

**JOHN HOWARD: A STUDY IN POLICY
CONSISTENCY**

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

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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	<i>Australian Financial Review</i>
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	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
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.