

JOHN HOWARD

PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

The Art of Crisis Management: The Howard Government Experience, 1996–2007

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PAPER NO. 11 *Live export: the gift that keeps on giving*

This paper was not presented at the conference but was kindly submitted and subsequently accepted as an addition to this series.

DR FIONA WADE
VISITING FELLOW
UNSW CANBERRA



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**John Howard Prime
Ministerial Library**

THE JOHN HOWARD PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

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

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

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

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

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

DISCLAIMER

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

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Inquiries about *Policy Perspectives* may be directed to the Executive Editor, Andrew Blyth (email: a.blyth@adfa.edu.au)

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

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

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

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

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



Dr Fiona Wade has over 25 years of experience in media and communication, specialising in political communication and advocacy. She was the media manager for the Cattle Council and Sheep Meat Council of Australia following the 2011 live export crisis and focused her doctoral thesis on events that occurred. A former political staffer (for both Liberal and Labor MPs), Fiona was public affairs and communication manager of the Law Council of Australia during COVID-19 and is currently lead academic with Deakin University's Centre for Future Defence and National Security based at the Royal Military College Duntroon. She has written previously on the Howard Government and continues to research the Howard legacy.

LIVE EXPORT: THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Dr Fiona Wade

JOHN HOWARD MADE NO SECRET HE BELIEVED IN LESS RED TAPE AND INDUSTRY ADOPTING SELF-REGULATION. His unwavering commitment to business operating as efficient and streamlined as possible worked for many industries and businesses alike. I would suggest, however, that leaving the regulation of the animal live export industry in the hands of the export companies was a disaster waiting to happen. Not least because, waiting in the wings, was a very effective animal welfare lobby that understood the value the community places on the lives and welfare of animals and who enthusiastically embraced the social media revolution.

The ability to influence government policy agenda is considered one of the most important sources of political power by both politicians and advocates.

Governments at both state and federal levels are forced to make concessions to certain interest groups ... because they [the interest groups] have it in their power to promote or frustrate the achievement of the government's objectives.¹

If the above statement is true, little wonder that advocating on behalf of interest groups, has become a multimillion-dollar industry. There are countless social movements worldwide that attract like-minded supporters to speak as one voice, with the singular aim of influencing policy decision-makers. There is also no doubt media is a useful tool for social movements to build support.

The animal welfare lobby has had a profound effect on media discourse – by defining and framing their grievances to attract media attention. Using the images of distressed animals as a backdrop to change government policy, is an example, and one the live export trade seems happy to accommodate.

In June 2011, the Gillard Government was faced with a hard choice: ban completely Australia's multi-billion-dollar live export of cattle trade or suspend it (pending the implementing of a regulatory system that would assure compliance with welfare standards). Doing nothing was not an option. The Government chose to place a six-month ban on Australia's live cattle exports to Indonesia until the

Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) was in place. This occurred following an Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) *Four Corners* investigation, in collaboration with the animal welfare lobby, featuring disturbing and gruesome footage of the treatment of Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs. The footage was so shocking it initiated an intense public outcry, demanding the Government act. The timing of the 2011 ban, could not have been more poorly received by cattle producers, coming during the thick of the crucial cattle mustering period – with thousands of cattle stranded in depots south of Darwin or enroute to ports. Northern cattle began flooding southern markets placing further pressure on prices while devastating farmers and regional economies. The ban had a multiplying impact on helicopter pilots, hay producers, and other industries that relied directly or indirectly on the live cattle trade, and on the value of land.

2011 was not the first-time live export had come under the microscope, nor the first time it had featured prominently in daily media. Since the 1970s, when Australia first began investing heavily in the live export of animals to Asia and the Middle East, there has been a parallel rise in the public's concern for the welfare of animals often fuelled by sporadic public reports of mistreatment. There have been several watershed moments for the live export trade, two of which occurred during the Howard Government: the first in 2003, involving stranded sheep in the Middle East, and the second in 2006 involving the inhumane slaughter of cattle in Egypt. On both occasions, while trade was suspended and inquiries held, there were limited long-term repercussions for exporters. This response leaves us to contemplate whether events that occurred in 2011 could have been prevented had the Howard Government acted differently.

2003: MV *Cormo Express*

On 6 August 2003, the MV *Cormo Express* embarked from Fremantle, Western Australia with some 57,000 sheep on board, bound for the Middle East. Two weeks later, on arrival in Saudi Arabia, officials denied permission for the sheep to be offloaded, claiming diseased stock.

What ensued was nothing short of a nightmare for the livestock. The ship was to spend the next two and a half months (80 days) sailing in scorching heat around the Middle East in search of a port willing to take the animals. First, the ship sailed to Jordan, then onto the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, taking onboard extra feed and other supplies at the ports of the latter two countries. Reports suggest that some 30 nations were approached by the Australian Government. After the Government committed \$10 million and employed three months of round-the-clock diplomacy, the sheep were donated to the northeast African country of Eritrea. The toll was significant: some six-thousand sheep had perished, the livestock industry lost \$125 million in revenue, two live export firms closed, and Australia's international reputation had been damaged.

Legislation

The livestock export industry is unique and inherently risky. The industry deals with live animals along an extended production chain. Animal welfare issues arise including loading, voyage, transportation, and arrival at their destination. Notwithstanding these inherent risks, there was little by way of regulation concerning welfare aspects of trade – although live animals had been included in the provision of the *Export Control Act 1982 (Cth)* and the *Australian Meat and Industry LiveStock Act 1997* permitted industry self-regulation.

The *Cormo Express* provided harsh lessons for both the Government and industry. The 'Keniry Review', led by Dr John Keniry AM (company director and chemical engineer) concluded its report highlighting the existing legislative and administrative framework was no longer adequate for such a high-risk trade. Keniry recommended that, 'Government must be solely responsible in the relevant legislation for granting export licenses and permits and enforcing compliance by exporters against the national standard'.² Self-regulation by industry had failed.

With the regulatory shift from industry to the Commonwealth Government – and the creation of the 'Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock' (AESL) – the Howard Government claimed it was taking significant strides in 'cleaning up' the live export trade. Critics argue the review was flawed; that it was created without parliamentary debate, there was an absence of a working definition of 'animal welfare,' and the terms of reference were restrictive. The Government had its back to the wall.

Response

Channel Nine's flagship current affairs program, *60 Minutes* aired 'Ship of Shame' on 21 September with veteran journalist Richard Carleton declaring

Somewhere in the Middle East tonight, there's a ship of shame, a ship packed with more than 50,000 Australian sheep that no-one wants. Now, it should have been only a 16-day voyage, but these poor animals have now been at sea for 47 days and a large number are known to have died. Now, this is yet another animal-welfare disaster, compounding the case against the Australian live-animal export trade, a trade we first highlighted two months ago. Now, that story is still attracting mail from outraged viewers and tonight's will no doubt cause more anger, as some scenes are quite distressing.³

The scene was set.

During the program, Carleton spoke to an on-board veterinary doctor, a stockman with experience of the voyage and the ship, an animal welfare lobbyist, and the Minister. The ship's plight drew media attention throughout Australia and internationally, including French actress and animal rights campaigner, Brigitte Bardot. Following the airing of the investigative program, the parliamentary gallery took hold of the story. Reporting on the government's progress, or lack thereof, in finding a solution, parliamentary gallery doyen, Michelle Grattan did not hold back: 'The MV *Cormo Express* has [had] become the Tampa of the live sheep export trade.'⁴ Grattan and members of the press gallery could smell blood. The Government's initial reluctance to disclose the location of the ship and its stricken cargo was ill-advised with Agriculture Minister Warren Truss MP defying a Senate order to publicly release information. When the Australian media disclosed the ship's location as being ten nautical miles from Dubai, a spokesman for Minister Truss refused to confirm its accuracy. Secrecy was the order of the day. Truss, who was leading the government's response to the crisis, was on the defensive, most days; keeping the location secret was in the best interest of the animals, he claimed.

For commentators, reporters, or animal liberation activists to paint the situation in any way that is likely to undermine the confidence of potential buyers is not helpful to the welfare of the sheep.⁵

The public and animal welfare lobby saw the decision to hide the location of the ship as an attempted cover-up.

The government's hesitation in releasing sheep mortality rates aboard the *Cormo Express* was concerning. A wave of discontent swept over the government, best illustrated by Carleton when questioning Truss:

Minister, may I suggest to you it's not very helpful talking to you if you won't reveal the number of dead when the owners of the ship have posted a figure on their website, and yet you're trying to keep it secret.⁶

Truss was on the ropes. When the Minister attempted to quell concerns regarding the health of the sheep, by quoting an on-board vet as saying, 'that apart from the 3800 that have died, the rest have put on weight', Carleton did not hold back. Truss was lambasted for his insensitive remark making it sound like the sheep were enjoying 'some Mediterranean Cruise'⁷. The severity of the issue was not lost on Howard. On entering the debate, Howard agreed with the public's feeling of distress reassure the public the animals were being looked after in the best way possible, while also pleading for a sense of balance.

My latest advice is that fresh supplies of food continue to be taken on board and that the condition of the sheep – according to the veterinary advice we've had – is good. But I do share the distress of many people about this and it worries me, but we have to have a sense of proportion.⁸

Howard continued

I deplore cruelty, any ordinary human being would and does. But we have to keep these things in perspective, we have to remember that you are talking about a very valuable economic asset... it's just not as easy as you suggest to dismiss the importance of an industry that provides a livelihood to tens of thousands.⁹

As the days and weeks passed reports surfaced of the ship running out of food and the sheep being in distress. The Opposition seized on these reports fuelling the perception the Prime Minister (and his Minister) were reluctant to get their hands dirty. Calling on Howard to intervene and secure a suitable port in the Middle East, then Leader of the Opposition, Simon Crean MP argued

'[i]t's about time the agriculture minister stopped making excuses; the prime minister has to involve himself and make some representations to the Saudis to get the sheep landed.'¹⁰

The Opposition were taking the fight to the Government.

Fifty-five days into the debacle, and after using taxpayers' money to purchase the sheep from the exporter, the Prime Minister raised the idea of bringing the sheep home. This caused an instant backlash from the agricultural sector with farming organisations and the livestock industry recoiling from the idea. Senior industry representatives vehemently protested the return of the sheep to Australia fearing 'they may have contracted exotic diseases during their long sea voyage that could ravage this island nation's huge livestock industry'.¹¹

Howard acknowledged the sheep could pose a danger to the country's livestock herds, but the situation left him perplexed, saying 'I understand that people are nervous, you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't'.¹² The idea of slaughtering the remaining sheep at sea was dismissed.

What would be required to slaughter them at sea would not only be graphic but also raise very serious environmental considerations and it would take a very long time, in fact 40 to 50 days.¹³

In the end, Australia gifted the sheep, along with a million dollars' worth of feed, to the State of Eritrea. Given the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia rejected the sheep on 28 August, and the sheep were finally unloaded some eight weeks later (on 24 October), it is easy to see why Labor's shadow minister for primary industries, Kerry O'Brien, referred to the situation as 'a fiasco' – a claim refuted by the Government. Liberal Senator Judith Troeth (Victoria), telling a Senate hearing

The government does not accept that it is a fiasco, and I wish to point out to you that, after the sheep were rejected, the government took charge of this situation, and we managed the situation. It may have taken some time and a degree of negotiation, but ultimately the situation was resolved, and government and industry are very happy at the outcome. We totally reject your word.¹⁴

From the outset of this 'incident', the Government apportioned no blame on the industry, despite this being an industry with a reputation of acting like 'cowboys' seemingly resistant to improving welfare standards.¹⁵ That may be why the initial response by the Howard Government on 28 August 2003 appeared lackluster. While the Government did not issue a public statement following Saudi Arabia's rejection of the sheep, it could not be said they sat on

their hands. The Government did place an immediate suspension on trade of live export to Saudi Arabia and simultaneously announced a review (the 'Keniry Review') into the livestock export industry, leading to \$11.3 million set aside to implement the report's recommendations in the following year's Federal budget.

The calling of an inquiry and a suspension of trade had – after all – worked for earlier scenarios. The Government had hoped their response would make the problem disappear, and it very well may have, but for the *60 Minutes* report. *Cormo Express* was now in the public domain.

Almost one month after the *Cormo Express* had been ordered to leave the Saudi port, the Government found it needing to step up its rhetoric regarding live export. The situation was damaging the Government. The media and subsequent public outcry, including the tabling of a petition in the Senate by the Australian Democrats (with more than 20,000 signatures) forced the hand of the Government. As reported by *The Age*,

The Howard Government refused to take the welfare of the animals on board seriously until the Prime Minister was attacked on talkback radio over the Minister's handling of the crisis and that it took a backbench rebellion inside the Coalition before Warren Truss took seriously his task.¹⁶

The Government had no option but to find a suitable outcome. The unrelenting public outcry now threatened the entire billion-dollar trade. As a former LiveCorp executive recalls

During the *Cormo Express* episode in the early 2000s, Prime Minister John Howard wanted to shut the industry down, but we managed to convince him that it was in the best interest of everyone to keep it going. The deal we cut with him was 'fix it up', but don't give me any more shocks, because we have an election around the corner.¹⁷

The industry's failure to sign an agreement with Saudi Arabia in 2000 (providing overarching governance of the trade) was a serious misstep. Prior to 2000, Australia had ceased the exporting of live animals to Saudi Arabia for close to a decade due to animal welfare concerns. Surely LiveCorp (as the industry body responsible for regulating the trade) could see recommencing trade with little to no governance in place was as an unacceptable risk for exporters? It was of no surprise the suspension of trade with Saudi Arabia lasted until the release of the 'Keniry

Review' and a new policy (ASEL) was realised. Better late than never.

The Coalition government placed a value on the live export trade and was not inclined to adhere to calls by the live animal lobby to cease trading. As Truss argued

Government and industry need agreed contingency plans such as an alternative destination or use for the cargo in the unlikely event of a similar unforeseen rejection arising with industry.¹⁸

While Howard let his minister take the lead, by his own admission, he gave strong direction for a resolution. With an election to be held in the coming year (9 October 2004), the thought of live export trade being a barnacle during the election campaign, was intolerable. Although Howard's actions were suggested as a 'failure in leadership' by his political opponents, he illustrated confidence in his senior leadership team to act in the national interest. This did not mean Howard shirked from media engagement. On the contrary, he willingly addressed the media in the hope of assuaging his colleagues, the public, and industry representatives. His stock in trade throughout his time in office.

2006: Cattle in Egypt

Three years later, the live export industry was again front and centre of a negative media campaign: this time it was cattle, and the country was Egypt. On Monday 27 February 2006, Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran MP (Nationals, Victoria), announced the banning of exporting live animals to Egypt pending an inquiry into reports of maltreatment of cattle in Egyptian abattoirs. This response came after another *60 Minutes* program, 'A Cruel Trade', aired the evening before.

The footage, secretly filmed by Animals Australia (an Australian animal protection organisation), showed cattle stabbed in the eye before having their rear leg tendons cut by a knife. While the cattle were not homegrown in Australia, the footage was filmed at an abattoir where Australian cattle were routinely slaughtered – an abattoir where Australian farmers and industry had invested equipment and manpower to ensure humane processes. From the footage aired it was clear the equipment was not being used humanely *and* advice was clearly ignored. McGauran found the vision '[g]ut wrenching ... you won't see worse examples of animal cruelty than that'.¹⁹ While the subsequent inquiry established the animals captured in the footage had not come from Australia, the animal

welfare lobby claimed the Government was failing in its responsibilities and charged it with complicity. Richard Carleton was equally blunt:

Richard Carleton: You're responsible?

Peter McGauran: No.

Richard Carleton: Yes.

Peter McGauran: How so?

Richard Carleton: Because you were told about this at least three years ago. You set about doing something about it, which was quite futile. You've got men in the Middle East who know this is going on. They answer to you.²⁰

McGauran was snookered. Consequently, the parliamentary week was dominated with questions targeting (again) the Government's track record on live exports. Howard would sit uneasy throughout Question Time.

In 2003 and 2006, the apparent failure of the Government to act on behalf of the welfare of animals left the Government wrongfooted and looking besieged. Labor's shadow agriculture spokesman Gavan O'Connor MP argued the government had known about welfare concerns at the abattoir for the past six years. He stressed the government's delays and inaction placed the future of Australia's live exports to Egypt (and other countries) at risk. In difference to the *Cormo Express* – where the animals involved originated from Australia – the Egyptian cattle saga spoke more to the brutality of the trade, intimating improvements introduced by Australian industry were insufficient. The public rhetoric suggesting that if the Government could not stop these events from occurring then live export trade should cease altogether. The damage done to Australia's farming reputation was potentially irreversible.

When the animal activists and elements of the media were not driving the narrative, the Government showed itself capable of mitigating a crisis. I doubt many people knew of the 3000 cattle temporarily stranded in the Red Sea in late 2004 due to a shortage of space at the Israeli holding facilities. As a result of a flurry of backroom diplomacy with the government of Israel, the cattle were saved from being stranded on board for any length of time, preventing another potentially embarrassing international incident for the Government. One that would have played into the hands of opponents of live export trade.

Lessons learned

Lyn White, a former South Australian police officer, joined the animal welfare group Animals Australia in 2003. White, a proponent of covert filming, who had conducted numerous investigations into the trade was now partnering with a major media outlet. White's arrival on the scene and the heightened furor over trade is not a coincidence. White understood that to release footage via a national media outlet (like the ABC or Nine) meant a potentially wider audience that what would normally resonate with a fringe group, potentially placing an issue on both political and public agendas. This tactical approach was evident in her work with *60 Minutes* in 2003 (and 2006) and later with the ABC in 2011.²¹

Putting White's actions aside, a pertinent question is whether Howard (or his ministers) could have foreseen what unfolded in 2011. There was enough history of media attention and public opinion surrounding the trade for any government to see that further negative press would seriously harm the lucrative business. I question whether even Howard would have been able to predict the 'perfect storm' that existed in 2011: when the ABC ran the live export expose causing a devastating effect on the cattle trade, combined with the precarious nature of the 'hung' parliament with the Gillard Government holding onto power with the support of independent Members of Parliament. In 2011, miscalculations of values placed on the live export trade were in part to blame for what has been referred to as a 'kneejerk' reaction by Minister Joe Ludwig (action later to be found unlawful by the Federal Court) in attempting to address an animal welfare issue. The Government chose to cripple an entire industry, rather than working with industry to fix problems inside the supply chain.

As highlighted in a report tabled by the Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Committee

The program was so hard-hitting that it panicked sections of the community and the Australian government into thinking that the only solution was to immediately suspend the live cattle trade, without consideration of the devastating and far-reaching impact this action would have on the many families and communities that depend on the trade for their livelihood.²²

The Howard Government had been criticised for not being tough enough on the live export industry following the

'Keniry Review'. For one former Western Australian Labor backbencher and prominent anti-live export campaigner

They [the Howard government] just didn't go far enough. A ban is one thing but making sure the industry cleans up its act could have been done before we got to 2011. Howard missed the boat on that one. The industry hadn't done anything to develop the tools the government needed to deal with any future incident. And Howard could have stepped in, way back in 2006, and made the industry far more accountable. Don't forget it was the animal activists as well [as 2011] that put the trade on the agenda. Banning was great but Howard could have put stringent and appropriate measures in place. But either couldn't or wouldn't.²³

As indicated in statements made by Howard in 2003, he and his government clearly understood the lucrative nature of the trade. A former Liberal National Party backbencher whose electorate relied heavily on cattle production for income contends

Howard did what he could but knew the value of the relationship with the rural heart landers, and we [the Nationals] weren't going to let him punish the whole trade for a few who wanted to cut corners.²⁴

The junior member of the Coalition was flexing its muscles. The *Cormo Express* placed Howard in a tricky position. Keeping the Nationals happy while acknowledging the voices of suburban voters was no easy task. Truss, a future Nationals leader, provided Howard some buffer against criticism from other rural leaders – but not entirely. Joint party room discussions throughout the crisis were said to be unusually robust, with divisions emerging between rural and urban Members of Parliament. Howard did well to shield internal disagreements from the media and public.

If we compare the three animal welfare incidents: the death of thousands of sheep aboard MV *Cormo Express* did not create much public uproar, in difference to the treatment of cattle in 2011. As one wryly farmer said, perhaps the public cared less about the livestock on *Cormo Express* as they were only 'maggots on legs'²⁵ simply not resonating in the same way as big-eyed cattle.

I suggest there is a far more logical reason as to why the public response was far less effusive than what occurred in 2011. It has to do with the evolution of social media and its relationship with the mainstream press.

Social media

In 2003 (and 2006), the public was informed of the *Cormo Express* via traditional media sources: television, radio, and newspapers. Political responses were driven by what was seen and heard. For Senator Ian MacDonald (during a heated exchange in Senate Estimates in later 2003), members of the Cabinet, '... can read the papers and read the letters to the editor. They can listen to the news and the airwaves.'²⁶ In 2003, talkback radio was the more immediate public temperature gauge available. As Howard readily acknowledged about the situation, 'I know there's a lot of concern expressed on talkback, and I understand that and I'm very sensitive to it.'²⁷

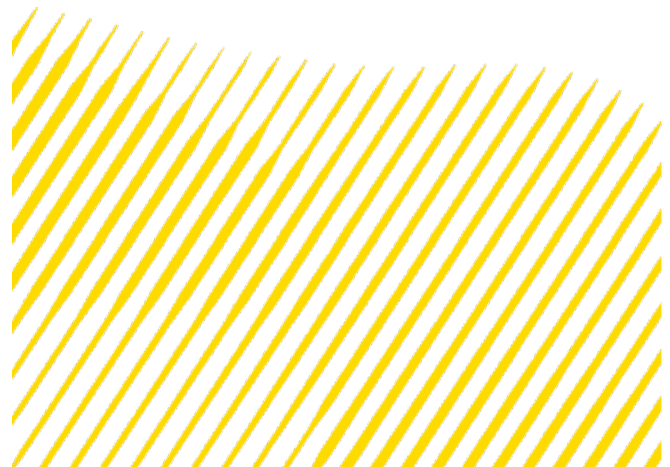
The reliance on traditional media was to change by 2011. The advent of social media offered a new means of political access for ordinary Australians: providing an efficient and effective way to contact politicians demanding immediate action. By 2011, social media was embraced by the animal welfare lobby (and others) changing the participatory landscape. Political activist group GetUp! in partnership with Animals Australia and the Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty against Animals (Australia), used social media to great effect. Coordinating an army of protesters to target the email inboxes of politicians, the digital era had landed on the doorstep of Australian politics.

Last thoughts

Julia Gillard was Australia's first prime minister to feel the force of the 24-hour news cycle. While this new competition for audience share emerged during the first Rudd government (2007–2010), it was not until Gillard the full suite of social media platforms was put to effect. I contest the impact of social media would have been negligible had the story in 2011 not been picked up by mainstream media nor the events occur within an unstable political environment. I contend further that had John Howard been confronted by a barrage of online dissent and subjected to the pressure of a relentless and targeted email campaign in either 2003 or 2006 (such as what was organised by the animal welfare lobby in 2011) then perhaps this may have resulted in stricter controls over exporters. Such a response may have gone some way to reducing the mistreatment of animals while protecting Australia's valuable export trade. We shall never know.

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The Howard Library Annual Conference Series

The Liberal-National Party Coalition led by John Howard won office on 2 March 1996 and continued to hold power until 3 December 2007 (after losing the election held on 24 November 2007). UNSW Canberra is hosting a series of retrospective conferences to assess the performance of the Howard Government. Each event provides the basis for collections of essays contributed by principal participants, key public servants, leading commentators and notable scholars drawing on documents in the John Howard Collection held at the Australian Defence Force Academy Library and other papers managed by the Howard Library at Provisional (Old) Parliament House. This series has become the authoritative treatment of the Howard years.

Contributors are asked to focus critically on the Coalition's policies and performance to reveal the Government's shortcomings and failures. This commitment to a candid critique attracts the attention of the press and current-serving politicians, affording the volumes a substantial public profile at the time of their release. UNSW Press is the series publisher.

The first conference covered the 1996 election, the Coalition's readiness for office, the main policy decisions and practical challenges of the first year of the Howard Government, including gun control and ministerial responsibility.

The second conference dealt with the second and third years of the Coalition's first term in office (1997-98) and most of its second term (1998-2001). It canvasses the High Court's Wik decision and native title, the Patricks waterfront dispute, the constitutional convention, the Coalition's near defeat at the 1998 poll, the Government's response to post-independence violence in Timor-Leste and the introduction of the GST.

The third conference focused on the controversial events leading to the 2001 election including the MV *Tampa* crisis, the collapse of Ansett Airlines, the '9/11' terrorist attacks and the invasion of Afghanistan. It looked at the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, the outbreak of the 'history wars', managing the environment and health care, the challenges faced by the Labor Opposition and the rise of Mark Latham.

The fourth conference was concerned with the period October 2004 to November 2007 and examined the Coalition's control of the Senate, the advent of Work Choices, the progress of Indigenous Reconciliation and the Northern Territory intervention, and the election that saw the Coalition lose office and the Prime Minister his seat in parliament.



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

UNSW Press Howard Government Series Titles

- I The Ascent to Power, 1996 (released 2017)
- II Back from the Brink, 1997-2001 (released 2018)
- III Trials and Transformations, 2001-2004 (released 2019)
- IV The Desire for Change, 2004-2007 (released 2021)
- V The Art of Coalition: The Howard Government Experience, 1996-2007 (released 2022)



Contact us

Old Parliament House
18 King George Terrace,
Parkes, ACT 2600, Australia

info@howardlibrary.unsw.edu.au