

PRIME FACTS

AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTERS CENTRE

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John Winston HOWARD, AC

Prime Minister 11 March 1996 to 3 December 2007



- John Howard became the 25th prime minister following a decisive Federal election victory for the Liberal Party-National Party Coalition. He replaced Labor's Paul Keating.
- Member of the Liberal Party of Australia.
- Member of House of Representatives for Bennelong (NSW) 1974-2007, Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs 1975-77, Minister of State for Special Trade Negotiations 1977, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister 1977, Treasurer 1977-83, Minister for Finance 1979.
- Howard's Coalition was re-elected in 1998, 2001 and 2004.
- Howard's term of office ended after the Liberal-National coalition was defeated at the general election by the Australian Labor Party led by Kevin Rudd. Howard became the second sitting Prime Minister to lose his seat at an election.

Main achievements (1996 to 2007)

- Strong economic growth, low inflation and interest rates, lowest unemployment in 30 years, creation of around two million new jobs, and wage increases.
- Introduced gun control with a federally-funded buy-back scheme in 1996.
- Goods and Services consumption tax (GST) July 2000. GST revenue of around \$40 billion per annum granted to the States and Territories.
- Reform of industrial relations system. Replacement of award wages with direct employer-employee enterprise agreements. Introduction of WorkChoices 2006.
- Gradual privatisation of Telstra, with initial billion dollar proceeds going to environmental funding.
- Introduced principle of mutual obligation to social policy.
- Committed Australian troops to international coalitions led by the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the 'War on Terror'. Took a leading role in United Nations peace enforcement in East Timor which enabled the independent democratic state of East Timor to be proclaimed in 2002.
- Adopted an 'Asia-plus' diplomacy, focusing on relations with Australia's Asian neighbours while maintaining and developing traditional links with Britain and other Commonwealth nations and the United States.
- Record health funding of \$47.6 billion in 2006-07.



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- Increased family assistance payments from \$14 billion in 1996-97 to nearly \$27 billion in 2005-06. Increased funding for state schools and higher education and vocational and technical training.
- Program to extend broadband internet and mobile phone connections to regional and rural areas.

Personal life

- Born on 26 July 1939, Earlwood, New South Wales.
- Educated Earlwood Primary 1946-51 and Canterbury Boys High 1952-56. Graduated from University of Sydney with Bachelor of Laws 1961. Admitted as a solicitor 1962 and became a partner in a Sydney law firm.
- Married Janette Parker at Watsons Bay, Sydney, 4 April 1971.

Character

- *Howard's personal story is that of a survivor, the defier of odds, the man who never gave up... Apart from tenacity, central to Howard's mature political persona has been a commitment to the ideology of economic reform, spliced with pragmatism, an acute sense of tactics, and an ordinariness that, while ridiculed by critics, enabled him to tap into 'mainstream' voters. By the mid to late 1990s he had turned this 'ordinariness' into a political virtue and claimed, as had Hawke before him, a special relationship with the Australian people... He entirely lacked the larrikin streak that made Hawke so popular... But he had no tickets on himself: he was the man next door, except for voters living in 'yuppie' suburbs.* (Source: Michelle Grattan, 'John Winston Howard' in Grattan, Michelle (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, New Holland, Sydney, 2000, pp. 438-9)

Did you know?

- John Howard joined the Young Liberal Movement at the age of 18.
- He was given his middle name after the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.
- He is the only Liberal Party prime minister to be educated in a state school.
- On 21 November 2004, he became the second longest-serving prime minister, the longest serving being Sir Robert Menzies.
- He is an avid, life long, follower of cricket.
- He likes to play tennis and golf and also keeps fit by power-walking every morning.
- He supports St. George Rugby League football team.

Sources

Grattan, Michelle, 'John Winston Howard' in Grattan, Michelle (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, New Holland, Sydney, 2000, pp. 436-63.

National Archives of Australia: <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au>

Parliament of Australia: www.aph.gov.au

Further reading

Barnett, David and Goward, Pru, *John Howard: Prime Minister*, Viking Press, Melbourne, 1997.

Manne, Robert (ed.), *The Howard Years*, Black Ink Agenda, Melbourne, 2004.

Singleton, Gwynneth (ed.), *The Howard Government*, UNSW Press, Kensington, 2005.



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