The Honourable John Winston Howard served as the 25th Prime Minister of Australia from March 1996 until November 2007. He has been Australia’s second longest serving Prime Minister. He was a member of the House of Representatives for 33 years, served for five years as Treasurer in the Fraser Government, and was led the Opposition prior to his election as Prime Minister.

A conservative on social policy John Howard pursued broadly liberal and pro market economic policies as Prime Minister. During his period in office Australia experienced continued economic growth averaging 3.6% per annum.

Australia’s budget was in heavy deficit and debt when Mr Howard’s government came to power. The deficit was eliminated and 10 of the 12 annual budgets produced by the Howard government were in surplus; $96 billion of debt was repaid so that when the Howard Government left office the Australian government had no net debt.

As well the Howard government undertook major reforms of the taxation system, introduced policies to shift people from welfare to work and substantially deregulated reformed Australia’s labour laws. When the Howard Government left office unemployment was close to 4%.

In the field of foreign policy the Howard government, was both a close ally of the United States as well as significantly expanding our links with the nations of Asia. A particular feature of the Howard government’s time in power was the development of the relationship with China, which is now Australia’s largest export market.

On 9 June 2008 Mr Howard was appointed a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia.

On the 14 January 2009, Mr Howard was awarded the highest civilian decoration of the United States, the US Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In January 2012 he was appointed by Queen Elizabeth II to the Order of Merit.

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