

THE CENTRE FOR
INDEPENDENT
STUDIES

John Howard Fellowship



John Howard Fellowship

Why create a John Howard fellowship?

Australian prime ministers can be defined into two categories. There are those who enter politics as just pliant politicians with no coherent set of principles. This type of prime minister never seems to be in control of events, but always their victim. As a result, they leave little of worth as a legacy. Most prime ministers fit into this undistinguished group.

Then there is a second category: truly exceptional individuals with the courage and the will to shape history. They enter politics with a firm set of beliefs, and thereafter stick closely to them. This type is extremely rare. Alfred Deakin, John Curtin, Robert Menzies and Bob Hawke come to mind.

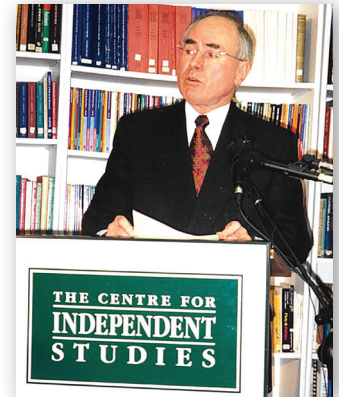
Add John Howard's name to this select group. In March 1996, he defeated Paul Keating's Labor government in a massive electoral landslide. He was then re-elected in 1998, 2001 and 2004, becoming our **nation's second longest serving prime minister**.

For the best part of **12 years**, Australia enjoyed a long stable period of political leadership and the longest economic boom since the Gold Rushes of the 19th century.

During his long tenure, Howard was all too often demonised beyond rational understanding. But the passage of time means that even Howard critics today recognise the strengths of their old nemesis. As the rancour of the political battles he fought grow more distant – guns, GST, waterfront, border protection, practical reconciliation, the republic, privatisation, industrial relations, the war on terror – Howard's greatness is being generally acknowledged.

Howard's support, like that of Margaret Thatcher's a generation earlier, never rested with the intellectual elite. Indeed, it has always been found among the great mass of ordinary, decent, hard-working people. A proud son of a petrol station owner, Howard has never forgotten his roots.

Able supported by several outstanding ministers – most notably treasurer Peter Costello, foreign minister Alexander Downer, National party leader John Anderson and Philip Ruddock – Howard was doggedly dedicated to using power to change Australia for the better. None of Howard's successors has come close to showcasing his grasp of policy and politics.



Prime Minister John Howard
at CIS in 1997.

Everything that should be up – incomes, growth, living standards – was up, while everything that should be down – inflation, unemployment, interest rates – was down. By most accounts, Australia became more confident, secure, comfortable and at ease with the world.

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History books will draw attention to his mistakes, including what some might say was his support for an unnecessary war in Iraq and his failure to leave power at a time of his choosing. But they will single him out as something extraordinary – a politician with the guts to use the office of prime ministership to change the nature of the nation in which he lived for the better.



Opposition leader John Howard, with 1988 CIS Bonython lecturer Thomas Sowell and CIS founder Greg Lindsay.

All the more reason for CIS to pay tribute to Howard with a research fellowship in his name. The CIS program will not just honour his legacy, but it will address future public-policy challenges through a Howard-style liberal-conservative framework.

The truth is that today, more than 15 years since the end of the Howard era, Australia faces troubling times: from rising debt, intergenerational inequity and a productivity drought to cancel culture and identity policy that all too often divides the nation. Do our current and future leaders have the inner moral strength to fight the political and intellectual battles in defence of liberalism?

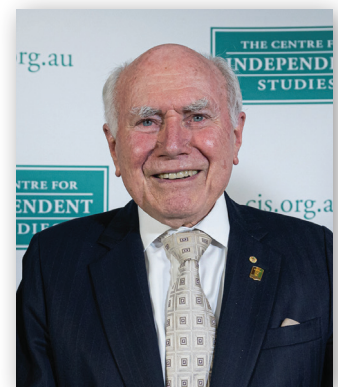
Though the challenges are different, there are still many lessons to be learnt from Howard's consequential government. He was a prime minister who combined strong policy convictions with a streak of prudence and pragmatism. He was prepared to risk failure rather than take the easy choice. And he had a broader philosophy about economic reform, national identity, and national security. If today's political leaders and policymakers can summon up the same courage and some of Howard's impressive legacy, Australia will be far better for it.

Why the Centre for Independent Studies?

For nearly half a century, CIS has been synonymous with classical liberalism, and we are immensely proud to be a sound voice in advancing a free and open society. We are known for our non-partisanship and commitment to the time-tested values of free choice, individual liberty, cultural freedom and the open exchange of ideas.

We are proud to be associated with some of the greatest leaders in business and academia as visiting lecturers or as CIS members, staff or directors. Through policy research, media exposure and public events, CIS encourages debate among leading academics, politicians, media and the public. For decades – before, during and since his prime ministership, John Howard was a regular speaker and attendee at our events.

We aim to make sure good policy ideas are heard and seriously considered so that Australia can continue to prosper into the future. Part of our stewardship of CIS is ensuring that we are built to last so that for decades to come CIS will still be fighting for, and defending, the liberty and prosperity of future generations.



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The Inaugural John Howard Fellow

Andrew Blyth was manager of the UNSW Canberra John Howard Prime Ministerial Library and Exhibition located at Old Parliament House, 2016-23.

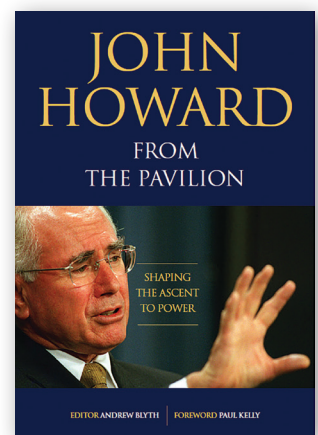
He lectures in ideas and power at the Australian Defence Force Academy. He is editor of *John Howard from the Pavilion: Shaping the Ascent to Power* (forthcoming, Connor Court publishing.)



Objectives from July 2023

In addition to officially launching his book *John Howard from the Pavilion: Shaping the Ascent of Power*, with CIS, Andrew envisages two papers for publication during the second half of the year while commencing a longer written project:

First, a paper arguing for a better coordinated approach to prime ministerial libraries in Australia (incorporating learnings from establishing the Howard Library and an interview with Sir Anthony Seldon). Second, exploring the contest of ideas and the rise of think tanks during the Howard era (based on his doctorate). Both papers would be complemented by podcast interviews.



Why your support makes a difference?

CIS is a not-for-profit independent public-policy research think tank – we do not solicit or accept government funding. We have a track record of both informing and changing government policy, but we cannot do this without individuals and foundations supporting our work. With your backing, we can defend and promote the Howard legacy and offer a brighter future.

To cover the costs of the Howard Fellow's salary, publications, podcasts/videos and overhead staffing, we require \$200,000 a year over the next three years.

