic notion of traditional marriages and their value to the community. He talked about protecting women and marriages during debates on Labor's 1975 no-fault divorce legislation, and in 2000 remained committed to the role families played in welfare.[15] With massive social and economic changes occurring from the 1970s, his goal appeared contradictory: retention of conservative social values that included the conventional structure of marriage and children, set against an economic agenda of competition, choice, removal of some state services, more stringent welfare benefits, and assumptions of greater individual responsibility. While negotiating these complexities, Howard's policies constantly

Ian Macphee were both ruthlessly eliminated from it". *Is the Party Over? The Future of the Liberals,* Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1994, p.134.

[13] See Philip Mendes, "The Neoliberal Takeover and the Marginalisation of the Social Liberals", *Australia's Welfare Wars Revisited. The Players, the Politics and the Ideologies,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, pp.125-127.

[14] David McKnight, "Futures for social democracy: social democracy and family values", *Renewal,* 15, 2-3, June 2007, pp.67-74.

[15] Howard, Address to Women's Action Alliance, 25th Anniversary Dinner, Melbourne, 12 October 2000.

privileged family policies. As he said in 2006, nothing had driven him more consistently "than a desire to profoundly advantage the families of Middle Australia. It has meant more to me than anything else and it remains at the core of my political being".[16]

This chapter returns to the argument that Howard's early childhood and family circumstances influenced his contexualisation of social structures and gender roles. As noted earlier, he came from a family with a strong, ambitious mother who assumed the role of carer.[17] He later married Janette, a fellow Liberal Party member, and who was similarly committed to his career, and who influenced many of his political decisions. Obviously, these positive experiences of family life formed his views on the benefits of families, marriages, and specific gender roles. However, like the wider world of poverty and diversity that Gerard Henderson claimed Howard could not see in his neighbourhood, he appeared not to recognise the aspirations of social groupings outside "traditional" marriage or family.   It can be seen that it remained Howard's perennial belief, and espoused in government policy, that marriages be supported and preserved, and alternative life-styles discouraged. *Future Directions,* for example, promised to reverse "modern anti-family attitudes", while offering positive incentives to reinforce the family.[18]   In government, therefore, as will be seen, Howard introduced measures to validate heteronormative relationships, but proscribed "anti-family attitudes".[19] He codified the *Marriage Act* to ensure the legal interpretation of marriage was a union between a man and a woman, prohibited *in vitro* fertilisation for lesbian women and child

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[16] Howard, CPD, Representatives 5 December, 2006, p.38.
[17] Hugh MacKay writes that children of parents from the war/ Depression era "recall their great respect for their mothers' fortitude, resourcefulness and selfless adoption of the role of carer …. when those children came to marriage, their model of the caring wife and mother was the one they automatically adopted"; *Generations. Baby Boomers, their parents & their children,* Macmillan, Sydney, 1997, p.41.
[18] Howard and Ian Sinclair, *Future Directions. It's time for plain thinking,* Liberal and National Parties, Canberra, 1988, p.15.
[19] Johnson, "Heteronormative Citizenship: The Howard Government's Views on Gay and Lesbian Issues", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 38, 1, 2003, pp.45-62.

adoption by gay couples, refused to endorse the Sydney Gay Mardi Gras, and said he would be "disappointed," if his son confessed to being homosexual.[20]

While family policies are central to all sides of Australian politics, for Howard they contained a personal narrative that could be adopted for political purposes, particularly before the 1996 election.[21] As noted earlier, his Headland speeches appealed to families displaced and fatigued by reform, and promised restoration of basic family principles and social stability.[22] What emerges from a study over decades is that his views on marriage never changed, despite changing "family" configurations. In a 2005 eulogy for former foe and Queensland Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, Howard spoke about the presence of children at a parent's death-bed as a "a metaphor for reminding us that the most important thing in life is your family and the way in which that family moulds you and shapes you".[23] When out of office in 2008 he warned against attempts to overthrow traditional family arrangements, for they "remain not only the best emotional nursery for children but also the most efficient social welfare system that mankind has ever devised".[24]

This chapter acknowledges and cites the wide range of literature published about Howard's policies and women. Again, it deals only with the origins and continuity of some of those policies, prefaced with a brief overview of the Liberal Party's attitudes towards women. Many of Howard's welfare ideas were covered in Chapter Two, but as

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[20] Howard, "Up Close and Personal with Ray Martin", Channel 9, 15 August, 1998.
[21] Fiona Allon, *Renovation Nation. Our Obsession with Home,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.107.
[22] Howard, "Fair Australia", Address to Australian Council of Social Service, Sydney, 13 October, 1995.
[23] Howard, Tribute to Joh Bjelke-Petersen, Kingaroy, 3 May, 2005. He repeated this later in parliament, CPD, Representatives 8 December, 2005, pp.128-129.
[24] Howard, "Sharing our Common Values", Address to American Enterprise Institute, Washington DC, 5 March, 2008.

women are major beneficiaries of government benefits, there are some overlaps. As will

be seen, it is often difficult to differentiate Howard's treatment of women with families in

general. Aboriginal families, or those in refugee detention centres are not discussed.

Women and the Liberal Party

As Howard often referred back to the traditions of the Liberal Party, it is useful to

briefly look at the role of women within the organisation, particularly in the New South

Wales Division where he was an important contributor to policies.[25]   The cooperation of

women's groups was key to Menzies' formation of the party in 1944, for which they

astutely extracted rights of representation at organisational levels in return.[26] The

original 1948 party platform contained a section on "Status of Women" which pledged

equality of opportunities, liberties and status for men and women.[27] Today, according to

Brennan, that would be "described as affirmative action or positive discrimination".[28]

Howard frequently referred to Liberal agencies set up to assist women, particularly when

arguing against Labor's 1986 Affirmative Action Equal Employment Opportunity for

Women Bill in 1997, when re-launching *Among the Carrion Crows,* the autobiography of

Enid Lyons, the first woman elected to the House of Representatives and to the Menzies

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[25] Marian Sawer and Marian Simms give an overview of women's political representation and history in *A Women's Place. Women and Politics in Australia,* George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1984; see particularly "Women in the Liberal Party", pp.143-153.

[26] See Menzies' version in *Afternoon Light. Some Memories of Men and Events,* Cassell, Melbourne, 1967, p.284. Also Brennan, "Women and political representation", *Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia,* Summers *et al.,* p.287; Sawer, *The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2003, pp.107-108; Marilyn Lake, "Freedom, Fear and the Family", *Creating a Nation,* Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, eds. McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 1994, pp.266-267. The Liberals first provided equal numbers of men and women in some of its senior party positions. See Howard, Address to 100th Anniversary Dinner for AWNL, 16 July, 2004; also Ainslie van Onselen, "It's Time: Women and Affirmative Action in the Liberal Party", *Liberals & Power. The Road Ahead,* ed. Peter van Onselen, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, p.197.

[27] Quoted by Puplick, *Is the Party Over?* p.131. See also Warwick Eather, "The Liberal Party of Australia and the Australian Women's Movement Against Socialisation 1947-54", on resolution that provided "Equality of opportunities, liberties and status for men and women", *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 44, 2, 1998, pp.191-207.

[28] Brennan, "Women in the 'Bear Pit'", Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, Newcastle, 25-26 September, 2006.

Cabinet, and when addressing the Australian Women's National League (AWNL).[29]

Much earlier feminists and sympathetic legislators had succeeded in placing Australia as

a world leader in granting women voting rights.[30] By the same token, women like

Elizabeth Couchman, President of the AWNL for twenty years, who "fulfilled the social

expectations of the time and achieved a strong organisational base", failed to gain Senate

pre-selection between 1930 and 1945.[31]

Howard boasted that the Liberals' record on women being first elected to the

House of Representatives, in most of the State parliaments, and in providing equal

numbers of men and women in some of its senior party positions was achieved without

formalised (and, in his opinion, unnecessary) quotas in electoral seats.[32] Ian Hancock's

study of the NSW Liberal Party shows that women had complained about their political

involvement being predominantly social, and as administrators rather than members of

parliament, office-bearers and policy-makers.[33] Beryl Beaurepaire, a powerful influence

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[29] Howard claimed, "The record of Australian liberalism in the area of female advancement surpasses that of any political party in this country", CPD, Representatives 10 April, 1986, p.1975. See Howard's re-launch of Enid Lyons' *Among the Carrion Crows,* Canberra, 25 September, 1997. According to Howard, Menzies delivered child endowment, national divorce laws, medical benefits, health schemes, and tax concessions for married pensioners. Holt, Gorton and McMahon governments gave assistance to deserted wives, lifted the Commonwealth Public Service marriage ban, introduced equal pay legislation and the first *Childcare Act* in 1972. Fraser introduced family allowance payments directly to carers, predominantly women, and established the Office of Childcare, the National Women's Advisory Council and Institute of Family Studies. See also Howard's Address to AWNL, Melbourne, 16 July, 2004: "The Liberal Party and our political forebears have a very proud record … in the area of women's representation and more broadly in the advancement of women in Australian society".

[30] By 1901 most women in South Australia and Western Australia had the right to vote in those states, and in the first Federal election. The Franchise Bill 1902 extended this vote to another 750,000 women in the other states. See Senator Norman Ewing's argument in 1902: "every man in this country is given the right to take a part in the making of the laws that control him, so … a similar right should be extended to women", CPD, Representatives 9 April, 1902. Quoted in "Voting Rights for Women", *Speaking for Australia. Parliamentary speeches that shaped our nation,* Rod Kemp and Marion Stanton, eds. Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2004, pp.16 and 18.

[31] See Marian Sawer and Marian Simms, *A Woman's Place,* pp.110 and 146-147.

[32] "[The Liberal Party does] not believe and we will never believe, in patronising quotas", Howard said at re-launch of Lyons' book. In 2006, on election of female Liberal MPs and Senators, he said, "we've done it without rules and quotas …. on merit", and cited his three women Cabinet members. "Howard dismisses female quota idea", *The Australian,* 12 October, 2006.

[33] See Ian Hancock, *The Liberals. The NSW Division 1945-2000,* Federation Press, Leichardt, 2007, pp-68-71, for "social" work undertaken by Liberal women, without advancing politically. See also

in the Fraser government as Chairman of the Liberal Party's Federal Women's Committee and Convenor of the National Women's Advisory Council between 1978-1982, later urged the Liberal Party under Howard to take women seriously, to return to the policies of Menzies and Fraser, and was annoyed that Liberal women had returned to the "tea and cakes stuff".[34]

Howard promoted a "modern Liberal Party" which he claimed followed economic liberalism and "modern conservatism when it comes to social policy".[35] This meant, for him, resistance to Liberal women's groups that smacked of feminism, separatism, or special rights, opposition to the Victorian Liberal Feminist Network in 1981 and its sister group in New South Wales. Despite his opposition, the Liberal Network Special Branch was set up to support feminist ideas.[36] Hancock writes of the frustration of feminists within the Party when dealing with the "instinctive and inflexible opposition of the dominant culture".[37] This could be seen in Howard's pattern of continually attempting to subsume women's issues within general issues; for example, at the 1975 Liberal Party Federal Council he argued against separate women's policies on the basis that they should be placed "among the party's general policies where they could take their chances against other interest groups".[38] In 1982 the Federal Platform and Policy Review Subcommittee tried to delete the "Women in the Community" section of the Federal

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Eather, "The Liberal Party of Australia and the Australian Women's Movement Against Socialisation 1947-54", showing the "wide gulf that existed between theory and practice regarding the roles women members could play within the LPA". The Australian Women's Movement Against Socialisation was formed in 1947 to combat Labor's plan to nationalise banks, and attracted many Liberal women disillusioned with their party. See also Sawer and Simms, *A Woman's Place,* p.146.

[34] Quoted by Gerard Henderson, *Menzies' Child. The Liberal Party of Australia,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 2008, p.38.

[35] See Howard, Address to Women's Action Alliance, 12 October, 2000.

[36] Brennan, "Women and political representation", *Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia,* p.288; also Puplick, *Is the Party Over?* pp.133-134.

[37] Hancock, *The Liberals,* p.241.

[38] See Michael McKernan, *Beryl Beaurepaire,* UQP, St Lucia, 1999, p.132.

platform, and substitute it with a more "mainstream" section called "Women and Liberalism", which read:

> women's issues should not be treated in isolation. Liberal policies are directed toward the whole community. In the individual sections of our Platform, special issues faced by women are addressed with a view to removing any continuing areas of discrimination against them. [39]

Although Howard agreed with this amendment, it was not successfully carried. However, as Louise Asher concludes, the "saga illustrated the thinking of many senior Liberals who believed that women did not need to be 'singled out' for special treatment".[40] Howard achieved his goal in *Future Directions,* where

> Women are best served by overall policies designed to provide the maximum freedom of choice and equality of opportunity. To the extent they suffer greater lack of opportunity than other Australians they will derive a greater benefit from our policies for more flexible labour market conditions, lower taxation – especially for families …[41]

The Liberal Women's Forum was formed in 1994 to promote women candidates, but was discontinued after 1996 when the Coalition won government with a record number of women parliamentarians, without, as was boasted, the need for quotas.[42]

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[39] Louise Asher, "The Liberal Party and women", *Liberals face the future,* eds. George Brandis, Tom Harley and Don Markwell, Oxford UP, Melbourne, 1984, pp.113-114.
[40] Asher, "The Liberal Party and women", pp.113-114.
[41] *Future Directions,* p.46.
[42] See Margaret Fitzherbert, "Credible Candidates Win Marginal Seats", *Liberals and Power. The Road Ahead,* ed. Peter van Onselen, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, pp.186-187. Andrew Robb, then Liberal Party Federal Director, claimed "The Liberal Women's forum … actively promote[d] the election of more Liberal women to Parliament without the need to resort to quotas", National Press Club, Canberra, 13 March, 1996.

Howard and families

As noted earlier, Howard saw the Menzies' era as a "golden age in terms of people [with] a sense of family, social stability and optimism".[43] He did not mention that some women were restricted entry into some professions, compelled to resign from the public service on marriage, although by the 1980s many inequalities were corrected and barriers eliminated with support from feminist groups. With greater numbers of women entering the workforce, the traditional family unit had substantially fragmented and diversified.[44] Despite this, Howard in *Future Directions* claimed he would not lead a government

> neutral to the dependence of our society on the family structure. It has a responsibility to ensure that the family unit has the legal, financial and social support necessary to sustain it. This will require action on two levels – reversal of modern anti-family attitudes and positive incentives to reinforce the family.[45]

Howard's view about marriage providing the best welfare system rankled with feminists, but meshed with New Right and neo-liberal philosophies. Marian Sawer cites Fraser Minister for Social Security, Fred Chaney, "stressing the need to cut back on the power of the state by 'restraining the claims we each of us and collectively make on the state'".[46] Families were, therefore, encouraged to "finance the welfare of their members from putative cuts in taxation, and utilise the unpaid labour of their womenfolk, rather

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[43] Howard, quoted by Henderson, *A Howard Government? Inside the Coalition,* HarperCollins, Pymble, 1995, p.31.
[44] See Judith Brett, "The Nation Reviewed", *Monthly,* October, 2008, pp.8-11: "In 1980 nearly two-thirds agreed with male breadwinner/ mother as homemaker ideal, but by 2003 only one-third agreed. Support for traditional gender roles has fallen precipitously, with more than half of Australians under 50 agreeing in 2005 that a same-sex couple with children is a family".
[45] *Future Directions,* p.15.
[46] Sawer, *Australia and the New Right,* p.10, quoting Fred Chaney, *The Age,* 12 December, 1980.

than depend on services from the state".[47]   As a backlash to "women's liberation", a group called "Women Who Want to be Women" appeared in the 1980s claiming that feminists had infiltrated the government to effect legislative changes to create a unisex society. Although Beryl Beaurepaire opposed the group, by 1981, with Howard in the Fraser Cabinet, their views had become "attractive to a government anxious to shed social justice programmes and to transfer welfare functions to 'the family'".[48]

Howard claimed families provided welfare, but also moral education, discipline and values, and was a place where thrift, moderation, the work ethic and courtesy were taught. He often referred to his mother's rebuke of his disdainful treatment of a cinema cleaner, saying: "Just because she is poor and forced to do menial work is no reason why she should not be treated courteously".[49] Howard's brother, Bob, took another message from the incident: "John might have learnt a lesson about pretension but never appeared to question why people in an affluent society had to scrounge for a living".[50] Journalist Tony Wright notes the influence of Howard's mother, and women like her, on his government policies. As Wright wrote in 2006:

> behind Howard's generally tough economic policies … you will discover an unusual weakness for assisting families and stay at home mothers. Is his mother, widowed with four sons, to be found here? Of course. Right behind the picket fence".[51]

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[47] Sawer, *Australia and the New Right,* p.10.
[48] Irene Webley, "Women Who Want to be Women", *Australia and the New Right,* p.151.
[49] Howard, quoted by Henderson, *A Howard Government?* p.32. See also Howard's interview with Neil Mitchell, Radio 3AW, 28 July, 2006: "I think people are entitled to respect and I tend to use formal expressions with people more frequently than other people do". In a condolence motion, Howard described a parliamentarian's greatest attribute as "unfailing evenness and courtesy"; CPD, Representatives 10 October, 1994, p.1590.
[50] Quoted by Robert Wainwright and Tony Stephens, "Canterbury Tales", *Sydney Morning Herald,* 18 September, 2004.
[51] Tony Wright, "The house of Howard", *Bulletin,* 7 March, 2006.

Howard noted the aspirations of his professional daughter (and mother), and in 2005 promised a "new compact" for Australian families that addressed the juggling act between work and family responsibilities".[52] A year earlier he said:

> The three women who have had the most influence on my life [are] my mother, my wife and my daughter … Mum stopped working when my eldest brother was born and never worked again [in] paid work …. Then Janette worked as a high school teacher until our first child was born …. Then my daughter, who's just got married, will clearly do this big juggling act because she wants a career, but she also wants a family.[53]

Howard's solutions for easing the work/ life balance always consisted of industrial relations reform, and offering greater choice of corporate childcare facilities.

Janette Howard did not pursue her own career, but was described as Howard's "greatest and least celebrated political asset … [whose] political judgment is shrewd and timely".[54] Malcolm Fraser writes in his memoirs there was "only one person whom [Howard] will consult in a crisis involving his own political fortunes and that is his wife, Janette. Nobody else's advice is worth a crumpet".[55] In government, Mrs Howard's influence was evident during the 1996 visit of the US President and Hillary Clinton when she vetted the guest list on a partisan basis.[56] In 2005 Howard praised his wife as the

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[52] Howard, "Australian Families: Prosperity, Choice and Fairness", Address to Menzies Research Centre, Sydney, 3 May, 2005.

[53] Howard, quoted by Malcolm Schmidtke and Gay Alcorn, "Being John Howard", *The Age,* 21 August, 2004.

[54] See Andrew Campbell, "John Howard – leadership and character; Peter Costello, 'The Hollow Man'," *National Observer – Australia and World Affairs,* 58, Spring 2003, pp.12-33.

[55] Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser. The Political Memoirs,* Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2010, p.618.

[56] Janette Howard and the Minister for Status of Women arranged an invitation-only function at the Opera House for Mrs Clinton and vetoed guests suggested by the Office for the Status of Women; Mrs Howard's invitees included Melanie Howard and university friend, and "a bevy of conservative female

"greatest source of support and companionship that anybody in public or private life could possibly have".[57] The following year he was equally effusive, with Janette the "pillar of my life and her counsel, love and support have been fundamental to any success I have achieved in public life".[58] During his 2007 leadership crisis Howard turned to his family for advice, ignoring that offered by his own colleagues.[59]

In 1989 Howard claimed the most favourable environment for rearing children was a "stable two parent family where there is both a role model in the mother and a role model in the father".[60] In 2003 he regretted a modern society where too many young boys were growing up in homes headed by mothers only and therefore lacked "proper male role models".[61] In 2005 he altered an advertising campaign "Violence Against Women: Australia Says No" because he considered it critical of men, and removed the feminist and gender dynamic by shifting "domestic violence" to "family violence".[62] Again, even when out of office, he lectured "we should maintain a cultural bias in favour of traditional families" because of the advantages to children from being raised by both mother and father.[63]

Howard brought these views on marriage, gender roles and family into parliament. In 1975 the Labor government introduced the Family Law Bill that replaced

politicians and political spouses". See David O'Reilly, *The Woman Most Likely. Cheryl Kernot,* Random House, Milsons Point, 1998, p.370.

[57] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 December, 2005, p.128.

[58] Howard, CPD, Representatives 7 December, 2006, p.116.

[59] Howard objected to criticism that he put family before Liberal Party views, because it was unfair to his wife. See Michelle Grattan, "Team Howard? Not", *The Age,* 14 September, 2007. See also Laura Anderson, "High-level adviser to the PM", *Adelaide Advertiser,* 22 November, 2007.

[60] Howard, "Up Close and Personal with Ray Martin", 15 August, 1998.

[61] Howard, CPD, Representatives. 24 June, 2003, p.17278.

[62] See Raewyn Connell, "Chicago values: the neoliberal dream and Howard government politics", *Overland,* 183, Winter 2006, pp.32-38; also Amy Webster, "The re-conceptualisation of domestic violence under the Howard government since 1996", *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal,* 16, Annual 2007, pp.61-73.

[63] Howard, American Enterprise Institute, 5 March, 2008.

the "fault" element within divorce with dissolution on the basis of irretrievable marriage breakdown. He attacked the government's proposal to set up a separate Family Court because the "establishment of an elaborate, expensive structure [would] undoubtedly cost a large amount of money".[64] He considered the Court was barely justifiable, although the legislation was passed with Coalition votes. He supported an amendment by Malcolm Fraser that acknowledged traditional women who saw their role in looking after children as a lifetime and honourable vocation.[65] Howard wanted to add the word "choice" for what

> ideally speaking we ought to achieve is a situation where, *with proper regard to the interests of children,* women are in a position to exercise a choice as to whether they should fulfill a full-time wife and mother role or only a part-time one.[66] [Emphasis added.]

Howard supported another amendment by a Labor member which formalised the ideas that family was the basic and stable unit of the Australian society; that marriage be buttressed, permanent and secure; that full and proper recognition be given to the status and rights of a woman as wife and mother; that children be reared and cared for by a present parent; and that marriage be dissolved only when a court is satisfied that it has irretrievably broken down or when the parties have lived separately and apart for two years.[67] Howard wrote thirteen years later in *Future Directions,* in similar language, that marriage represented protection for "many of the values Australians cherish and a clear

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[64] Howard, CPD, Representatives 19 May, 1975, pp.2448-9.
[65] Malcolm Fraser, CPD, Representatives 20 May, 1975, pp.2501-2502.
[66] Howard, CPD, Representatives 20 May, 1975, p.2502. The Family Law Bill passed the House of Representatives on 21 May, 1975 without Division, by 60 votes to 59 (p.2602).
[67] Frank Stewart, CPD, Representatives 12 February, 1975, p.162.

legal framework within which the obligations of one individual to another and to their children can be established".[68]

In May 1996, two months after he gained office, Howard presented a petition from constituents calling on the government to "preserve completely intact the exclusiveness of marriage as being one male and one female".[69] Again, Howard could not be responsible for constituents' views, even though they were remarkably similar to those he expressed in 2004 when he changed the *Marriage Act* to ensure that marriage was a "lifelong union between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others".[70] He rejected criticism of discrimination against those who wanted same-sex marriage, saying he would not alter the "character of institutions which have been fundamental to our society since it began".[71] In 2005, when he launched *The Conservative* magazine, he defended marriage on the grounds of his (selective) respect for institutions:

> I am sceptical of radical reform of our society …. As Liberals we support and respect and promote the greatest institution in our society, and that is the family. There is no institution that provides more emotional support and reassurance to the individual than the family. There is no institution, incidentally, which is a more efficient deliverer of social welfare than a united, affectionate, functioning family. It's the best social welfare policy that mankind has ever devised".[72]

As seen, Howard was repetitive in his support for the traditional institution of marriage and its place within his policies. To emphasise his determination to safeguard what he

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[68] *Future Directions,* p.15.
[69] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 May, 1996, p.349.
[70] Howard, Address to National Marriage Forum, Canberra, 4 August, 2006.
[71] Howard, National Marriage Forum.
[72] Howard, Address at launch of *The Conservative,* Canberra, 8 September, 2005.

saw as the integrity of marriage, he overrode the Australian Capital Territory legislation that recognised civil unions.[73] Rejecting allegations of homophobia, he defended his action because he wished to preserve the "special and traditional place of marriage as a heterosexual union for life of a man and woman in Australian society".[74]

When the Hawke Labor government marked the 1985 United Nations Decade of Women by introducing a National Agenda for Women to recognise women's aspirations of gender and workplace equality, Howard's response was to return to traditional homes and families as primary units of benevolence:

> It bears repetition, in case there should be any doubt as to the emphasis placed upon the family unit by the coalition parties, that there is no unit in our society which provides a greater degree of personal security and cohesion or a greater avenue for individual fulfillment than the family unit.[75]

Marian Sawer noted in the 1980s that the euphemistic use of the word "family" concealed an assumption that women would sacrifice public lives for domestic and welfare functions within the family, as there was little expectation that men would fill that unpaid role.[76] Unsurprisingly, WEL later observed that Howard in government

> pushed support for carers which is a plus, but has at the same time cut other programs such as disability and childcare on a per capita basis. One can't help feeling that his

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[73] As Howard advised colleagues of his decision, his Attorney General was with the Governor General quashing the ACT legislation. See Michelle Grattan, "PM copping it on many fronts", *The Age,* 15 June, 2006. "Some of Mr Howard's backbenchers were furious. 'They felt he had dealt with the party room in a less than straight forward way – almost deceptive', one Liberal said yesterday".
[74] Howard, "I'm not anti-gay, says PM", *The Australian,* 3 April, 2006.
[75] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 November, 1985, p.3906.
[76] Sawer, *Australia and the New Right,* p.10.

funding is often designed to reinforce unpaid family care as the preferred option, which certainly accords with the Liberal view of the family as the primary means of welfare.[77]

Aligned with his wish to assist single-income families with children, Howard devised taxation policies to reflect that goal, but which reinforced his designation of carer's role to women. In 2006, he defended the Family Tax Benefit Part B (FTB) as "an additional support for those families who desire to have one parent – usually the mother – at home full time with children in their early years".[78] While the option existed for either parent to remain at home and receive the benefit, his assumption about the mother usually being at home proves Sawer's point. Also, Rachel Power's studies showed that,

> Despite the current government's rhetoric about supporting parents' individual choices regarding the care of their children, in reality these options are distorted by the inherent inequalities in John Howard's "family tax initiatives". The result is that double-income families are heavily penalised over single-income families, with special tax breaks offered to dependent mothers with dependent children.[79]

Taxation benefits for one-income families with children were long-time policy aims for Howard. In 1986 he promised a Coalition taxation policy sympathetic to families with dependent children, because any system unfavourable to those who reared children lacked "a social vision".[80] A year later, he promoted a "bias in our taxation system towards families with dependent children", and before the 1987 election –

[77] Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) 1998 Election Form Guide. The Leaders. http://www.wel.org.au/issues/98elec/score19.htm.
[78] Howard, "Taxation: Keeping faith with Australian families", Address to Menzies Research Centre, Canberra, 18 April, 2006.
[79] Rachel Power, "Taxing families: families are finding they have no real options as 'flexible' tax policies keep women and men firmly entrenched in their traditional roles", *Arena Magazine,* i68, December, 2003, pp.8-10.
[80] Howard, CPD, Representatives 21 August, 1986, p.499.

recognising struggling families with mortgages – he targeted families as a group disadvantaged by Labor's economic reforms.[81] In 1994 he praised Labor's "valuable measure" of introducing a means-tested parenting allowance designed to help low-income people where one parent was at home full-time caring for infant children.[82]   In 1996, one month before becoming Prime Minister, when quizzed on his sympathy for "traditional families", he confirmed the Coalition would remove bias against families where one parent chose to remain at home to care for children.[83] By his fourth term of office, he continued to stress his "willingness to tilt the playing field in favour of low and middle income families with dependent children".[84]

Howard showed equal concern to encourage families to remain intact, based on his premise that a sound economy helped them to stay together.[85] His old church magazine, *The Methodist,* in 1955 had advised against deploring "the processes for obtaining divorce", but rather to consider "ways and means of preventing marriages from breaking down".[86] When in government, a glimpse of this idea was seen in the Family Relationship Centres he set up to counsel couples and families without the legal expense and trauma of court cases. In so doing, he recognised the moral benefits of marriages *and* the economic costs to families and governments when they broke down:

[81] Howard, CPD, Representatives 14 May, 1987, p.3255.
[82] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 June, 1994, p.2162.
[83] Howard interview with Liz Jackson, ABC TV *Four Corners,* "An Average Australian Bloke", 19 February, 1996.
[84] Howard Address to Menzies Research Centre, Sydney, 3 May, 2005. See also discussion on this point by Sawer, *The Ethical State,* p.84.
[85] Howard said: "If you have a strong economy, low interest rates, rising real wages and growing numbers of jobs, then you have more conducive circumstances for families to stay together". CPD, Representatives 28 June, 1999, p.7578.
[86] See Marion Maddox, *God Under Howard. The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, p.15.

I've often said that not only do strong families provide individuals with a moral compass and a secure emotional environment, but strong and united families are also the most effective welfare system that mankind has ever devised. And when families fall apart and relationships break up, there's not only an enormous emotional cost but there's an enormous economic cost.[87]

Behind Howard's conviction of the place of marriage in the community were pragmatic, neo-liberal concerns to curtail public expenditure on welfare. In 1988, Freebairn *et al* warned that the increasing incidence of sole parenthood and associated welfare dependency had resulted in rapid growth in the social security budget.[88] Howard's welfare expenditure cuts reflected New Right thinking, but also his belief in personal responsibility. To stress the connection he saw between marriage and welfare, even when out of office he returned to the theme of holding families together rather than picking up the pieces later, because "that must always be the major driver of social welfare policy".[89]

The Australian Institute of Family Studies was established under the *Family Law Act 1975* in 1980 to provide research into factors affecting marriage and family stability.[90] In 2005, at the Institute's International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition, Howard announced a plan to

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[87] Howard, Address at Community Afternoon Tea, Gawler, 28 August, 2006.
[88] John Freebairn, Michael Porter and Cliff Walsh, *Spending and Taxing. Taking Stock,* National Priorities Project 1988, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1988, pp.111-112.
[89] Howard, American Enterprise Institute, 5 March, 2008.
[90] Alan Hayes, "Director's foreword" *Proceedings of the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition, Legislative, practical and policy responses,* eds. Bruce Smyth, Nicholas Richardson and Grace Soriano, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 1-2 December, 2005.

bring about a cultural change in the way family breakdowns are handled … These

changes will be supported by the biggest ever investment in the family law system ….

The centerpiece of this investment is the establishment of 65 Family Relationship

Centres, providing relationship education for intact families and practical, early

intervention assistance to separating families.[91]

As with his preference for including Christian-based voluntary organisations in welfare

programmes, Howard advised that government-funded private operators like Anglicare,

Relationships Australia, Centacare and the Uniting Church would administer the

centres.[92] These centres had a long gestation period, for *Future Directions* contained an

entry that urged greater emphasis on marriage counseling, conciliation and mediation.

"Judges", it said, "should be seen to be, and should be, a last resort, exercising a purely

judicial role only when disputes cannot be resolved", with child access handled by

informal procedures with minimum time and costs.[93]

While Howard stressed that a sound economy and counseling helped to keep

families together, he also saw the need to maintain traditional social values, and blamed

the social revolution of the 1960s for family breakdowns.[94] As he said one month before

he won the 1996 election, addressing an electorate which he characterised as weary with

change and seeking social stability, "This will probably sound like the ravings of a social

liberal", but "I really do believe that the wholesale annihilation of some traditional

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[91] Howard, "Message from the Prime Minister", *Proceedings of International Forum on Family Relationships.*
[92] While "supposed to help separating families make custody and other arrangements without needing to go to court", the organisations running them were concerned that $200 m. pledged in the May 2005 Budget was insufficient; see Stephanie Peatling, "MPs seek to expand role of family centres", *SMH,* 7 June, 2005.
[93] *Future Directions,* pp.17-18.
[94] Howard interview with Paul Kelly, in *100 Years: the Australian story,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.245.

attitudes towards the family has played a major role [in social disintegration]."[95]

Because of economic pressures, it was "tragically the case – but little wonder – that

family breakdowns have reached record levels and crime rates are escalating.[96] These

ideas were not especially crafted for the 1996 election, for in *Future Directions* he

complained that under Labor

> self reliance tends to be lost and responsibility tends to disappear, both to be replaced by
>
> a dependence, often long-term, on the government and manipulation by social engineers.
>
> It also provides the setting which leads young people to the treadmill of drug abuse and
>
> crime.[97]

And out of office, Howard continued to lecture about the nexus between joblessness and

family breakdown.[98]

Howard was also constantly concerned about the "moral" aspects and the dangers

to family relationships through violence, gambling, guns and X-rated videos. In 1984 he

had attempted to lift classifications for pornographic material because of the potential

damage to family standards. In this, as he said, he was pleased to receive support from

the coalition of the "more rabid feminist groups" and "some of the more conservative

groups".[99] In 1988, having failed to ban the sale and distribution of X-rated videos,

frustrated by Labor's lack of action, he drew up a policy to outlaw those "who continue

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[95] Howard, interview with Michael Duffy, "Who is John Howard and why are they saying these things about him?" *Independent Monthly,* February, 1996, p.36.
[96] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In. The Values, Directions and Policy Priorities of a Coalition Government Outlined in 1995", Liberal and National Parties policy document, Canberra, 1995, p.16.
[97] *Future Directions,* p.15.
[98] Howard, American Enterprise Institute, 5 March, 2008.
[99] Howard, CPD, Representatives 4 June, 1984, p.2848.

to peddle X-ray pornography and excessively violent videos".[100]   Immediately on

gaining office, he established a group to study the

> impact of video games on children … of certain excessively violent films … and the
>
> broad question of whether many things in modern day life are possibly contributing to the
>
> development of a culture of violence in our community".[101]

After the shooting tragedy in Tasmania and his tougher gun control laws, he claimed that

the "causes of that dreadful event lie deeper than simply the inadequacy of our gun

control laws. They go to aspects of the kind of society we are".[102]

The kind of society that Howard envisaged was not difficult to establish:

assistance for traditional families, with no government-sponsored maternity leave, and

childcare best delivered at home, or through commercial, competitive childcare centres.

When challenged in 2004 about a Cabinet briefing note that registered the fall of family

income when women left the workforce after childbirth, and would be remedied by a

national paid maternity leave scheme, he argued his government's priorities lay in

defence, national security, and tax cuts: "No government has unlimited resources", he

grumbled.[103] As well, he did not consider that paid maternity leave was the "most

important thing that needs to be done in the work and family area … it's benefits are

limited and quite illusory".[104] Under "A Fair Go For All" in *Future Directions,* he had

gestured towards childcare as "central to the capacity of many parents to work outside the

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[100] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 November, 1988, p.2552; CPD, Representatives 2 November, 1988, p.2220.
[101] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 May, 1996, p.338.
[102] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 May, 1996, p.391.
[103] Howard, CPD, Representatives 16 February, 2004, p.24769.
[104] Howard, CPD, Representatives 12 February, 2004, p.24652.

home" and promised to encourage its provision, but through the private sector.[105]   His

later stress on market-driven childcare in government was therefore unsurprising. In the

postscript to *The Politics of Australian Child Care,* Deborah Brennan points out that

Howard's conservative approach to childcare encompassed a broader agenda and

philosophical approach, and included consistent policy issues described throughout this

work: a deeply conservative approach to women's issues, a wish to wind back many

social policy measures initiated by previous governments, and minimising government

regulation and commitment to small business.[106]   In summary, Howard's use of childcare

illustrated his "general argument for reliance on market-forces rather than government

intervention".[107]   She predicted that childcare as a monopoly industry could raise

problems of conflict of interests between the interests of shareholders and children.[108]

She also predicted market failure, even before the 2008 financial collapse of ABC

Learning, a major for-profit childcare monopoly organisation.[109]   While Howard was

clearly committed to the spirit of private enterprise reflected in commercial childcare

centres, he remained convinced that parents provided the best childcare. That, he said,

"happens to be my personal view, my own personal, very strong view and a lot of our

policies have reflected it".[110]

Howard *did* set up a House of Representatives committee to enquire into work-

family balance, but effectively ignored the findings when tabled in 2006. Chaired by

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[105] *Future Directions,* p.74.
[106] Brennan, *The Politics of Australian Child Care. Philanthropy to Feminism and Beyond,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1998, p.206.
[107] Brennan, "Private vs Public. Childcare revisited", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* May, 1989, 65, 12, pp.27-28.
[108] Brennan, "Childcare: not as easy as ABC", *The Age,* 29 February, 2008.
[109] In "The ABC of child care politics", *Australian Journal of Social Issues,* 42, 2, 2007, Brennan says by "allowing a single corporation to assume a dominant position in the provision of long day care, Australia has embarked on a vast experiment in the care of children, unparalleled in other countries".
[110] Howard, interview on Southern Cross radio, 13 April, 2007; reprinted in AAP, "Children best cared for at home – PM", 13 April, 2007. See also AAP, "Stay-at-home parenting is best, says PM", 10 May, 2007.

Liberal Bronwyn Bishop, the committee found the "childcare system needs an urgent overhaul to give women more childcare choices instead of locking them out of the workforce".[111] Bishop recommended childcare tax deductions, including for nannies and *au pairs,* but Howard was unenthusiastic – despite first-hand knowledge of professional women and mothers like his daughter – and the enquiry's "economic argument for dramatically increasing childcare spending".[112] Childcare could not be made entirely costless, he explained in a familiar rationale, "but I'm also concerned to ensure that people who choose to stay at home while their children are very young, and provide their own childcare, are not totally ignored in this debate".[113] Howard's policies ensured they were central to that debate.

Women and Feminists

Howard's use of the words "rabid feminism" and "claptrap" indicated that, as a political or social justice construct, feminism had no place in government policies. As consistently noted, he was hostile towards collective groups representing minority or interest groups (if not market- or employer-orientated ones) and WEL fared no better. As an organisation unaligned to any political party, it had with previous governments from the 1970s lobbied for equal pay and access to childcare, and on issues like contraception, violence against women, women's health and changing workforce cultures.[114] When it took office in 1972, the Whitlam government claimed a mandate for reform that included a commitment to women's issues.[115] In 1976 the Fraser government promised equal

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[111] Bronwyn Bishop, quoted by Patricia Karvelas, "MPs call for tax breaks on childcare", *Weekend Australian,* 25-26 November, 2006.
[112] Karvelas, *Weekend Australian,* 25-26 Novemer, 2006.
[113] Howard interview with Neil Mitchell, Radio 3AW, 8 December, 2006.
[114] Eva Cox, "The demonising of feminism", *AQ – Australian Quarterly,* 79, 3, 2007, p.31.
[115] Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police,* Penguin, Camberwell, 2002, p.529: "Australian feminists … were fortunate to have burst onto the political scene [when Whitlam was elected in 1972].

opportunities to ensure that women's skills and talents were used to the full.[116] Yet when

Howard as Treasurer replied to a 1982 Question on Notice (QON) about gender wage

disparity, he dismissed the enquiry by saying it was "not part of the Bureau [of Statistics]

to predict future rates of change".[117] There was no rider in his response when confronted

with the significant wage differential between genders. Nor was it ever his intention in

Opposition to support affirmative action or quotas to positively benefit women,

considering the gesture merely "symbolic".[118] While Howard's response to the 1985

National Agenda for Women acknowledged the realistic (and political) need for gender

equality, his method for achieving it differed from Labor:

> the time has long since passed when there can be any equivocation by any major political
>
> party in Australia as to the desirable goal of effective equality of status of women in the
>
> Australian community …. The Liberal and National Parties are committed to an effective
>
> equality of status for women. We recognise the changes which have occurred and which
>
> affect the lifestyles of many women in Australia. [119]

However, he saw achievement of gender equality through taxation benefits linked to

families, and industrial relations reform permitting flexibility and choice. As he

explained in his speech:

> Increasingly women wish to combine the responsibility of parenthood with careers. The
>
> Liberal Party … is facilitating choice …. It is not for a government to impose a

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[116] Governor-General's speech, CPD, Representatives 17 February, 1976, p.17.
[117] Howard, CPD, Representatives 7 September, 1982, p.1156.
[118] Howard called affirmative action "symbolic politics", "prescriptive, positive discrimination" which implied "an enormous bureaucratic interference in the lives of ordinary Australians". See CPD, Representatives 10 April, 1986, p.1975. See also *Future Directions,* p.46.
[119] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 November, 1985, p.3906.

stereotype of behaviour. It is for governments to facilitate choice. That ideal of choice lies at the heart of every Liberal policy.[120]

Yet the discriminatory gender practices of the NSW Liberal Party where he was a key figure, his opposition to separate feminist policies in party policy, in government his reduction in funds and status of bureaucratic and research units which provided policy support for women's issues (discussed below), indicated resistance to feminist ideals, and limiting women's choices; in effect, he saw it as a mainstream issue. Although he saw women in particular being advantaged through the flexibility promised in his industrial relations and taxation reforms, he stressed that both women *and men* would be equally assisted in their life/ work choices and pursuit of balance. In 1987 he had said:

> This society needs a taxation system and an industrial relations system which give to Australian women no less than to Australian men a choice to remain, *without any condemnation* or loss of self-esteem, as full time permanent homemakers, to pursue a career, or to try to combine both elements.[121] [Emphasis added.]

In 2007 and after eleven years of a Howard government, the Democratic Audit of Australia showed that Australia's progress towards gender equality had resiled from earlier commitments, and many achievements of previous governments had been "undone".[122] Research by former Federal Labor member, Mary Crawford, showed that men did not consider children a factor in deciding to enter politics (again proving Sawer's

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[120] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 November, 1985, p.3906.

[121] Howard, CPD, Representatives 31 March, 1987, p.1763. Anne Summers pointed to difficulties facing young women with *choice* between career and child-rearing. "Instead of a modern world offering unlimited opportunities to young women … women today are all too often confronted with the same sorts of choices that confounded their grandmothers"; *The End of Equality. Work, Babies and Women's Choices in 21st Century Australia,* Random House, Milsons Point, 2003, p.35.

[122] Maddison and Partridge, *How well does Australian democracy serve Australian women?* p.xii.

point), but for women the choice was still between children *or* a political career.[123]
Parliamentary secretary in the Howard government, Jackie Kelly, resigned to look after
her young family, and complained about the lack of availability and costs of childcare
facilities.[124]   Natasha Stott-Despoja, former Australian Democrats leader, twice
unsuccessfully introduced legislation for paid maternity leave, and also resigned to care
for her infants.[125]   Relevant to the (lack of) accommodation of women's professional
careers in parliament was the decision to include a swimming pool in the plans for the
New and Permanent Parliament House, but with a crèche becoming available in 2009
"after almost two decades of lobbying" by generations of female politicians.[126]

        As noted above, Howard continually rejected any idea of government-funded
maternity leave. In 2002 (then) Commissioner for Sex Discrimination, Pru Goward,
proposed a scheme at a cost considered "almost indecently modest, compared with the
handouts given to single income families".[127] Howard claimed the benefits of allowing
paid maternity leave were "grossly exaggerated by many of its advocates". [128] He
showed familiar concern about the "unreasonable burdens" placed on small business
through such benefits.[129] To a Liberal Students' Federal Convention, he described the
idea as "an absurd proposition", claiming that people chose to have children for many

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[123] Mary Crawford, "Putting the Political Scientist into the Picture", Australasian Political Studies
Association Conference, Newcastle, 25-27 September, 2006.
[124] Jackie Kelly, quoted in "Childcare industry 'lacks diversity'", AAP, 1 November, 2006.
[125] Natasha Stott Despoja's 2007 Private Members' Bill (first mooted in 2002) advocated 14-weeks'
government-funded leave at the minimum wage. She claimed a "lack of political will on both sides of
politics and a continual underestimation of the needs of working women in this country". See Elissa
Lawrence, "Push to extend baby pay", *Sunday Mail,* 9 September, 2007.
[126] See Emma MacDonald, "Federal parliament child-care centre full", *Canberra Times,* 14 January,
2009.
[127] Pru Goward's Interim Paper "Valuing parenthood. Options for paid maternity leave" was released
in April 2002. The final proposal of December 2002 recommended a federally-funded scheme of 14
weeks paid maternity leave for all women in paid work. See Genevieve Heard, "Pronatalism under
Howard", *People and Place,* 14, 3, September 2006, pp.12-16. See also Rosemary Neill, "It's a
workable formula, so bottle up the bleating", *The Australian,* 13 December, 2002.
[128] Howard, Address to Australian Liberal Students' Federal Convention, Canberra, 7 July, 2003.
[129] CPD, Representatives 14 May, 2002, p.2005.

reasons, but did not include availability of childcare.[130] Evidence indicated otherwise:

Goward warned that no country was successfully addressing its fertility problem "without

accepting that women will only have children if they can also continue to work".[131]

Research by the Institute of Family Studies showed that access to community resources,

including family-friendly workplaces, were important criteria in combating low fertility

rates.[132] Peter McDonald's research additionally showed that decisions by couples to

combine work and child-raising hinged on levels of support from families, employers,

communities and governments.[133] When the Australian Industrial Relations Commission

in 2005 gave parents the right to *request* up to two years unpaid leave to care for a new

baby, up to eight weeks paid leave for new parents and part-time work until the child

attended school, Howard's reaction was cool. It boiled down, he said, reverting to old

arguments about negotiable rights over compulsion, and to whether agreements could be

concluded at an enterprise level. This was the essence of workplace reforms – for men

and women – he had long argued for: choice and flexibility.[134]

Marian Sawer wrote in 1994 that while the idea of social liberalism within the

state's role "can prove compatible with feminism, the neo-liberal conception, now

vulgarised in public choice theory or 'economic rationalism' is fundamentally hostile to

feminist goals".[135] Howard's adoption of aspects of neo-liberalism and his aversion to

special interest groups, meant that, apart from reducing funding from WEL as discussed

above, and privileging commercial childcare centres over community-based, not-for-

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[130] Howard, Liberal Students' Federal Convention, 7 July, 2003.
[131] "Goward to continue fight for paid maternity leave", ABC TV, *Insiders,* 15 September, 2002.
[132] Matthew Gray, Lixia Qu and Ruth Weston, "Fertility and family policy in Australia", *Australian Institute of Family Studies,* Research Paper 41, February, 2008, p.29.
[133] Peter McDonald, "Family Support Policy in Australia: The Need For A Paradigm Shift", *People and Place,* 9, 2, 2001, pp.14-20.
[134] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 August, 2005, p.6.
[135] Sawer, "Reclaiming the state: feminism, liberalism and social liberalism", *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 40, S1,1994, pp.159-172.

profit facilities, he targeted those government research agencies dedicated to women's

issues. He quickly abolished the Equal Pay Unit (1998) and the Work and Family Unit

(2003), while the Office of Status of Women was removed from his own Department and

merged into the Department of Family and Community Affairs as the Office for

Women.[136] The Women's Bureau, established in the 1960s to monitor women's

employment conditions, was "mainstreamed out of existence".[137] The Human Rights and

Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) which handled complaints of discrimination

on grounds of race, sex and disability, had its budget reduced by forty percent and the

power of individual commissioners significantly weakened.[138]

In 1990 when Howard responded to criticism that some feminists regarded him as

a relic from the 1950s who believed a woman's place was in the home, he protested:

I don't agree with that view of me. But I don't care what anybody says – nothing

replaces time spent with your kids. You can be home all day and then suddenly you will

fall into this most terrific conversation with one of them. You can't plan that. You can't

come home and say, "Here I am, now we will have 30 minutes of quality time". That's

bull---t.[139]

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[136] Sawer, "Mums and Dads of Australia", *Mortgage Nation: The 2004 Australian Election,* Marian
Simms and John Warhurst, eds. Richard Nile, General Ed., API Network, Perth, 2005, pp.248-249.
[137] Lani Russell and Marian Sawer, "The Rise and Fall of the Australian Women's Bureau", *The
Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 45, 3, September, 1999, p.362. The Women's Bureau from
inception was involved in development of equal pay, abolition of the women/ marriage bar, and
childcare policy.
[138] HREOC was stripped of power to conduct public hearings and individual commissioners for sex,
race and disability lost complaint-handling powers, which went to the President of HREOC. See Anne
Summers, 7th Human Rights Oration, "Putting equality back into the agenda", Melbourne, 10
December, 2007.
[139] Howard, interview with Roy Masters, "Pain of a Plain Man", *Good Weekend,* 7 April, 1990, quoted
by Henderson, *A Coalition Government?* p.36.

Howard appeared oblivious to the irony that, in responding to criticism about his lack of awareness on feminist issues, he reverted to family, children and home. In government in 1997 he again denied his policies encouraged mothers to stay at home and complained many had "wrongly attempted to stereotype my Government as possessing … an old fashioned attitude towards women".[140] Anne Summers, former women's adviser to Paul Keating, however, pointed out that his "ruthless use of childcare, employment, social security and taxation policy to steer women with children out of the workforce and into full-time motherhood", imposed financial penalties for working mothers.[141] Indeed, the AMP and National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) revealed that participation rates in the workforce of mothers aged twenty-five to forty-four years had fallen between 1990 and 2003.[142] As Rachel Power thought, it was "incomprehensible" that Howard defended his tax system as free of ideological bias: "In penalising families with a secondary income, current government policy clearly punishes women who choose to combine work and mothering".[143]

Yet as a consistent policy objective, Howard promised his industrial relations reforms offered choice and flexibility of workplace negotiations, and created (notably) part-time jobs for women.[144] Through choice, women (and men) could pursue "the way of life they desire".[145] It was an old argument, for this 1985 Opposition speech could have been incorporated twenty years later into his 2005 *WorkChoices* debate:

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[140] Howard, Address at re-launch of *Among the Carrion Crows.*
[141] Summers, Pamela Denoon Lecture, "The end of equality? Australian women and the Howard government", Canberra, 6 March, 2003; also *The End of Equality,* pp.142-171.
[142] Quoted by Ann Harding and Quoc Ngu Vu, "Keeping mums out of paid work", *Australian Financial Review,* 16 May, 2006.
[143] Power, "Taxing families", *Arena Magazine,* p.8.
[144] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 November, 1985, p.3906.
[145] Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 April, 1986, p.1975.

> If we did have a more flexible attitude towards part time work from the trade union movement and this Government … a more flexible industrial relations system that did not impose penalties on individual enterprises that made agreements to stagger their working hours to make them more acceptable to female and male employees who had family responsibilities – in other words, if we had a more commonsense approach to working hours in this country – there would be a lot more part time working opportunities available to women.[146]

While always a champion of women who stayed at home to look after children, Howard in 1987 cited research that showed they were concerned about their status and image as full-time workers at home, and that they suffered feelings of poor self-esteem and isolation. He blamed the "antiquated industrial relations system", and again saw the answer in "permanent part-time work and striking a blow for women who wanted to re-enter the work force – *while doing justice to their family obligations*".[147] [Added emphasis.] Immediately in government, when introducing workplace relations legislation, he said one of the

> many reforms that will be contained in the workplace relations bill will usher in a new era enabling the women of this country to effectively and beneficially combine their work and their family responsibilities …. It will give unparalleled opportunities ….[148]

This "new era" for women then, and later when the *WorkChoices* legislation completed his industrial relations reform, did not extend much beyond negotiable workplace

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[146] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 November, 1985, p.3906.
[147] Howard, CPD, Representatives 31 March, 1987, p.1763.
[148] Howard, CPD, Representatives 22 May, 1996, pp.1076-7.

contracts, which, as he always claimed, brought flexibility and choice into the arrangements.

Howard maintained it was not the role of government to dictate to parents how to organise their lives, but to establish circumstances that enabled women to make choices that suited them. As he said, "I am talking about facilitating choice".[149] The 1998 WEL Election Form Guide noted the frequent use Howard made of "choice" in relation to women and families, but suggested the main choice on offer was the traditional role:

> In his tax initiatives he has twice directed funds towards single income families, and ignored evidence that this actually is likely not to increase choice but reinforce more limited options for women with few job skills …. His reduction of per capita funding of childcare services has also limited women's choices to do other than stay at home caring for children".[150]

Despite the "new era" of "limitless choices", significant barriers remained for women to gain admittance to top corporate positions, boards, and within Howard's own Cabinet and ministry.[151] Studies by Ainslie van Onselen show gender imbalance remained in the Liberal Party at both Federal and State parliamentary level.[152] Howard in government did not introduce formal processes where policies were measured against impacts on families or women, and unlike previous Prime Ministers, never appointed a women's

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[149] Howard, CPD, Representatives 28 June, 1994, p.2162.
[150] WEL 1998 Election Form Guide. WEL stressed its non-partisan status but regretted Howard's score as leader on women's issues was low ("and not really even trying to change"). See also Peter McDonald, "Family Support Policy in Australia", *People and Place,* pp.14-20.
[151] On 2001 International Women's Day, Howard said a "record high of 32.2 per cent" of women held positions on Commonwealth boards and bodies, although still short of a "desirable figure". CPD, Representatives 8 March, 2001, p.25471. See Stephen Lunn, "Sharp drop in number of female executives", *The Australian,* 28 October, 2008, quoting Australian Census of Women in Leadership 2008 Report.
[152] Ainslie van Onselen, *Liberals & Power,* pp.194-201, esp.196.

adviser.[153]   As Sarah Maddison and Emma Partridge conclude in their *Democratic Audit of Australia* into how well democracy serves Australian women, "after a decade of federal government overtly hostile to these goals, Australia's standing as a leader in the struggle for gender equality is much diminished".[154]

Conclusion

One concludes after studying Howard's policies relating to families, women and feminists, in Opposition and in government, that there was significant continuity of direction and conviction.   He acknowledged the difficulties faced by his daughter and other women to balance work and motherhood, but the solution always lay in taxation and industrial relations reforms. His policy statements on families and their worth at a personal, community and national level followed a predictable direction, with scant accommodation to changing structures of family units, or social changes from the 1970s. He protected values closest to his own imaginings and experience – traditional marriage units, homes as havens, and specific gender roles – but excluded groups and individuals with *different* life priorities who chose (or were forced) outside those idealised parameters. He inferred throughout his parliamentary life, with clear reference to his own circumstances, that stable marriages with defined gender roles kept individuals and a cohesive society intact, and were, therefore, the subject of continuous policy statements that encouraged their viability. These were constant, repetitive statements born of conviction, but which were also used as political tools prior to the 1996 election when he judged the community wanted a return to social stability. This was a strategy which, propitiously, matched his ideas of social conservatism set against the radical economic changes he envisaged.

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[153] Howard was unconvinced the "enormous commitment of manhours" required to instigate a system of family impact statements was appropriate. CPD, Representatives 15 October, 1981, p.2066.
[154] Maddison and Patridge, *How well does Australian democracy serve Australian women?* p.104.

Howard's views on marriage and families – and the government policies that subsequently emerged – have been seen from the prism of his own experiences: as an idealised site of warmth, nurture, lessons about courtesy and handing values down to the next generation. Conversely, he considered that alternative life-styles, broken homes, a poor economy, and the disintegration of traditional social values (including pornography, guns and single parenthood) contributed to, and encouraged, drug abuse and crime. He stressed in Opposition that any government he led would be socially conservative, and in government set out to ensure that was so. His government legislated to ensure marriage constituted a union between a man and a woman, and while "choice" was a key word in his policy vocabulary, he refused to countenance same-sex civil unions. As seen in the previous chapter on industrial relations, he substantially refused to abandon elements of *WorkChoice* legislation, or acknowledge its potential disadvantage to women. By refusing to endorse government-sponsored maternity leave, Howard consolidated the idea that his government's policy priorities did not lie in assisting women who sought education or careers *and* families.

In 2007 Howard lost government to Labor and union campaigns that conflated the interests of women and "working families", and the vulnerability of women with children under *WorkChoices*. Howard and his government lost the monopoly on families and workplace reforms. The incoming Rudd government promised to scrap *WorkChoices* and appointed a single, childless woman as Deputy Prime Minister and a female, Asian, openly-homosexual senior woman in a key Cabinet position. Out of office and now a private citizen, Howard resolutely reiterated his belief that the traditional family – and not

feminists or alternative life-style adherents – remained the bedrock of Australian community values and culture.

The following chapter, "Constructing the National Identity", extends the social conservatism which was a central and continuous element of his family policies, into the realms of creating policies that reflected Australia's history and national identity. It will be shown that his interpretations encapsulated many of the ideas expressed throughout this thesis around the themes of Australian "values", "One Australia", and a national history of colonial success and war-time achievement through ANZAC. Most of these ideas were learnt at school and home, with contributions from migrants, trade unions, Aborigines and pioneer women conspicuously absent. What again emerges from a study of Howard's construction of national identity, is a remarkably continuous narrative.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONSTRUCTING THE NATIONAL IDENTITY

"Q.   How would you describe yourself?

A.   I'd like to be seen as an average Australian bloke … I can't think of a

nobler description of anybody than to be called an average Australian

bloke".[1] Howard, 1996.

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[1] John Howard interview with Liz Jackson, ABC TV, *Four Corners,* "An Average Australian Bloke",
19 February, 1996.

Introduction

John Howard's political and personal construction of national identity was an amalgamation of many policy issues that concerned him throughout his parliamentary life. He framed his interpretations of Australian history, the ANZAC legacy, mateship, egalitarianism, courageous colonial achievement, Anglo-Celtic, Christian heritage and Australian values, around the idea of a quintessential national spirit and identity. Many of these ideas were learnt at home, church and school. As noted earlier, he did not include multiculturalism, separate treaties for Indigenous people, or trade unions, and strived for a cohesive "One Australia" through, particularly, "mainstream" policies applicable to Aborigines (and women), and insisting on new citizens accepting Australian values. Before the 1996 election, Howard claimed the Labor government had ruptured the nation's economic and social life, and had caused confusion about national identity. Consequently, he promised to create an Australia where people felt "comfortable and relaxed" about themselves and their country.[2]

Earlier chapters noted that Howard was sometimes accused of being poll-driven, of reacting to opportunities which suited his political agenda, and on compromising on some policies. In particular, Guy Rundle claimed that Howard was an opportunist who would "seize any chance" to retain power.[3]   Undoubtedly, Howard developed into a skilled political practitioner who was forced by circumstances to adapt, but, as has been argued throughout this thesis, he rarely retreated on a core or key issue to him, even if it threatened his leadership in Opposition, or provoked dissent later in government. This chapter will show that, on the subject of national identity, he displayed a particular, unwavering conviction. His 1995 version of history and national identity outlined in the

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[2] Howard interview with Liz Jackson, 19 February, 1996.
[3] Guy Rundle, "The Opportunist. John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction", *Quarterly Essay,* 3, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2001.

Headland speeches reflected what he identified as the national mood, but, as shown, it meshed with his ideas about Asia, Indigenous people, colonial history, and, importantly, the place of ANZAC in Australian history and nationhood. Indeed, although he consolidated these ideas in an election campaign context, a study of his parliamentary speeches and public statements show that he harboured these views long before he competed with Paul Keating for office. He entered into the so-called culture or history "wars" against Keating and the "black armband" advocates with aggressive determination, because he believed their interpretations were inaccurate and sullied the legacies of past generations. With electoral disillusionment "at its peak" in 1995, the time was opportune for Howard to conflate the desire for simpler social values, economic security, alongside pride in national identity and historical achievement.[4] Propitiously, as this chapter will argue, these ideas reflected Howard's views and values.

This chapter also returns to Howard's themes and policies relating to war veterans, ANZAC, homes as retreats, national sovereignty, border security, citizenship and perceived threats to national identity and characteristics. He saw Australians as the beneficiaries of the British Empire, monarchy, Westminster democracy and the United States alliance, and he refused to change the Australian flag with its Union Jack, or support any moves towards republicanism that removed the Queen as Australia's head of state.[5] At the same time, he praised Australia as a nation that had adapted traditions to suit its own circumstances. He embraced Britain and the US but was chary of nations

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[4] The times, as noted earlier, had indeed "suited Howard". As James Walter wrote: "For all that we now recognise that any useful map of the future will reorient us to civil society, nation and citizenship, when disillusion with politics is at a peak, we may need a mobilising cause to bring things together. What will be the cause of the 1990s?" *Tunnel Vision. The failure of political imagination,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p.119.

[5] See Helen Irving, "The Virtuous Citizen", *Arena Magazine,* February-March, 1995, p.19.   Republican Keating wanted a referendum to decide the issue, while monarchist Howard promised a convention and referendum options; see Irving's account of Howard's intervention at the 1998 Constitutional Convention, "A Conventional Convention", *Arena Magazine,* 34, April-May, 1998, pp.5-7.

that did not share Australian culture or values. Earlier chapters stressed his continual

demand for the sovereign right to dictate who may cross Australian borders. When he

digressed in 1988 from bi-partisan, non-discriminatory immigration policies, rejected

official multiculturalism, brought in more punitive deterrence laws covering asylum-

seekers, and compulsory citizenship tests, there was an underlying tension of "them" and

"us", or elements of exclusion.[6] Under his "One Australia" banner, Howard constantly

strove for a single interpretation of national history, citizenship and identity, with limited

room for competing or contested opinions. As Graeme Turner in *Making it National*

suggests, however, definition of national character based on a singular version of history

indicates an incapability to incorporate multiple identities and histories within the

"discourses of nationality".[7] But Howard's pattern of rhetoric and action show this

specific aim: to construct a national identity that suited the political times, but which

reflected his personal experience, bias and education.

        This chapter returns to Howard's capacity to identify with "Middle Australia" or

"battlers" and "ordinary" Australians, as the central element in constructing a national

identity. He offered social stability against Keating's forays into republicanism,

changing the flag, and what he once ridiculed as the "manic pursuit of gender-inclusive

language".[8] Against his diagnosis that the electorate wanted stability at a time of

economic and social displacement, he sensed it also wanted to feel pride in identity and

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[6] See Danielle Every and Martha Augoustinos, "Constructions of racism in the Australian parliamentary debates on asylum seekers", *Nations and Nationalism,* 14, 1, 2008, pp.562-580; Nick Dyrenfurth, "Battlers, Refugees and the Republic: John Howard's Language of Citizenship", *Journal of Australian Studies,* 84, 2005, pp.183-261; Carol Johnson, "Narratives of identity: Denying empathy in conservative discourses on race, class and sexuality", *Theory and Society,* 34, 2005, pp.37-61, and Johnson, "John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp. 195-209.

[7] Graeme Turner, *Making in National. Nationalism and Australian Popular Culture,* Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p.10.

[8] Howard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives (CPD, Representatives) 9 November, 1994, p.2946.

patriotism, as much as he wanted to discount Keating's negative account of history, adoption of multiculturalism and closer liaison with Asia. Studies by F L Jones in 1996 showed a majority view that "feeling Australian" was very important in being "truly Australian".[9] Katharine Betts' research in the same year also confirmed that pride in Australian history correlated to voters' intentions, with patriotism and immigration impacting on the 1996 election.[10] These were tailor-made issues for Howard, because they allowed him to exploit them for campaign purposes, but, importantly, they suited his convictions, for he had always strived to convey the idea of "One Australia", "Australian values", and the "Australian Achievement".

The political use of national identity

Although Australia was founded as a nation by British colonists and assumed the laws and democratic processes of its Westminster system, it adapted circumstances to suit the environment. As Howard said, the "genius of Australia has been to keep the good bits of our inheritance and to throw out the bad bits".[11] In the 1890s there was a surge of nationalism as the nation prepared for Federation, but the magnitude of change a century later prompted new political debates about national character, history and identity, especially as massive post-Second World War immigration programmes exposed Australians to new and different ethnicities, races and religious beliefs.[12] While the influx of different nationalities introduced new ideas of cultures, cuisine and customs,

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[9] F L Jones, "National Identity and Social Values", *People and Place,* 4, 4, 1996, pp.17-26.

[10] Katharine Betts, "Patriotism, Immigration and the 1996 Australian election", *People and Place,* 4, 4, 1996, pp.27-38.

[11] Howard, interview with Paul Kelly, *100 Years: the Australian story,* Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.247.

[12] For stages of nationalism, see Patrick Morgan, "A World of One's Own: Traditions and Divisions in Australian Life", *The New Conservatism,* ed. Robert Manne, Oxford UP, Oxford, 1982, pp.88-107; Ronald Conway, "The Commonwealth of Mates 1890-1950", *The Great Australian Stupor. An Interpretation of the Australian Way of Life,* Sun, South Melbourne, 1971, pp.34-56.

within the concept of evolving national characteristics, new citizens were expected to accept the host country's laws and values. As the analysis of F L Jones concluded:

> national identity is not a fixed property assigned at birth. It is an emergent and constantly evolving sense of what it means to be Australian, including a commitment to basic social institutions such as parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and equality before the law, freedom of the individual, freedom of speech, religious and other forms of tolerance (for example, a "fair go") and equality of opportunity.[13]

Howard formalised the requirement for new citizens to accept Australian laws and values, and, as noted in Chapter Five, objected to the notion that until multiculturalism and ethnic diversity came to Australia with post-war immigration, the nation had lacked identifiable characteristics. For him, Australia's history resided within the stories of achievement it told about itself through Gallipoli, the bush or outback, and colonial courage. As he said,

> I believe that the balance sheet of Australian history is overwhelmingly a positive one …. [it] will demonstrate a group of people who have had great achievements … heroic achievements and have done much to bring about a remarkably enlightened, tolerant and diverse Australian community.[14]

Howard constantly used the symbols of ANZAC, war, and colonial achievement to emphasise the construction of history and national identity. Like most politicians, he recognised that popular national images, symbols or cultural myths were powerful tools

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[13] Jones, "National Identity and Social Values", pp.17-26.
[14] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 October, 1996, p.5976. See also Mark McKenna, "Different Perspectives on Black Armband History", Australian Parliamentary Library, Research Paper 5, 1997-98.

because they can be manipulated to promote political agendas, to bind cultures, construct narratives about how Australians see themselves, or how others view their nations.[15] As Carol Johnson cautions, the politics of national identity should not be underrated as a potent, potential electoral tool.[16] Between Howard and Keating, there were contested versions of history and national identity: Howard was committed to his conservative version, and accused Keating of an "attempted heist of Australian identity".[17] While planning his own "heist", he claimed the

> Australian identity is the possession of all Australians. It ought not to be the political playing of one or other side of politics. We should not politicise the Australian character. It is not for government, or indeed oppositions, to impose their stereotypes on the Australian identity.[18]

Howard also objected to the direction Keating wanted to take the nation, which involved detaching Australia from remnants of British colonialism and more closely engaging with the Asian region. While Keating launched national and historical educational programmes, including the significance of ANZAC, he saw greater relevance in utilising the cultural diversity within Australia, and, unlike Howard, on concentrating on historical military events closer to the defence of Australian shores, such as Singapore and Papua New Guinea.[19]

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[15] Peter Wall, "The Aussie identity and multiculturalism: the importance of heritage in a changing society", *AQ – Australian Quarterly,* 78, 5, September-October, 2006, pp.25-26.

[16] Johnson, "Anti-Elitist Discourse in Australia", *Us and Them. Anti-Elitism in Australia,* eds. Marian Sawer and Barry Hindess, API Network, Perth, 2005, p.125.

[17] See Johnson, "Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", pp.195-209.

[18] Howard, "The Role of Government: A Modern Liberal Approach", Menzies Research Centre, 6 June, 1995.

[19] Keating instigated *One Nation* (1992), *Creative Nation* (1994), and *Australia Remembers* which focused on ANZAC; a Civic Expert Group developed a program for educating Australians about their history, rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Howard saw the ANZAC story as central to the nation's history. His version of history and national identity was based on war, mateship, masculine courage, with limited space for social issues, women pioneers, the environment, or Aborigines.[20] He promoted the picture of a nation with a proud colonial history and exhorted new citizens to "learn about our history and heritage" and so join the "the national journey".[21] Memories of his male relatives' military service and patriotism, the family's stoicism in times of war and Depression, his insular upbringing and schooling, had seemingly informed most of those views.[22] The values he attributed to national identity were socially conservative, historically selective, based on conviction and experience, consistent, and useful politically. As Nick Dyrenfurth notes,

> Howard, as with other political leaders, extols and employs values, he also shapes and distorts their (historically contingent) meaning. [His] decade-long electoral success owes as much to his rhetorical hegemony upon "Australian values", national identity and engagement with popular culture, as to political strategy and luck.[23]

Interestingly, those leaders that Howard most respected, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, had each invoked conservative values and history in their respective political agendas to promote social stability at a time of economic change.[24] Similarly,

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[20] See Turner, *Making it National,* p.5, and Ann Curthoys, "History in the Howard Era", Address to Professional Historians Association, Sydney, 19 July, 2006. Editors Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly say of Australian history "in the forging of new political orders and the fashioning of national identities, men have positioned themselves as the main players"; *Creating a Nation,* McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 1994, p.1.

[21] Howard, "A sense of balance: the Australian achievement in 2006", National Press, Club, 25 January, Canberra, 2006.

[22] See Andrew Bonnell and Martin Crotty, "Australia's History under Howard, 1996-2007", *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 617, 2008, pp.149-165.

[23] Nick Dyrenfurth, "John Howard's Hegemony of Values: the Politics of 'Mateship' in the Howard Decade", *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2, June, 2007, pp.211-230.

[24] Thatcher and Reagan scripted a particular view of history to foster pride in national identity; Thatcher in 1979 accused her opponents of "a deliberate attack on our values … on our heritage and

Howard's 1996 election campaign was based on appealing to what he saw as a fractured nation, confused about its past and future in terms of history and national identity, and receptive to returning to pride in national history and identity. This was partially a political ploy, but also based on convictions framed in childhood and refined – but not changed – during his terms of government.

Howard's construction of national identity

In an Australia Day address on the eve of his tenth anniversary in office, Howard claimed victory in what he termed the "divisive" and "phony" debate on national identity and ethnic diversity.[25] In his speech, he welcomed the "corrective in our national sense of self" whereby Australians could now "appreciate the enduring values of the national character that we proudly celebrate and preserve".[26] In praising the national character, Howard, as he frequently did, stepped back to the colonial heritage of British democratic institutions and rule of law, and showed a marked propensity to concentrate on historical legacies rather than the reality of a national character evolving from an increasingly diverse population within Australian.[27] James Curran notes that (unlike the Oxford-educated, more inclusive social liberal, Malcolm Fraser), Howard did not consider "the multicultural society", trade unions and Aborigines as "vital to the concept of an Australian achievement".[28] Indeed, he was

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our past". For discussion on the "black armband label" debate in Britain, US and Western Europe since the 1980s, see McKenna, "Different Perspectives on Black Armband History", 1997-98.

[25] Howard, National Press Club, 25 January, 2006. See also Michelle Grattan, "Howard claims victory in national culture wars", *The Age,* 26 January, 2006.

[26] Howard, National Press Club, 25 January, 2006.

[27] See, for example, Howard's addresses to Guildhall Dinner, London, 5 July, 2000, Kings College, London, 7 July, 2000, and 1997 Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Lecture, "Australia and Britain; the Contemporary Partnership in a New International Environment", 23 June, 1997. See also Johnson, "John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity", pp.195-209.

[28] James Curran, *The Power of Speech. Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2004, p.252.

much more forthright in defending the British heritage as the indispensable ingredient of national cohesion, and he is much less inclined to question in any way its centrality to the Australian story. [29]

Howard dismissed what he considered the egregiously incorrect versions of Australian history portrayed by "black armband" critics, which contradicted his version of benevolent colonial settlement, noble exploits and courageous achievements. In his first year in office, he delivered a speech that purported to cover the "Liberal traditions" and the beliefs and values that guided his government. Here he refuted the idea that the

past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. I take a different view".[30]

This was repeated a decade later when he praised the *Quadrant* journal as a "counterforce to the black armband view of Australian history", because "it had become almost de rigueur in intellectual circles to regard Australian history as little more than a litany of sexism, racism and class warfare".[31] One sees in these repetitive statements Howard's constant and familiar impatience with both any denigration of Australian history, and his aversion to "political correctness".

Howard's ideas of a British-based idea of history that involved retaining the British monarchy as head of state, and his refusal to remove the Union Jack from the Australian flag, reflected his social nostalgia by harking back to previous eras. But, as

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[29] Curran, *Power of Speech,* p.252.
[30] Howard, "The Liberal tradition: The beliefs and values which guide the federal government". Sir Robert Menzies Lecture, 18 November, 1996.
[31] Howard, Address to *Quadrant* 50th Anniversary Dinner, Sydney, 4 October, 2006.

Curran observes, Howard *was* "least at ease with the 'new Australia' of the post-Menzies era". Indeed,

> Fearful that a sense of respect and affection for the "old Australia" is slipping too easily from view, [Howard] seeks constantly to balance a respect for the new era of diversity and tolerance with an older nationalism of his own – and it is to this older Australia that he most frequently appeals.[32]

Mark Davis also notes that Howard reached back to an "era before mass non-European immigration, before multiculturalism and the leftist reconsideration of white settlement history, to a white archetype many thought had disappeared".[33] These observations are not surprising, for, as noted throughout this thesis and reflected most clearly in his interpretation of nationalism, Howard was comfortable at a personal and political level with this appeal to "old" social values, consistent with his rejection of multiculturalism, retention of "old" symbols and social conservatism.

Central to Howard's social conservatism and concept of national identity was his idea of safeguarding national borders and homes, and, by extension, his use of imagery of "home" as metaphor for nation. He conflated the idea of home and nation to establish a narrative – an "Australian way of life" – that embraced security for both. As Fiona Allon writes, the

> continuous invocation of "our way of life" worked to secure an Australian identity that was time honoured and long established, although still vulnerable, under threat and

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[32] Curran, *Power of Speech,* p.242.
[33] Mark Davis, *The Land of Plenty. Australia in the 2000s,* Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, p.239.

needing to be defended. This sort of language – "our way of life", "our national identity"

establishes a direct line of connection between the domestic home and the national home

…. Security – securing the home, securing the nation – amount to one and the same thing

…. Howard's speeches cannily tapped into this understanding of home and nation as a

seamless continuum.[34]

Howard posited in his 1999 Federation Address, "The Australian Way", that the nation's

success began in the homes of its people.[35] Therefore, what concerned him as leader was

to offer reassurance that homes/ the nation were protected from factors that diluted or

compromised Australian culture, history, or sense of national identity.

As outlined in earlier chapters, Howard in 1996 had claimed that Australians were

fearful and confused about their national identity and retention of values important to

them. By the time he had been in government for two terms, however, it was untenable

to sustain this argument. He shifted to the success he had achieved in restoring

Australian pride, nationalism and values. But these, too, were under constant threat.

The terrorist attacks in 2001 in New York, Washington, and later in Bali, London and

Madrid, fed into his concern that Australia, and indeed the world, was threatened by

Islamist fundamentalism. In 2003 he personally devised a public information campaign –

which many regarded as propaganda – that involved mailing "terror kits" to eight million

households, which included a two-page letter from him which talked about "[o]ur open,

friendly nature mak[ing] us welcome guests and warm hosts …. We are a strong, free,

compassionate society – together, we will look out for Australia and protect the way of

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[34] Fiona Allon, *Renovation Nation. Our Obsession with Home,* New South, Sydney, 2008, p.187.
[35] Howard, "The Australian Way", Federation Address to Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Brisbane, 28 January, 1999. See also Allon, *Renovation Nation,* p.187.

life we value so highly".[36] There were intersecting messages of fear, vigilance and compassion, but the import of the letter was to remind Australians of the vulnerability of their "way of life". Having exploited community unease prior to the 1996 election, as Prime Minister he claimed victory in the so-called history "wars" by positively changing the perception that Australians had of themselves and their history. Now, having elevated confidence and national pride, it remained, however, for a vigilant leader to protect the "Australian way of life".

Yet Howard had always seen the retention of Australian values, history and identity as a constant battle. In Opposition he railed against Keating's attacks that demeaned conservative contributions to Australian history, and his "big pictures" that neglected the primary concerns of ordinary, or mainstream citizens. Even before the 1996 election, *Future Directions* declared, "we no longer seem to have sufficient confidence in ourselves as Australians to assert who we are and the sort of society we want to be".[37] Looking back in 2004, Howard admitted his aim to redress that problem:

> I set out to turn back some of the cultural inferiority that I felt Australians were starting to drift into. I thought we shrugged off a lot of that years ago, but then we went through that period of navel gazing, about whether we were Asian, European or whatever. I certainly set out to change that.[38]

After one year as Prime Minister, he said:

[36] Quoted by Elspeth Tilley, "Propaganda –Who, Us? The Australian Government 'Terror Kit'", *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy,* 113, November, 2004, pp.30-43. On a "propaganda index" test, Howard's letter scored 62 per cent.   Howard authored this campaign with minimal advice from security advisers; personal communication.
[37] Howard and Ian Sinclair, *Future Directions. It's time for plain thinking,* Liberal and National Parties, Canberra, 1988, p.89.
[38] Howard, quoted by Malcolm Schmidtke and Gay Alcorn, "Being John Howard", *The Age,* 21 August, 2004.

I am not one of those people who believes that Australia suffers from an identity crisis. I believe that the Australian identity is so distinct and our shared values so robust and so many of our past achievements such a legitimate source of pride, that we don't need endless naval [sic] gazing.[39]

And in an interview with Paul Kelly to discuss 100 years of Australian history, Howard repeated views expressed in an earlier Headland speech about his views on Australia's place in an Asian region:

We're not an Asian nation. We are a modern Australian nation, in many ways a projection of Western civilisation in our part of the world but with a real difference …. we should stop fretting about how we precisely define ourselves. We shouldn't waste time with the sort of endless national navel gazing about which definition best fits us".[40]

The cultural gulf between Australia and Asia constantly exercised Howard, noted particularly in his Headland speeches. His goal ostensibly was to differentiate between the two regions, most tellingly displayed in his contrasting approaches as Prime Minister to two powerful international leaders. In his 2003 welcoming speech in parliament to the President of the People's Republic of China, he said that while the relationship between the two countries was "mature and practical", no purpose would be served by pretending that they shared similar societies, cultures, traditions and histories.[41] By contrast, the address by the US President the day before was preceded by Howard's celebration of, and recommittal to, the shared values of the two nations, including a belief in individualism, families, free enterprise, and the worth of a person being based on

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[39] Howard, 5th Annual Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop Asialink Lecture, Melbourne, 11 November, 1997.
[40] Howard interview with Kelly, *100 Years,* p.250.
[41] Howard, CPD, Representatives 24 October, 2003, p.21695.

character, rather than their religion, race, colour, creed or social background.[42] In these speeches his emphasis was on Australia's status as a US ally and sharing its values and culture, while his approach to China highlighted cultural (if not trade) differences.

Howard's lack of empathy has been remarked upon throughout this work, and it plays into his notions of how the national identity is constructed. When opening the 2001 exhibition, "Belonging: A Century Celebrated", he tried to imagine the circumstances of those whose life experiences were different from his. In this speech, it is predominantly his own childhood memories that he successfully conveys, and which he condenses into past "comfortable" images, where "we" enjoy Christmas holidays, and have a "sense of belonging" within Sydney suburbs:

> We all have those comfortable recollections of the Christmas holiday in the Blue Mountains if you grew up in a certain part of Sydney or later on it was a beach holiday. If you were a migrant you would have some recollections of your first experience with Australia. If you were an Indigenous person you would have a mixture of recollections. If you were a bushman it would be different. If you were somebody who grew up in the suburbs of Sydney and who identified your youth with the Victa mower and the Hills Hoist you'd probably have a sense of belonging that was in common with many millions of Australians who grew up in those circumstances.[43]

Those imaginative limitations shaped Howard's views on multiculturalism and citizenship. Multiculturalism threatened the formation of a single national identity and was consequently jettisoned as government-sponsored policy in his later terms of

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[42] Howard, CPD, Representatives 23 October, 2003, p.21687.
[43] Howard, Address to Centenary of Federation Exhibition "Belonging: A Century celebrated", Melbourne, 9 May, 2001.

government. When he released a discussion paper, *Australian Citizenship: Much more than a Ceremony,* and invited debate on the merits of introducing a formal citizenship test, its title suggested that as Australian citizenship was "a privilege not a right", only through acceptance of Australian values could migrants fully participate in the life of the nation.[44] These values were similar to those quoted above by F L Jones in 1996, and which had been part of Australia's immigration and integrationist policies for decades: "respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, support for democracy, our commitment to the rule of law, the equality of men and women, the spirit of the fair go, of mutual respect and compassion for those in need".[45] Howard again went further by insisting on the compulsory elements of tests for new citizens, and drew criticism from his few remaining moderate colleagues within the Liberal Party (discussed below).

Howard's 2007 Australia Day message (delivered two months before the passage of the *Australian Citizenship Act 2000,* allowed him to expand on the values that he believed had contributed to Australia's success. It was stressed that the "essence" of Australia was its belief in democracy, but omitted from the elements that made Australia "great" were Aborigines, migrants or pioneer women:

> I do think there are some things that most of us hold very dear and hold to be the essence of what it is to be an Australian. I think we all embrace and hold very strongly to the fact that this is a great democracy …. We are a nation that holds very strongly to the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary … a free press …. We believe very passionately in the equality of men and women … the notion of the fair go, the quality of opportunity ….

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[44] See Andrew Robb, Foreword to "Australian Citizenship. Much more than a ceremony". Discussion Paper. Consideration of the merits of introducing a formal citizenship test, Australian Government, Canberra, September 2006.
[45] Robb, Foreword to "Australian Citizenship".

> We can debate our history … but fundamentally the verdict of history is that Australia has been a remarkable success and we have built in this country a great nation.[46]

Howard's *Future Directions* expressed similar ideas, claiming that people wanted to "come to this country because it is the best country in the world in which to live".[47] As Judith Brett notes, sentiments such as these imply a need to claim superiority and refuse to acknowledge the social and cultural bases of people's personal identity.[48] For Howard it was imperative that migrants accept Australian values, because he *did* feel that Australian life, values, laws and culture were superior. In 1988, he bluntly asked migrants to make an

> overwhelming commitment to the country they have chosen as home – to its democratic traditions and institutions, to its moral and ethnical values, to its social values and to its cultural background, in other words a commitment to those things that together give it a national identity.[49]

In 2005, after the London terrorist attacks that involved British-born terrorists, and the continuing influx of Muslim refugees into Australia, Howard repeated in plain terms:

> My view, very simply, is that you come to this country, you have the incredible privilege of living in one of the best societies in the world and you have rights. But you also have the responsibility to endorse and imbibe and embrace the values of our society.[50]

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[46] Howard, Address at Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony, Canberra, 26 January, 2007.
[47] *Future Directions,* p. 92.
[48] Judith Brett, "Future Directions. New Conservatism's manifesto", *Current Affairs Bulletin,* 65, 1, June, 1989, pp.11-17.
[49] *Future Directions,* p. 93.
[50] Howard interview with Barry Cassidy, ABC TV, *Insiders,* 7 August, 2005.

Howard introduced legislation to strengthen laws to cover the threats of potential terrorists, and said his government would consider withdrawing citizenship from people who did not adhere to Australian values. For him, it was an agreement based on mutual obligation, for "they" have the

> rights and privileges, and they are immense, of being an Australian citizen or resident, in return those people are required to embrace and imbibe and become part of Australian society and Australian values …. we could … look at citizenship deprivation where there was proven behaviour in relation to somebody's behaviour [sic].[51]

Howard's colleague, Petro Georgiou – and the son of Greek migrants whose English was poor, but who had nonetheless contributed to the benefit of their new country – had previously criticised Howard's asylum-seeker policies, and now complained that compulsory citizenship tests were counter to liberal ideals.[52] Howard did not change his views, and even with loss of government, remained emphatic about the need for "cultural self-belief" as critical in building national strength, particularly when faced with the "particular challenge posed by extremist Islam".[53]

These ideas were not entirely born from the challenges to government of international terrorism, or asylum-seekers whose culture and faith differed from the majority of Australians, but was of a piece with Howard's pattern to instigate policies that ensured social cohesion. This involved protecting borders, but also from perils *within* the community. In the centenary year, he claimed to be proud of having achieved

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[51] Howard interview with David Speers, Sky News, 8 August, 2005.

[52] Petro Georgiou, "The Liberal Tradition", University of Adelaide, 4 October, 2006. He opposed the legislation, but did not cross the floor as Labor supported the plan. See Jane Bunce and Denis Peter, "Rebel MP fails to halt citizenship test", AAP, 8 August, 2005.

[53] Howard, "Sharing Our Common Values", Address to American Enterprise Institute, Washington DC, 5 March, 2008.

many of his goals, but considered his agenda incomplete. At the January 2001 (an election year) Centennial Ceremony, he praised the level of social cohesion and national unity that, he said, was the envy of the world. However, he continued, "We are a nation that has achieved its ambitions. But like all nations we must set ourselves further ambitions and strive to achieve further goals in the years ahead".[54] Later in May that year, at the Centenary of Federation celebration, he returned to the idea of protecting one's own particular place – before the US, Bali, or London terrorist attacks, or the arrival of the *Tampa* – and warned of dangers to Australians from within their own society:

> In the years ahead I think we also need to preserve and defend a society, which, while caring for the needy and disadvantaged, also encourages self-reliance. It is a society that says to individuals that you have responsibilities in our society as well as rights and privileges.[55]

Many of his goals on welfare reform, with its emphasis on personal responsibility and mutual obligation, were achieved. With control of the Senate in 2005 when it no longer became, as he called it, "the graveyard" for his reform bills, he accelerated his industrial relations legislation.[56] One hears, however, in the language used in this speech the prelude to later formal citizenship initiatives, with their emphases on rights and responsibilities, and – as he had mentioned in his 1974 maiden speech – *preserving* and *defending* "a society".

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[54] Howard, Address at Centennial Ceremony, Sydney, 1 January, 2001.
[55] Howard, Address to Centenary of Federation, Melbourne, 10 May, 2001.
[56] Howard, "The Government's Goals for 1998", Address to Australian Institute of Company Directors (SA Division), 28 January 1998.

Preserving the kind of Australian society he wanted meant defending Christianity as the nation's dominant faith, and this was an important part in Howard's construction of Australia's national identity. In the post-2001 anxiety about Islamist terrorism, he cited Christianity as a formative element in his own character, and claimed

> of all the influences that have shaped Australian life, none has been more profound, none has been more beneficial and, in my view, none has been more enduring than the Judaeo-Christian ethic …. We should never be apologetic about our Christian tradition; we should never imagine that tolerance towards minorities is achieved by denying our own heritage. I have never believed that anything is to be achieved by that.[57]

There was more to this speech than a declaration of Christian faith within a secular, but Christian country. Howard consolidated the image of Australia as a Christian nation set against the threat of competing religions. As he had earlier argued against apologising for being a European country in an Asian region, here he signalled that at a religious (Christian) level, Australians should not defer to "minorities" or deny "our own heritage". It served his purpose in stressing that Christianity played a central role in Australian culture and character, set against those cultures deemed incompatible with Australian "values".

While policy consistency is the central argument throughout this thesis, often Howard simply uses repetition. Robert Menzies claimed the "art of political advocacy is the art of judicious and varied repetition …. Unless you learn to repeat yourself with skill you will never make a good politician".[58] Howard took the advice to heart. Clearly,

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[57] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 December, 2005, p.127.
[58] Menzies, quoted by Howard when launching *The Menzies Lectures 1978-1998,* Parliament House, Melbourne, 13 December, 1999.

however, he applied repetitious statements to issues that he saw as personal core beliefs, and, by extension, of value to the nation. For example, he saw community division – or threats of division – through cultural and religious diversity, and constantly repeated the message that "things" that united the nation were greater than "those" that divided it. Within his exhortations for a single, national identity and for unity over difference, with minimal room for cultural overlaps, there was repeated emphasis on community cohesion. *Future Directions* advised, "We are about to enter our third century as a nation. Whatever the differences that divide us, the things that unite us as Australians are much greater and more enduring".[59]   In 2000 in relation to mainstream solutions to Aboriginal problems, Howard said that while Australia was the "envy of the world – rich in resources, rich in opportunity, united in our values and united in the hopes we hold for the future", what really mattered was that the nation remained united in its values and hopes for the future. This, he said, was "far stronger than those that divide us".[60]   And at the Centennial Ceremony:

> On this day of all days it is important for all of us as Australians to acknowledge the reality that those things that unite us as Australians and bring us together as part of the great Australian nation are always more important, they're always more enduring, and they're always more emphatic than the things that divide us.[61]

While repetitive, it was not an original idea, as noted by Kim Beazley when attacking Howard as a backward-looking Prime Minister devoid of new ideas.[62] John F Kennedy had used it in his inauguration speech in 1962, and John Gorton used it in his first media

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[59] *Future Directions,* p.13.
[60] Howard, "Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues", Menzies Lecture Series, 13 December, 2000.
[61] Howard, Address at Centennial Ceremony, Sydney, 1 January, 200l.
[62] See Kim Beazley, CPD, Representatives 8 December, 1999, p.13092.

conference as Prime Minister in 1968.[63]   However, as Graham Freudenberg, remarked, "Thirty-five years later John Howard was enabled, by an obsequious press, to erect this tired old platitude into a national philosophy".[64]

The history/ cultural war

Keating's pre-1996 "big picture" of republicanism, closer ties with Asia and Indigenous reconciliation, identification with past wars closer to Australian shores, and lesser importance placed on ANZAC, was seemingly at odds with the electorate's exhaustion with change, and many "longed for a more homely, less challenging national story".[65]   That suited Howard's "plain" personality and his political story of an ordinary man, but who was a strong leader, who understood mainstream Australians and their connection with historical legacies and social values. The so-called "war" with Keating also suited his adversarial nature, and, combined with his convictions, provided the ingredients for his attack on any distortion of history that demeaned the values of previous generations and manipulated Australian nationalism.[66]   He defended the patriotism and war experience of people like his parents and grandfather, their initiative in post-war commercial enterprise, and their role in constructing the idea of a quintessential Australian nature or character. In particular, the "black armband" view of Australian history, and related "guilt industries" were anathema to him.[67]

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[63] Gorton said: "our common history and our common future show that in this nation the things that unite us are infinitely greater than the things that divide". Quoted by Graham Freudenberg, *A figure of speech. A political memoir,* Wiley, Milton, 2005, p.98.

[64] Freudenberg, *A figure of speech,* p.98.

[65] Macintyre and Clark, *The History Wars,* p.128.

[66] Howard, "The Australia I Believe In. The Values, Directions and Policy Priorities of a Coalition Government Outlined in 1995" (n.d), Canberra.

[67] See Geoffrey Blainey, "Drawing up a balance sheet of our history", *Quadrant,* 37, July/ August, 1993, pp.10-15; *Future Directions* talked about "professional purveyors of guilt" attacking Australia's heritage, p.7.

While Howard was averse to employing symbolism in relation to Indigenous people, he usefully employed rituals or emblems to reflect aspects of history, culture and tradition that resonated with his values and sense of history. In 1987, for example, he objected to the Speaker's Chair (a gift from Britain in 1926) being left behind in the Old Parliament House and vowed to bring it into the New Parliament House when in government.[68] As he said, "In the life of any country, in the life of any parliament, a certain modicum of tradition, a certain modicum of convention, a certain modicum of symbolism, is a very important element".[69] He later wanted to place the Australian coat of arms behind the Deputy Speaker's chair in the Main Committee Room, insisting he did not want the "terribly short one" but the "full-blown" coat of arms.[70] In government, he changed the oath of allegiance so that he and his Ministers once again swore allegiance to the Queen (but not heirs or successors). He vetoed any idea of changing the Australian flag and flew one on his Commonwealth car. He retrieved Robert Menzies' old desk and installed it in his Canberra office and worked under a photograph of the Queen.[71] These were selective and tangible expressions of Howard's historical nostalgia, which reflected personal values and conveyed a political message. It formed a coherent pattern, for as Paul Kelly notes, it was a

> Classic study of the way Howard uses values and symbols in politics …. Consider the
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> multiple Howard brands being reinforced: loyalty to nation, individual responsibility,

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[68] The Speaker said the UK gift from the Empire Parliamentary Association, a replica of the original chair in the House of Commons, containing timber from Westminster Hall and Nelson's flagship, *HMS Victory*, would not go to the new parliament. Howard responded: "No political party, no parliament and no nation should be a total slave to tradition or to history. But any parliament which on such flimsy and insubstantial grounds rejects the most visible link that this chamber, this body of people, this body of representative Australians … has insufficient regard to history and symbolism". CPD, Representatives 6 October, 1987, p.755.
[69] Howard, CPD, Representatives 6 October, 1987, p.755.
[70] Howard, CPD, Representatives 8 June, 1994, p.1728. Re-location costs meant the Chair remained in its original position.
[71] Howard criticised Keating for having "rubbished" the Australian flag overseas, calling it the country's "most treasured emblem abroad". CPD, Representatives 9 February, 1994, p.626.

social obligation and cultural unity. These are Howard's symbols, unfashionable as political constructs a decade ago, but now winning traction on a wide front.[72]

Howard consistently resisted any change to the Australian flag, which he considered an enduring emblem of the nation's history and identity. In 1988 he introduced a Flags Amendment Bill to make it impossible to change the flag without a reference to the people at referendum, because, as he said, the flag was "a beautiful and provocative emblem" that must remain unaltered.[73] In 1993, outraged at Keating's disregard for its history and tradition, and what he considered "deference" to an outside (particularly Asian) nation, Howard said in a Samuel Griffiths Society speech:

> Last year I watched, with incredulity, an interview with the Treasurer in which he seriously asserted that Australia's economic performance in Asia would be lifted if the Union Jack were removed from our flag …. No argument is more insulting to Australia's dignity and sense of independence than the one which says that we must change our emblems or institutions to please the nations of the Asian/ Pacific region or, indeed, any other region".[74]

In 1994, Howard was again angered by Keating's statements that economic relations with Asian and Pacific neighbours would be enhanced if Australia were a republic, describing it as "grovelling" and "grossly demeaning to our sense of independence and pride … [and] also extremely patronising to our regional neighbours".[75]

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[72] Kelly, "Citizenship model will work for PM", *The Australian,* 20 September, 2006.
[73] Howard, CPD, Representatives 17 March, 1988, p.988.
[74] Howard, "Mr Keating's Mirage on the Hill: How the Republic, Like the Cheshire Cat, Came and Went", Samuel Griffith Society, Vol. 3, Chapter 7, 1993.
[75] Howard, CPD, Representatives 9 June, 1994, p.1840.

The flag, the Queen, Menzies, wars and relics from Britain's parliament were outward symbols of the conservative social history and tradition that Howard favoured. An earlier chapter discussed history as his favourite subject, with his sources mainly British-based texts. In 2005, having claimed victory in the so-called history "war", he remained unhappy about the level, content and "political correctness" of history teaching in Australian schools. Therefore, at a function to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the conservative magazine, *Quadrant,* he announced plans to instigate a more traditional educational approach to history curricula:

> *Quadrant* has always been a principled defender of what I might call a "traditionalist" view of a good education and in opposition to the more fashionable, progressive views that have held sway in schools and universities …. Armed with clear evidence of the decline of Australian history in our schools, the Government has made a start in our quest to ensure that the nation's history is an essential component of every Australian child's education, no longer an afterthought or an optional extra.[76]

Howard was unapologetic about his traditionalism, and his denigration of universities was not unexpected. Through his proposed "root and branch" renewal of Australian history in educational institutions, he planned to remove "fashionable" or "progressive" ideas, and replace them with a history narrative more aligned to his interests and interpretations, particularly on war-related subjects.[77] In another insightful, if partisan, observation, Freudenberg wrote:

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[76] Howard, Address at *Quadrant* 50th Anniversary Dinner, Sydney, 4 October, 2006.
[77] Howard, *Quadrant* Anniversary Dinner. He awarded the inaugural Prime Minister's $100,000 prize for Australian history jointly to Les Carylon's *The Great War* and Peter Cochrane's *Colonial Ambition.* The media noted Howard's connection to Carylon's book and experiences of his soldier father and grandfather. See "Blainey ire over PM's history prize", *Weekend Australian,* 17-18 November, 2007.

if you understand this about John Howard, that he wants to rewrite Australian history in

his own image, you have an essential clue to what he is doing, his hostility towards

reconciliation, his hostility towards multiculturalism and, above all, first, last and always,

his hatred of the union movement of Australia.[78]

Rewriting history, or at least ensuring a version that suited Howard's own beliefs

and ideas, was attempted through the establishment of the 2006 History Summit. Prior to

taking office in 1996, he wanted Australian people to feel "comfortable and relaxed about

their history … about the present and … about the future".[79]   In government, he stressed

the "truth about Australia's past should be taught in an unvarnished fashion".[80]

However, as his education was influenced by British-based texts, and some aspects of

history were substantially omitted, "truth" veered towards a version he preferred and with

which he was familiar: he endorsed the historical elements of Gallipoli, colonial courage,

and the British legacy of monarchy. In his 1997 publication, *Suspect History,* historian

Humphrey McQueen had questioned Howard's re-writing of Australian history that

precluded the nation's sins but valorised its heroism.[81]

Having declared victory in the so-called history "wars", Howard now turned to a

school-age generation to perpetuate a version of history that reflected the kind of history

that found favour with his own interpretations, and which would mark the demise of

those representations that, for him, failed the terms of truth in narrative. Although it was

nearly a decade into his government when he finally set up the History Summit, it is

noted from his *Quadrant* speech that he was clear about the kind of "unvarnished" history

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[78] Freudenberg, *A figure of speech.* p.281.
[79] Howard interview with Liz Jackson, 19 February, 1996.
[80] Howard, CPD, Representatives 29 October, 1996, p.5976.
[81] Humphrey McQueen, *Suspect History. Manning Clark and the Future of Australia's Past,*
Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 1997, p.211.

he wanted taught in Australian schools. He was nonetheless sensitive to criticism that he

had commissioned an authorised version of history, stressing that

> It is not a partisan political exercise. It is designed to give the young of Australia a better
>
> understanding than the products of our education system of the last 10 or 20 years plainly
>
> have to Australian and indeed world history …[82]

His argument was somewhat negated, however, when he included former staff member

and conservative historian, Gerard Henderson, together with Geoffrey Blainey, who had

appropriated the expression "black armband view of history", to the panel charged with

designing the national history curriculum for secondary students.[83] As shown in the

earlier chapter on the Australian Public Service, Howard had frequently placed on boards

and statutory bodies those appointees known to be sympathetic to his policies and views.

It is noteworthy in the context of historical or national interpretations that when the

National Museum of Australia was built to celebrate the Centenary of Federation, he

influenced decisions on the Museum's directorship, its interpretations of Australian

history, and placed within it Board members with Liberal Party connections. In effect,

and importantly, as Greg McCarthy writes, Howard wanted the museum to reflect "a

celebratory position on Australian history and national identity".[84]

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[82] Howard, Address to History Summit, Parliament House, Canberra, 17 August, 2006. .
[83] Geoffrey Blainey referred to the "black armband view of history" as one which represented the swing from a favourable interpretation of history; the expression was "borrowed" from an Indigenous poet and activist. See Norman Abjorensen,, "The History Wars", in *The Culture Wars: Australian and American Politics in the 21st Century,* eds. Jim George and Kim Huynh, Palgrave Macmillan, South Yarra, 2009, pp.148-152. Also Mark McKenna, "Different Perspectives on Black Armband History", Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, Research Paper 5, 1997-1998.
[84] Greg McCarthy, "Postmodern Discontent and the National Museum of Australia", *borderlands e-journal,* 3, 3, 2004.

Howard and ANZAC

As Prime Minister, Paul Keating had generated interest about the Kokoda battles in Papua New Guinea during the Second World War.[85]   For Howard, it was always the ANZAC story that captivated him and played a pivotal role in his sense of values, history, nationhood and Australian national identity. He was not alone in these sentiments, of course, because many Australians considered the valiant but catastrophic event the cornerstone on which the nation was founded, and which earned Australian soldiers an international reputation as larrikin warriors.[86] At the State funeral for the last Australian ANZAC, Alec Campbell, Howard described him as a person who deserved respect by "dint of his own bravery but also [because of] what he represents".[87] Australia had been (and is) involved in many theatres of war, but it was the doomed First World War ANZAC adventure in Turkey that became the central theme for the story he told – or retold – the nation about itself. When he delivered eulogies for parliamentarians who had been war veterans, he was notably at his most respectful, and least divisive. War courage equated "being Australian" – as well as other attractive qualities – as suggested in his speech honouring war hero and surgeon, "Weary" Dunlop, who Howard described as a man of extraordinary courage, skill, sportsmanship and generosity, and "Australian to his boot heels".[88] Belittling or undermining war service was reprehensible, and Howard reacted furiously when Keating accused him of disrespect for a Second World War incident that involved high casualty rates:

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[85] Paul Keating visited Kokoda and kissed the ground in honour of an uncle who died in the Sandakan death march. "They were fighting for the place they had built; the democracy, the wheat crop, the wool clip, their families". Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: Paul Keating, PM,* Knopf, Milsons Point, 2002, p.183.

[86] Gallipoli was the event that "rightly so … did define our country in an indelible way", Howard said when launching Les Carlyon's book, *The Great War,* 30 October, 2006, Canberra.

[87] Howard, CPD, Representatives 16 May, 2002, p.2394.

[88] Howard, "Weary" Dunlop Asialink Lecture, 11 November, 1997. He also used "Australian to his boot heels" in a condolence motion for John Gorton. CPD, Representatives 27 May, 2002, p.2431.

I would have thought that in all the exchanges in which I have taken place in this House there is nothing more sacred than bipartisan respect for Australia's war dead. I would have thought it is the one thing that no member of this House ever transgresses for the purposes of making a political point.[89]

Howard used aspects of the ANZAC story for political purposes, but it was undoubtedly grounded in his respect for what it represented, and which also resided in the collective national sentiment. As Graham Seal observes,

While national and nationalistic traditions, such as ANZAC, may be created for political ends, they must possess dimensions or elements that can motivate popular sympathy and participation. It is impossible to establish or maintain for long a public tradition that does not attract popular participation and support.[90]

While true, ANZAC's place in national ritualism *had* waned in past years, particularly during the questioning years of social and cultural revolutions, for which Howard had no enthusiasm. Ronald Conway in 1971 wrote that younger generations thought the ceremonies of ANZAC Day had become as "puzzling and macabre as an Aztec ritual".[91] Alan Seymour's play, *The One Day of the Year,* with its protagonists of "digger" and university student son, exemplified the competing views of different generations.[92] Patriotically, as noted in an earlier chapter, the Howard family always observed the

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[89]Howard, CPD, Representatives 2 June, 1994, p.1333.
[90]Graham Seal, *Inventing ANZAC. The Digger and National Mythology,* UQP Australian Studies, UQP, St Lucia, 2004, p.169. The key to ANZAC was its ritualistic familiarity within Australian life, whether marked on honour boards in country towns, memorial gardens, state memorials in capital cities, "all the way to the monumentalism of the Australian War Memorial" (p.172).
[91] Conway, "The Commonwealth of Mates 1890-1950", p.41.
[92] See John Hirst, *The Australians. Insiders & Outsiders on the National Character Since 1770,* Black Inc., Melbourne, 2007, pp.51-56

ANZAC Day tradition. By century's end, under the leadership of Howard, ANZAC Cove had become a place of pilgrimage for many Australians.

Recapturing the significance of ANZAC was a deeply-personal objective for Howard, for it encapsulated memories of his father and grandfather, and the respect he showed for past war heroes was also directed to modern "diggers".[93] His ritualistic and highly-publicised farewelling and welcoming of Australian Defence Force (ADF) troops deployed to war zones highlighted the value he placed on defence personnel, while lifting his profile as a war-time, decisive leader. As Robert Manne remarked, it strengthened "a new form of nationalism, more military in flavour than anything seen in the history of Australia".[94] Apart from sending troops to war, Howard worked towards raising the profile of the ADF and to restore a neglected aspect of national pride and identity, remarking to the *Australian Army Journal,*

> One of the things I was quite determined to do when I became Prime Minister was to give to the military their proper place in the country's life and recognise the unique role they played in the country's existence and defence".[95]

Australian troops gained recognition when Howard sent them to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and when he despatched peace-keeping forces to East Timor and the Solomon Islands. It remained, however, the ANZAC ritual that captured and encapsulated his sense of Australian military history and nationhood.

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[93] Tony Wright says,"There can be little doubt that he found his resolve to send troops to East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan from the reverence he has attached to the memory of his father and grandfather, both soldiers of World War I". "The house of Howard", *Bulletin,* 7 March, 2006.

[94] See Robert Manne, "What Went Wrong?" *Liberals & Power. The Road Ahead,* ed. Peter van Onselen, Melbourne UP, Carlton, 2008, p.17.

[95] Howard interview with Russell Parking, *Australian Army Journal,* III, 1 (nod.) (recorded 9 June, 2005) pp.11-16.

As with Howard's version of history, certain aspects of the military history to which he subscribed were elided. Against his valorising of ANZAC and war veterans was the reality of war hero Captain Alfred John Shout, a recipient of the Victoria Cross and other medals for courage at Lone Pine, whose descendents were forced to auction medals to finance the health care of a grandson.[96] When millionaire businessman Kerry Stokes bought the Victoria Cross medal to donate to the Australian War Memorial, Howard said, "It is an example that there are people in our community who do very well and are fortunate and become wealthy, that they use some of their money very wisely in the national interest".[97] In this rationalisation, one recalls Howard's "trickle-down" theory, and the story of the cinema cleaner and the popcorn boxes, where courtesy was paramount, but poverty, need and disadvantage were overlooked.

Howard parlayed the ANZAC story as one that was important to him and the nation. Freudenberg suggests that Howard rewrote history that did not extend beyond "Gallipoli, Bradman and Menzies", and that the ANZAC legend had been politicised for political gain.[98] Studies of Howard's long-standing respect for war veterans and the significance of ANZAC in his construction of the Australian identity, suggest otherwise. His ideas on ANZAC were inculcated in his first family home, and if he extrapolated those ideas into politics and public debates, it succeeded because he believed it was a significant national event, and, as Seal suggests, was also central to the values of most Australians. It perhaps was unrealistic to expect new migrants – through compulsory tests on values and history – to absorb with his intensity the significance of ANZAC Day

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[96]Howard thought "all Australians would want this Victoria Cross to stay in our country and preferably at the War Memorial"; doorstop interview, Bannockburn, Victoria, 24 July, 2006. The Victoria Cross at auction fetched a record $1m.

[97] Howard, Address to Upwey-Belgrave RSL, Upwey, Victoria, 26 July, 2006.

[98] Freudenberg, *A figure of speech,* pp.280-281.

and its military connotations in shaping the Australian spirit, temperament and identity, but for Howard this was the foundation on which the nation was built (and which ignored Federation). Although ANZAC Day commemorated a failed war in another century, in another country, under the flag of the Empire, he was convinced – and persuaded many young Australians and reminded an older generation – that Gallipoli shaped the national history and character.

This was Howard's relentless history lesson on nationhood and national identity: on the centenary birthday of Albert Matthews, the last living survivor of the Gallipoli landing, he paid tribute to that place reserved "in the hearts of all Australians for those original ANZACs. They played such a special role in shaping the identity and the distinctive character of the nation that all of us love so much".[99] He returned to the theme when announcing that Gallipoli was the first nomination under the new National Heritage Council in 2004:

> the ANZAC experience at Gallipoli, of course, is recognised as the most defining event in Australia's history that has provided so much in the years that have gone by since 1915, so much of the inspiration for our sense of independence, our sense of our place as a nation in the world, of our separate identity from others – those qualities that we like to believe lie at the heart of the Australian spirit and the Australian character.[100]

In his zeal, however, Howard's action in claiming Anzac Cove as Australian revealed an extraordinarily cavalier attitude towards Turkish land and sovereignty. It also showed aspects of his character – and policies – discussed throughout this thesis: he lacked the

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[99] Howard, CPD, Representatives 7 November, 1996, p.6818. Howard called on Mr Mathews in his nursing home to deliver best wishes and gratitude of all members of parliament, and "all Australians".
[100] Howard, Address at launch of Distinctively Australian, Chowder Bay Heritage Area, Mosman, 18 December, 2003.

empathy to show the same respect to sovereignty that he demanded as an Australian leader; he was immune to criticism, and determined to pursue a political and personal goal at whatever diplomatic cost. Howard claimed Anzac Cove as Australian, because, "anyone who has visited the place will know that once you go there you feel it is as Australian as the piece of land on which your home is built".[101] *The Age* accused him of arrogance and insensitivity, and Humphrey McQueen rebuked him for repeating the "colonisers' arrogance that led to a waste of Australian lives in 1915".[102] Acrimony escalated about Australian road-works at Anzac Cove, and Howard blamed the Turks for "unintentional ineptitude" in its handling of the heritage management plans at the site. Turkey naturally rejected attempts to list Anzac Cove on an Australian heritage list and expressed its concern about setting precedents that impinged on its own sovereignty.[103] Howard was unmoved by criticism from within, and beyond Australia; as Bart Ziino writes, "Gallipoli remains a central part of the so-called 'history wars' for Howard, and the patronage of young Australians vindicates a proud Australian history".[104] This was precisely Howard's aim. His emotional (and political) claims to (an invalid) ownership over place, history and memory were of crucial historical, personal and national importance to him, and, as he had identified and encouraged, of great significance to many other Australians for whom ANZAC has powerful ties. His determination to envelop Australian history within the ANZAC ritual over-rode his regard for Turkish land, Turkish warriors, or gratitude to present Turkish people protecting Australia's war dead. Howard's treatment of ANZAC as past and contemporary history relayed much about the constancy of his beliefs on history, nationhood, and national identity.

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[101] Howard, launch of Distinctively Australian.
[102] *The Age,* 3 January, 2004, and Humphrey McQueen, *The Age,* 28 December, 2003, quoted by Bart Ziino, "Who owns Gallipoli? Australia's Gallipoli anxieties 1915-2005", *Journal of Australian Studies,* 88, June, 2006, pp.1-15.
[103] *The Age,* 10 April, 2005, quoted by Ziino, "Who owns Gallipoli?"
[104] Ziino, "Who owns Gallipoli?"

Conclusion

Carol Johnson has observed that while Howard *claimed* to have transformed Australian culture by salvaging the past, and positioning Australia for the future, he had in fact reworked "old solutions and old orthodoxies to govern change".[105] His construction of history and national identity looked backwards for its validity, was centred on conservative values, views held from early days at home, school, church, and marked by symbols and events important to him. Britain's legacy and ANZAC – and all that each entailed – were central to the national story he carved out for himself and the country. It was a story of Australia's war courage, colonial achievement, built on British institutions and democracy, adjusted to suit the Australian environment. Under the title of "One Australia", with sub-titles of the "Australian way of life", or "Australian values", Howard constructed a national history, identity and temperament that reflected his own beliefs and ideas, or his own feelings of "being Australian".

Howard's perpetual wish was for "One Australia", despite an increasingly diverse population. His constant reference to unity over division inferred that he anticipated potential disruption from competing or different cultures within Australia. He had always been chary about multiculturalism, refugees and migrants (in the 1970s with the Vietnamese; in 1988 with Asians; from 2001 the Middle Easterners and Africans), whose cultures he feared would prevent them from successfully assimilating within their new country. He disliked peddlers of the "guilt industry" and politicians and historians who distorted Australian history to depict anything other than a successful, courageous nation. Omitted from his version of history were contributions from migrants or pioneer women, and the treatment of Indigenous people was glossed over. His sense of

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[105] Johnson "A Changed Australian Culture – or Conditions for a Labor Resurgence", Postcript, *Governing Change. From Keating to Howard,* 2nd ed., API Network, Perth, 2007, p.183.

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nationalism was built on what was familiar to him: Christianity, conservatism, "shared" and suburban values rooted in British values, Australian egalitarianism and masculine, war-time valour.

From Howard's declaration of victory in the so-called history or cultural "wars" to his History Summit to ensure new generations of schoolchildren learnt a prescribed form of history, and his interference in the kind of exhibits displayed within Australia's national museum, everything points to a particular kind of history and national identity under construction. Yet Howard had long indicated the direction of his convictions: respect for the monarchy, the flag, the military, the symbols and rituals of parliament, the stereotypical ANZAC warrior and bush hero, and preserving *a particular sense of place.* Howard's use of historical imagery was creative and consistent, but often led to omission of pertinent facts. Indigenous displacement did not feature in his narrative, other than as a "blemish" on an otherwise noble history. He extravagantly praised the valour of an ANZAC soldier, but saw nothing untoward in the sale of his Victoria Cross medal to meet family health costs, just as he praised the camaraderie of "diggers" but remained silent about post-war Aboriginal soldiers who were denied entry to Returned Soldiers' League (RSL) clubs on their return home.[106]   He often described the Australian nature as being characterised by its egalitarian spirit, generosity and that sense of "fair go" that sat alongside "mateship". "Mateship", he said in 1999 when arguing for it to be encoded in his revised preamble to the Constitution, is a "word that I hold very dear … I love that word. It expresses a quintessential Australian attitude".[107]   However, two groups fell

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[106] Noel Pearson, "Layers of identity bind our nation", *The Australian,* 27 July, 2006: "I remember two of my grandparents who served in France in World War I. Their service to their country did not make them citizens when they returned to Australia. I feel alienated because non-Aboriginal Australians say 'lest we forget' at ANZAC shrines while seeking to forget what happened to the country's indigenous people".
[107] Howard, CPD, Representatives 11 August, 1999, p.8428.

outside those terms of "mateship"; women's groups objected to the treaty's masculine connotations, and Aboriginal groups pointed out they had not been consulted at all.[108]

Howard's construction of the Australian national identity was premised on the notion of the existence of a collective and quintessential Australian characteristic, based on Anglo-Celtic, Christian values, egalitarianism, war-time bravery, spirit of enterprise and respect for democracy and the rule of law. For him, the nation itself was forged from failed military exploits far from Australia, and consolidated by later war deployments. One would not expect any national leader to be anything other than proud of his or her country, and to champion and protect its customs, values and sense of pride in national successes and historical achievements. However, a consistent theme that emerges throughout this thesis, and particularly in this chapter that describes the personal and political use he made of constructing a national identity in his own image, is Howard's propensity to exclude elements he considered to be threats to national cohesion, Australian values, or the Australian way of life. Yet, as F L Jones is quoted as saying earlier, "national identity is not a fixed property assigned at birth". This was particularly true of a migrant nation like Australia, with its evolving sense of national identity based on myriad cultures, customs and beliefs. In his interpretation of national history and identity, Howard's ideas – and continually reflected in his policies and educational programmes – was to look backwards to the First World War, to colonial settlement, to align himself and the nation he led to other nations whose values he understood and shared.

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[108] For background, discussion and list of objections, see Mark McKenna, Amelia Simpson and George Williams, "With Hope In God, The Prime Minister And The Poet: Lessons From the 1999 Referendum on the Preamble", *University of New South Wales Law Journal,* 29, 2001.

Howard's determination to construct a "One Australia" that conformed to his personal, political and historical imagination was set against a diverse and remarkably tolerant nation. In government, he moved the Liberal Party from its social liberal roots, and the work of previous Labor governments, in trying to accommodate recognition of Aboriginal land titles, and inclusive policies towards migrants and refugees. Like most of the policies outlined throughout this thesis, his ideas of national security, the national "home", and the collective characteristics of the Australian people were selectively personal, born of conviction, politically useful, consistently expressed and rarely abandoned. With all that it contained and omitted, Howard's construction of the Australian national identity was an amalgamation of many ideas lodged within his belief system, which he considered "truth" and essential to the national interest. There are few other reasons for studying one of Australia's most powerful and long-standing leaders.

CONCLUSION

"Lord, grant that I may always be right, for Thou knowest I am hard to turn".[1]

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[1] Old Scottish prayer.

In terms of his contribution to Australian leadership, governance, national life, and the Liberal Party, John Howard's political policies played a significant role. When history judges or debates those policies, conviction and consistency will be important elements. Like most people, Howard brought to adulthood the values he imbued as a child at home, through school and church, and the Liberal Party philosophy. Unlike most people, however, he became Prime Minister and formed policies with the potential to change the social and economic structure of the nation. His progression from Earlwood to The Lodge (even though he declined the latter as his official residence) had many elements of a Wagnerian opera with its plotlines of success, betrayal, failure, triumph and, finally, political demise. While he politically courted the nation as an "ordinary man", few ordinary people possessed his determination to carry out his ideas as political policies. The Australian media and the electorate were initially slow to acknowledge his leadership potential, and many were surprised at his political success and the authority of his leadership for over a decade. Yet, as shown throughout this thesis, Howard had *always* shown the direction he would take Australia.

Howard's early influences profoundly influenced his character, ambitions, and, in particular, many of those ideas which ultimately became government policies. He entered parliament as a social conservative, and remained so for his entire public life. He played a key leadership role during the 1980s debates when he Liberal Party faced new directional challenges with neo-liberalism, globalisation, high-speed communications, and demands from the gay community, migrants, Indigenous people and feminists. He followed the Hawke/ Keating governments in new economic and taxation régimes, but would not endorse the social revolution. As Opposition leader, the policies embedded in *Future Directions* were largely those he took into government: greater financial

deregulation, flexible workplace negotiations without union interference, targeted welfare, and border security, but, importantly, leavened with the traditional social virtues and values of another era.

Paul Keating once said that Howard should leave politics for the "game is too hard for him. Lurking in his chest is not a heart for the political fight …. He cannot make the changes in Australian public life that the nation needs".[2] On the contrary, Howard did have the heart for fight and change. As a youth, he worked through ranks in church and the Liberal Party to win influential positions, and repeated the process in parliament. In Canberra, he tirelessly sought promotion to leadership, for through that he could influence the economic and social directions of his party. When first Opposition leader, he failed to communicate effectively with his moderate colleagues, the media, or the electorate, but when he returned as leader in 1995, he was honed by betrayal and adversity. But, as shown in his Headland speeches, his policies remained basically the same, and bore his now familiar imprint of an economic radical and a social conservative. This apparent contradiction, skillfully-negotiated throughout his parliamentary life, was the mainstay of Howard's political life and repeatedly shown in the policies he formed.

As parliamentarian, Treasurer, Opposition Leader and Prime Minister, Howard had to satisfy many masters and critics: the Liberal Party, his electorate of Bennelong, the nation, the media, international alliances and trading partners, and, in particular, his parliamentary colleagues whose votes he needed for leadership. In such a climate, the pressures from leadership rivals, competing interests and opposing views are immense. Howard admitted in an interview that many had urged him to change his mind on

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[2] Paul Keating, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives 29 May, 1987, p.3647.

controversial issues like Australia becoming a republic, the war on Iraq, and the Goods and Services Tax, but he refused to do so. As he said, he "could not, and would not". Whether it is better to be *right* than consistent is for other scholars and studies, and perhaps history, to decide. What is clear from this over-arching historical study of John Howard's career and (some key) policies is remarkable consistency in policies important to him. He was accused of being driven by polls, of being a populist and opportunistic, and, of course, like any modern politician he used opinion polling, party research and focus group findings. As the late veteran journalist, Alan Reid said:

> Nobody is more sensitive to public opinion polls than parliamentarians. They profess to laugh at them and to scorn them but they follow their movements with the same rapt attention as a person who hates snakes watches the displays by snake charmers".[3]

And of course Howard *was* prepared, or forced, to compromise on issues he considered harmful to his government, or even to delay, or strategically retreat. Robert Menzies once said – the man Howard selectively portrayed as political mentor – life was "full of political accommodation if a greater cause is to be achieved".[4] But, as this work shows, in the longer term, and over a wide spread of historical evidence, Howard did not compromise his key policies to any great degree, and certainly not where a core value or belief was involved.

An aspect of public life is the greater scrutiny of the backgrounds and personal lives, ideas and motivations of Prime Ministers and parliamentarians. Increasingly, many politicians now flaunt their credentials on the basis of their families – past and present –

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[3] Alan Reid, *The Whitlam Venture,* Hill of Content, Melbourne, 1976, p.377.
[4] John Howard, CPD, Representatives 10 December, 1998.

and the values they derived from them. Howard boasted that although people may not like him, they did, at least, know what he stood for, for he constantly referred back to the values he learnt from his parents. In the political story that Howard told the nation about itself, based on his own suburban story, he was remarkably consistent. And, of course, after many years of raw failure, he had some luck. For almost twelve years, he faced a Labor Opposition that was demoralised and riven with leadership failures (in a mirror-image of the predicament of the Liberal Party in the 1980s), and with each election victory, Howard's authority and confidence grew. Into the new century, international terrorism provided opportunities to display strong leadership at home and abroad through the alliance with the United States and his personal friendship with the President. It also sharpened his long-held focus on border control, protecting the "Australian way of life", and his resistance to cultures that threatened the kind of life that was familiar to him, and which he wanted to retain. As this thesis has shown, Howard's actions incrementally built on earlier beliefs and policies, and did not substantially alter in substance.

With control of the Senate in 2005, Howard's authority appeared unassailable. He could complete his policy agenda – particularly his *WorkChoices* legislation – without hindrance from Independent Senators, Democrats or Greens. After four election victories, he had won respect from many for his trade overtures in the Asian region and in the United States and for providing swift humanitarian aid after the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. If Australians objected to the Iraq war and the false information on which it was based, they supported Australian troops once deployed. He comforted the nation with unusual eloquence after the October 2002 Bali terrorist attack that killed many Australians. He presided over budget surpluses, a sound economy, low unemployment, deflected asylum-seekers who attempted to reach Australian shores, and locked up those

who did. He committed Australian troops to peacekeeping roles in the Solomon Islands, Fiji, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, and offensive roles in Iraq and Afghanistan. If he showed little empathy for those outside or beyond his milieu, he displayed it for Australians and nations that shared common values. There was truth in Howard's acknowledgement of the Australian spirit, and his declaration that Australians were "particularly wonderful when it comes to working together in tackling adversity". In floods, fire and drought, they reacted with speed and practicality to fellow nationals in need. In the wake of violence after the East Timor independence ballot, they bombarded parliamentarians' offices demanding protection for the East Timorese. After the Boxing Day tsunami, they opened their wallets and hearts in unparalleled generosity. In the aftermath of the two Bali terrorist attacks, they were moved to compassion and outrage, and in the worst bushfires in the nation's history in 2009, they fought back with courage and grieved with dignity. Howard had much material to work with in his construction of the national identity, but in striving for his "One Australia", or insisting on a quintessential Australian identity and values, there were always elements of *exclusion.* While every leader has a responsibility to defend its sovereignty and culture, these policies often failed to recognise the generosity of the Australian spirit, the success of multiculturalism, and a nation forged from many nationalities.

By 2007 Howard faced a new, younger, Mandarin-speaking Opposition leader, and the virtue of consistency converted to intellectual rigidity that made it impossible for him to recognise a changed electorate mood. *WorkChoices* was unpopular and perceived to be unfair, but he refused to substantially alter it. There was concern about water shortages and the environment – subjects that had never captured his interest – and he refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol that many saw as a considered, international response

to climate change. There were concerns about growing inequalities and widening income gaps in a neo-liberal, competitive world. The government wore heavily its years in office and many grievances, including the prolonged war in Iraq, industrial relations, the AWB Ltd scandal, the treatment of asylum-seekers and Aborigines. Too late to be credible, Howard acknowledged global warming and the need for action in Indigenous communities. By focusing on the past, he failed to capture the electorate's imagination about the future. Although he acknowledged the challenge of renewal for any long-term government, within an electorate now grown bored and deaf to his story, it was a task he found impossible.[5] Losing both his seat, and government, was an ignominious end to a long parliamentary career.

Through the authority and power that political leaders wield, the decisions they make or do not make, their personal values, attitudes to war, welfare, women, refugees, the elderly, race, social justice, Indigenous people, faith or diversity, and how they present themselves and their country to the rest of the world, shape the national life. Howard changed the Liberal Party from the old one of Robert Menzies or Malcolm Fraser, and under his leadership, social liberalism disappeared, as did most of those parliamentarians who supported it. Some remained (temporarily) like Petro Georgiou, who constantly reminded Howard of another kind of liberalism. Under Howard, the Liberal Party became a more punitive, less inclusive, socially conservative, economically-driven political party. No-one should have been surprised at this direction, for he consistently strived for it throughout his parliamentary life: this was seen in his industrial relations and taxation reforms, his support of traditional families, border sovereignty, and "mainstreaming" policies that bulked together diverse and unequal

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[5] Howard, launch of publication *The Party Room,* Canberra, 20 June, 2005.

needs and opportunities. In the end, consistency of ambition, policy and conviction (and some luck) were multi-edged: they finally took him to the Lodge as Prime Minister, where his long-held policies could become law, but they also contributed to his political downfall.

The two Australian Prime Ministers who followed John Howard have talked about their personal values underpinning their political credentials; in effect, *who* they are, based on *where* they come from. It is axiomatic that their policies will be, in part, derived from those values and experiences, but the reality of political life is that many ideals are necessarily modified or compromised by circumstances. Nonetheless, what can be seen by a study of Howard's statements and actions over decades is that, even under pressure from colleagues, the media, and the electorate, he showed remarkable fidelity and consistency of purpose in policies of significance to him, and, by extension, to those he judged to be in the interests of the Liberal Party, and the nation.

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*Between 2005 and 2010 various discussions were held with political secretaries and advisers: Ms Suzanne Kaspryzk (on staff of Hon John Howard while he was Prime Minister), Ms Betty-Ann Daly (Clerk to the Government Whip), Ms Donna Jacobsen (staff of John Spender in the 1980s), and Ms Maxine Peters (staff of Don Chipp, Leader of the Australian Democrats).