

## **Victory speech: John Howard, Opposition Leader (LP)**

***Wentworth Hotel, Sydney: March 2, 1996***

“Ladies and gentlemen, I am very conscious of the enormous responsibility placed upon me and my colleagues by the verdict of today. I feel many emotions tonight, the deepest is humility.

The Australian people have given me the privilege of leading the Government of this country and I want to say it will be a government not only for the people who voted us but also for the people who voted against us.

Nine years ago when I was unsuccessful in an election, I said that the things that united Australia were infinitely more important and more enduring than the things that divided Australia. That has always been my political credo and it will be a political credo I will carry forward in government in the next three years.

I want to thank Paul Keating for his gracious words. I want to wish Paul Keating and Annita and their family good health in the future. Can I say, although we have been vigorous opponents, he has been a great warrior for his own political cause and despite our differences it is something that I recognise.

I want to make it clear that although uniting the Australian people will be the cornerstone of my government, we have been elected with a mandate, a very powerful mandate.

We need to implement the program on which we were elected, and I want to make it very clear there will be absolute determination, with fairness and understanding, to do that.

We have endured 16 years without a federal election victory and tonight is an immensely proud and wonderful moment.

When you look at the swings in western Sydney, and in some of the traditional Labor areas, I think it is a magnificent result in Queensland, a wonderful result in South Australia, and the way the party held its very high proportion of seats in Victoria, and the early returns in West Australia are very encouraging, it is a comprehensive endorsement of the philosophy and approach of the Liberal party.

To all of you who have endured the barbs and the insults, and you who have heard your party written off, I want to say, tonight it is a victory we all share; it is not mine alone.

I say from the bottom of my heart how grateful I am for that loyalty because that has given us the victory we have tonight.

There is something special about being an Australian and today experienced, I experienced ... along with everybody else I had to queue up and cast my vote and the bloke in front turned around and said 'hello'.

He had a Labor Party how-to-vote ticket and he didn't have a Liberal one. He said, 'Well it's nice to meet you, but I'm not going to vote for you'. Now that is a celebration of what Australia is all about.

And lastly, can I say to my wife, Janette, and to my three children, Melanie, Tim and Richard, that more than any four people in the world they have kept me going and have shared the difficulties as well as the successes of politics and anyone in public life should always remember the contribution of their family.

I unhesitatingly express, not only my affection but also my enormous gratitude to my wife and three children for what they have done for me and what they continue to mean to me."

Source: Compiled from The Sunday Age, 3/3/1996, page 2 and the Canberra Times.