



PRIME MINISTER

137/95

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP

JOHN HOWARD AND THE MARKS ROYAL COMMISSION

John Howard's claims today concerning Justice Marks are transparently dishonest.

His only truthful statement was his grudging admission that the Telstra matter and the Marks Royal Commission were totally "unrelated".

Mr Howard claimed on "AM" that the Government had appointed Justice Marks to carry out a Telstra review - this is untrue. Justice Marks was appointed by Telstra, not the Government.

For Mr Howard to imply that the appointment of Justice Marks by Telstra long before the establishment of the Marks Royal Commission somehow invalidates the Government's criticism of the Commission is either ignorant or deliberately deceptive.

Criticism of Justice Marks followed his acceptance of a politically motivated Royal Commission. His previous professional life has never been at issue.

The Marks Royal Commission was the product of deliberately narrow terms of reference designed to deny Dr Lawrence natural justice while the terms of reference in the Telstra inquiry were wide ranging and properly constructed.

There was also no question of improper contact between the Government and Justice Marks in the Telstra case. In the Western Australian case the contact between Richard Court's staff and the Royal Commissioner is open to question.

It is drawing a long bow indeed to compare Mr Marks' involvement a year ago with an external Telstra review with his later involvement in Richard Court's and John Howard's politically malevolent Royal Commission. It is also completely dishonest for Mr Howard to say the two cases were run "simultaneously".

With the connivance of John Howard, Richard Court established a Royal Commission with the express purpose of having terms of reference guide the Royal Commissioner towards a 'guilty' finding.

It was a vicious \$5 million political onslaught against one woman. It was the most savage and systemic personal attack against someone in political life in the post war period.

Its findings were left open to doubt by even the Royal Commissioner himself.

Mr Howard's dishonesty in exploiting this matter deserves to be condemned.

CANBERRA

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