

Victory Speech: John Howard, Prime Minister (LP)

October 9, 2004

“Ladies and gentlemen and my fellow Australians, can I say first of all that I am truly humbled by this extraordinary expression of confidence in the leadership of this great nation by the coalition.

And the first thing I say to the Australian people in accepting their charge to lead the nation over the years ahead, the first thing I say is to rededicate myself and all of my colleagues to the service of the Australian people.

This nation by reason of the circumstances of history and by reason of its great capacity and the great capacity and dedication of the Australian people, this nation stands on the threshold of a new era of great achievement.

This is a proud nation, a confident nation, a cohesive nation, a united nation, a nation which can achieve anything it wants if it sets its mind to it. An no Australian should ever shrink from a passionate belief in the ability and the capacity of this nation not only to provide a wonderful homeland for our 20 million, not only to be a partner with our friends in our own region but to be a beacon of democracy, of tolerance, of hope and of achievement all around the world.

The rest of the world sees us as a strong, successful nation and tonight the Australian people by their decision have declared themselves confident and hopeful about their future. And my task, my mission, my commitment to the Australian people is to lead them to the achievement of all of the opportunities that we have in the world. We have a strong economy, we are a nation that is respected around the world because we are prepared to stand up for what we believe in.

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition Mark Latham for his gracious remarks tonight. He rang me before making his speech and I do warmly thank him for the gracious things that he said. Ours is a great democracy, there can only be one winner when an election is held. You face that great moment of electoral judgment and electoral truth.

We are happy, we are joyful that the verdict has been given by the Australian people but never forget the fact that governments are elected to govern not only for the people who voted for them, but also for the people who voted against them.

If I can address some remarks particularly, and I know the rest of my fellow Australians will understand my doing this, some remarks particularly to the two coalition parties. This is a truly historic achievement for our two parties. We have to reach back to the 1960s to find an occasion when an incumbent government has increased its majority on two successive occasions. That is an extraordinary achievement and when I look around the nation there is a wonderful story to be told

of achievement in each of the different states of our nation but to all of my colleagues I express my thanks for their loyalty and their cooperation and their support, particularly during the weeks of this election campaign.

And may I especially say a few words about two very important colleagues of mine in the parliamentary party. Can I say to John Anderson, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the National Party, there is no finer human being in public life than John Anderson and the loyalty that he's displayed towards me, the leadership of his own party, the way in which he represents the interests of country Australia is a source of continued inspiration and help to me, and to John I say thank you for the friendship and the loyalty of these past years and the hope that it offers to the years ahead.

And the Deputy Leader of my own party, Peter Costello, the Treasurer, whose stewardship has given us one of the strongest economies in the Western World and also the strongest economic conditions that this country arguably has experienced since the end of World War II. Those two men and all of my other cabinet colleagues have represented a united team and we are here tonight, we've won our fourth successive victory. And we've won it for many reasons but one of the reasons that we have won it is that we have been a united team. We have worked together, we have been a team. We have not been a one-man band and to all of my colleagues I owe so much because theirs is the victory tonight as much as it is mine.

Can I also say a very special word of thanks to the Liberal Party organisation around Australia. You cannot win elections without the assistance of a party organisation. I cannot win elections without the assistance of people like you who are gathered here tonight to share this victory, and to Shane Stone, the Federal President of the Liberal Party, Shane I thank you very much for your leadership of the party. And to Brian Loughnane, the new Federal Director who has steered us at an organisational level to a wonderful victory on the first occasion that he's been at the helm of the organisation, and to all of the other directors of the party around Australia that have made tonight possible, they have made the achievement that is represented by tonight possible, I express my tremendous gratitude and thanks.

Might I also say a very special word of gratitude to my staff. Being the staff of a prime minister is no easy task. Being the staff of a prime minister during an election campaign is an almost impossible task but they have carried it out with great dedication, great professionalism, and great goodwill and particularly can I express my thanks to Arthur Sinodinos and I guess the political steward of staff Tony Nutt. Probably one of the hardest jobs in an election campaign is to deal with the media of Australia and I therefore should thank Tony O'Leary for the tremendous work they have done.

It is a wonderful thing to be able to participate in a great democratic exercise like an election. It's nerve-wracking and like many of you in this room, I had butterflies in my stomach this morning. I happily confess to that and it's true and it's perfectly normal and it's perfectly human but we are privileged to be able to participate in the great exercise in democracy.

Let us remember that this very same day the people of Afghanistan have had an election and for the first time in years. That election has been made possible by reason

of the fact that a number of countries, including Australia, were prepared to take a stand for democracy and to take a stand against terrorism. As the people of Afghanistan vote today, and particularly the women of Afghanistan, they have been so brutally suppressed for so long, we should be proud of the role that we have played in their liberating Afghanistan just as we should be proud of the role that Australia has played in many other areas in standing up for the values we believe in and the things we hold dear.

We rededicated ourselves to the service of the Australian people. We rededicate ourselves to the great ideals of the Australian nation. We rededicate ourselves to that passionate belief of mine that the things that unite Australians are infinitely more important and more enduring than the things that divide us.

And so, my friends, I thank you for the support that you've given me and to the broader Australian community, can I say again I cannot muster words adequate enough to express my sense of gratitude and humility at the great honour that you have again given me to lead this nation.

To be the prime minister of Australia is undoubtedly the greatest privilege that can come the way of any person. I will never forget, I will never lose contact with, I'll never misunderstand the nature of the honour and the privilege that's been given to me. I serve the Australian people and I commit myself to their service and their interest in the years ahead.

And finally, can I say on a personal note that tonight is possible for me, as my eight-and-a-half years as prime minister have been possible for me, because of the tremendous support I have received from those of my immediate family who are on the stage with me tonight. We are two more than last time - Tim was over in England three years ago and Rowan and Melanie hadn't got married or hitched by then, so it's great to have Rowan with us on the platform tonight. And I have to say to Richard thank you very much for coming home briefly from the United States, and if I could extend the family bit could I also acknowledge the presence of two of my brothers here tonight and their families for the tremendous support they have given me over the years, it's always been very much a family thing for us, and to have you all here tonight is something that's very special to me.

So again I say to my fellow Australians, thank you for the enormous trust that you have placed in us. I said at the beginning of this election campaign that it was about trust, it was who the Australian people had trusted to manage the economy, to lead this nation at a time of international peril, who did the Australian people better trust to keep the budget strong, who did the people better trust to lead it. In the first part of the 21st century [unclear].

The Australian people have given their answer, we thank them for that, and we start work immediately to justify and fulfil the trust that they have given to all of us tonight. Thank you very much.”

Source: Compiled from audio, The Sydney Morning Herald, October 10 2004, and the Prime Minister's Website.