

## **Concession Speech: Mark Latham, Opposition Leader (ALP)**

***October 10, 2004***

“Thank you for your support through the course of today and the long campaign in which we've been engaged.

A short time ago I spoke to Mr Howard and I congratulated him, his family and coalition parties on their election victory this evening.

I've said during the campaign on behalf of the Australian Labor Party that we always honour and respect the decisions of the Australian people that indicate a verdict and of course tonight is no exception.

I want to ... congratulate and thank all the Labor candidates and campaign workers for their efforts, not just in the six-weeks but over the past three years of parliament. They've worked hard, they've done the cause of Labor proud advancing our policies every step of the way.

We made a decision to run a positive campaign. We wanted to support opportunity for the Australian people and we'll continue to advance our belief and our policies in the parliament in the coming three years. We put forward clear choices to the Australian people, choices about the future of Medicare, about fair funding for our schools, about opportunities in our TAFE and university system and also in saving the Australian environment.

We decided to put forward our positive alternatives in the big areas of health, education, environment but also on national security and the economy. I'm glad we did that because I know for a fact that so many Labor supporters and Labor voters today felt good about supporting our cause because of the choices and alternatives we put forward.

We ran on principle, we ran on our positive beliefs about hope and opportunity in this country and I want to thank the many, many people who voted Labor today supporting our policies and supporting us into the future. I thank you very much.

I want to thank my parliamentary colleagues lead by Jenny Macklin, my parliamentary deputy, but also John Faulkner, our senate leader who played such an important role through the course of the campaign. I also want to thank the national campaign team led so well by Tim Gartrell. They all worked very hard for the cause of Labor. Thank you very much.

I also want to thank my personal staff, in particular Michael Cooney whose been with me through the three years of this parliamentary term. Also Alison Byrnes and Glen Byres in particular who have worked so hard.

I also want to thank my family, Janine and the boys. I have the privilege of leading the Labor Party and being able to present to the Australian people our policies, our alternatives. But I couldn't do it without their support in the home. I'm a lucky man to be married to Janine and have two beautiful boys and my family counts the world to me and I thank them for all their support. through this campaign. I couldn't have done it without them.

My mother Lorraine and my sisters who are here this evening, in some respects we've come a long way since Harrison Street, Ashcroft, but we've never forgotten where we've come from and we'll always be true to a place called Green Valley.

May I say that I thank my extended family and friends, I include very much in that Gough Whitlam, the great man who's here this evening. Gough's been a great friend to my family and a great supporter over the years and I know that he's loved very dearly by Labor supporters right around the country, and particularly all those Australians who got a university education thanks to Gough Whitlam.

And I thank you ladies and gentleman, I thank the Australian people for the privilege I've had, particularly over the last six weeks in presenting the Labor program, the Labor policies. Our democracy is strong because the people were engaged, they did me the courtesy, they did our party the great courtesy of listening to our policies, of giving us their consideration, giving us a fair go.

Of course tonight is not our night, it's not the night that we were hoping for but I've certainly found that the democratic experience is something we all should be grateful for in this country. Australian democracy is strong when the people are engaged and they've given us fine consideration through the course of the campaign and the three-year parliamentary term.

I've had a lot of people say that we've made the opposition strong and when there's a strong opposition Australian democracy is so much stronger. We'll continue to do that in the coming parliamentary term, we'll make sure the government is held to account, that we keep pressure on.

And in a democracy that's the best note on which I should finish, to thank the Australian people, all those who've spoken to me directly or I've been able to speak to through the media. I thank you very much and I'll see you again.”

Source: Compiled from audio and Sydney Morning Herald, October 10 2004.