

## The Honourable John Winston Howard OM AC

The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon John Howard by the Chancellor, Ms Belinda Hutchinson AM at a joint Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Faculty of Law graduation at 11.30am on 30 September 2016.

### Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present The Honourable John Winston Howard OM, AC to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa).

Mr Howard is an alumnus of this University and graduated with a Bachelor of Laws in 1961. He practised as a solicitor for 12 years before entering parliament.

He joined the Liberal Party in 1958 and became a member of the Liberal Party's New South Wales Executive in 1963. Then, in the 1974 federal election, won by the ALP, Mr Howard successfully contested the Division of Bennelong, a seat he represented for the next 33 years.

Mr Howard was Treasurer in the Fraser Government between 1977 and early 1983. He became leader of the Liberal Party first in 1985 for three and half years and again in 1995 and then led the Coalition to victory at the 1996 federal election. Mr Howard successfully continued as the country's 25<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister for nearly 12 years of Coalition Government, completing the second longest period as Prime Minister after Sir Robert Menzies.

Early in Mr Howard's first term as Prime Minister and in response to the Port Arthur massacre, he introduced a proposal for uniform gun laws throughout Australia, limiting the availability of firearms and incorporating a federally funded buy-back scheme. This decisive action, which was highly unpopular in sections of Prime Minister Howard's political support base, is now seen throughout the world as one of the most successful examples of a gun-control system.

Over the course of his four terms in office, Mr Howard made a number of important contributions to Australian foreign affairs. First was the skilful response to the East Timor crisis in 1999, when East Timor experienced violent disruption after an overwhelming vote for independence from Indonesia. Australia contributed 4,500 troops to the United Nations peace-keeping force, charged with disarming pro-Indonesia Militia and providing shelter, food and medical aid to the East Timorese people. Their actions paved the way for a stable democratic government and Indonesia's acceptance of East Timor as an Independent State.

The Howard Government restored valuable relations with Indonesia and following the 2004 Tsunami that devastated large areas of Indonesia, made a generous aid package of \$1 billion in relief funds, further cementing positive diplomatic ties between our two nations.

The Howard Government developed a strong economic and pragmatic relationship with China, Australia's largest trading partner, and encouraged the immigration of skilled Chinese migrants to enrich Australia's workforce. These strong links with Australia's near neighbours are tribute to the Howard Government's commitment to Asia-focused diplomatic relations.

The Howard Government established a reputation for strong economic policy, including the reformation of the Australian tax system through the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). This broadened the country's tax base so that it no longer relied unduly on income tax on individuals and corporations. It was a courageous and risky political reform, endorsed by the Australian community in the subsequent election.

Mr Howard left a lasting legacy as Prime Minister with the protection of the Sydney Harbour foreshores. In 1998, the Minister for Defence initiated a proposal to subdivide surplus Defence land on Sydney Harbour foreshores to defray the cost of moving Defence personnel to bases elsewhere in Australia. Prime Minister Howard intervened to reverse the proposal, instead creating a National Park, thereby preserving the sites for prosperity. Mr Howard's government allocated \$183 million to the remediation and reuse of heritage buildings and facilities on the sites. The resulting National Park continues to be enjoyed by tourists and resident walkers, including Mr Howard himself.

Mr Howard is a keen cricketer and is a patron of Cricket NSW.

During his eminent career, he has received many awards, most notably a Companion of the Order of Australia and a Member of the Order of Merit FROM Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. He was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by the former United States President, George W Bush. Mr Howard has an Honorary Doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for outstanding statesmanship in promoting democracy and combating international terrorism, and Honorary doctorates from Bond and Macquarie Universities.

Chancellor, I present The Honourable John Winston Howard OM, AC for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.