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2 March 1996

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**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER-ELECT
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
VICTORY SPEECH - 1996 FEDERAL ELECTION
THE WENTWORTH HOTEL, SYDNEY**

E&OE.....

Can I say to you, and my first words are addressed to all of the people of Australia, that I am very conscious of the enormous responsibility that has been placed upon me and upon my colleagues by the verdict of the Australian people today.

I feel many emotions tonight, but the deepest emotion of all I feel is that of humility that the Australian people have given me the privilege of leading the Government of this country and I want to say that the Government that I will lead will be a Government not only for the people who voted for us but also for the people who voted against us.

Eleven years ago when I was unsuccessful in an election I said in my concession speech that the things that united Australians were infinitely more important and more enduring than the things that divided Australians.

That has always been my political credo, and it will be a political credo that I will carry forward in the governance of this country over 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 a good health and happiness in the future. Can I say that although we have been vigorous opponents he has been a great warrior for his own political cause and display our differences that is something that I recognise.

I owe thanks to many people and I will come to that in a moment. I want to make it clear that although uniting the Australian people will be the cornerstone of my approach in Government, we have been elected with a mandate, a very powerful mandate.

And whilst I will seek at all times unity and a common point of view, we have not been elected to be just a pale imitation of the Government that we have replaced.

We have been given this emphatic mandate tonight because there have been many things that have been left undone that need to be attended to and addressed. We need to implement the programme on which we were elected and I want to make it very clear that there will be an absolute determination with fairness and understanding and to do that and to do it with resolution and without qualification.

I want to thank all of my colleagues and I especially wish to thank Tim Fischer and the National Party. I will lead a Coalition in Government as I have led a Coalition in Opposition, and I look forward to working very closely with Tim Fischer as the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia.

To all of my Parliamentary colleagues, I say thank you. And I particularly want to extend my thanks to the Liberal Party organisation; to Tony Staley the Federal President; to Andrew Robb and Ron Walker the honorary federal treasurer and the many other members of the organisation who have worked so tirelessly.

Can I say it is an immensely proud moment for me tonight to lead back into Government the Liberal Party of Australia. We have endured sixteen years without a federal electoral victory and tonight is an immensely proud and wonderful moment.

And in celebrating the miracle of democracy that we can peacefully and respectfully transfer power through the ballot box and through no other device, let us also as Liberals and as Liberal supporters celebrate the magnificent win that we've had tonight.

It is a victory for those who voted Liberal in the past and for those who are by habit swinging voters, and it is a victory that has also embraced many traditional Labor Party areas of Australia. And when you look at the swings in Western Sydney and in some of the areas... (inaudible)...; and I look at the magnificent result in Queensland that wonderful result in South Australia and the way in which the Liberal Party held its very high proportion of seats in Victoria and the early returns in Western Australia are very encouraging. It is a comprehensive endorsement of the philosophy and the approach of the Liberal Party.

And to all of you who have endured the barbs and the insults and you've heard your Party being written off, I want to say to the rank and file of the Liberal Party, you have endured far too many years in the political wilderness. And tonight it is a victory that we all share. It is not mine alone, it is mine because I was given from the moment I became the leader of the Liberal Party just over a year ago, I was given the most magnificent loyalty and support by my Parliamentary colleagues and all of the members of the organisation. And I say from the bottom of my heart how grateful I am for that support and that loyalty because that is ... (inaudible)....

I said when I launched our campaign only a few weeks ago that one of the great features of the Liberal Party is that it was owned by no section of the Australian community and our only obligation is to give good Government to all of the Australian people.

And it will be my intention and my commitment that from now I and my colleagues will devote our all to delivering good government, to doing good things, and for delivering the maximum degree of unity and cohesion to the Australian people.

There is something special about being an Australian and today I experience along with everybody else I had to queue up to cast my vote, and the bloke in front of me turned around and said, "oh, hello". He had a Labor Party how to vote ticket - he didn't have a Liberal one - and he said, "It's nice to meet you but I'm not going to vote for you!" And that is, can I say, that is a celebration of what Australia is all about.

And the very last thing that I want to say is a special word of thanks to some people who've been very close to me over the past months. I want to thank my own personal staff. The personal staff of a Party leader carry enormous burdens and responsibilities and I am personally very very grateful to all of my staff for the magnificent job that they have done. They have shared the disappointments and tonight they share the exhilaration of this remarkable victory.

And lastly, can I say to my wife Janette and to my three children, Melanie, Tim and Richard, of all the things these four people in the world, they have kept me going and they have sustained me and they have shared the difficulties as well as the successes of politics. And anybody in public life should always remember the contribution of their families and I unhesitatingly express not only my affection but also my enormous gratitude to my wife and my three children for what they have done for me and what they continue to mean to me.

And my very last words are to all of the people of Australia, to my fellow Australians, I am both deeply moved and I understand very very deeply and very profoundly the responsibility that has been given to me tonight. And I can but make a simple promise and a simple commitment, that from now on I will do all I can to advance the welfare of all of the Australian people.

I will focus on those things that bind us together, I will focus on our strengths, I will defend the interests and the values and the principles of this country both domestically and internationally.

There is something very special, there is something unique about our nation and about being Australian and I commit myself and my future Government to the service of all of the Australian people.

Thank you.