



## **MOST TALKED ABOUT HOWARD'S LEGACY**

# Our recent history is still with us – not just on TV

HELEN Coonan unconvincingly tries to justify John Howard's less than sensitive comments about Barack Obama's presidential candidacy ("Coonan defends Howard's Obama slur", 20/11). Had Howard won, this would have been a long-lasting and damaging embarrassment.

Where does the shadow foreign minister stand on the Howard government's disgraceful treatment of genuine asylum seekers as reported in the SBS documentary *A Well-founded Fear*? This is a thorough and far-reaching piece of research by Phil Glendenning, Director of the Edmund Rice Centre.

John Howard found it impossible to apologise to indigenous Australians because he claimed that his generation could not be held responsible for the cruel treatment they received. So far as refugees are concerned, that is not a valid excuse, any more than is pleading ignorance as to what was going on. If the Coalition hopes to return to the government benches, they now need to make an unqualified apology to asylum seekers who have been assessed as genuine refugees.

Furthermore, the Labor Government should not delay in relieving genuine refugees of the charges imposed on them for detention centre accommodation. These can exceed \$220,000 and cause great anxiety for those bravely trying to re-establish their lives in a new country.

**David Dyer**  
Ballarat, Vic

I HAVE just finished watching the SBS documentary *A Well-founded Fear* in which Phil Glendenning tracks down rejected asylum-seekers to see what happened to them after being deported by the Howard government. I felt sick to the stomach hearing the eyewitness testimonies of two men shot, another shoved into the back of a van by armed gunmen, a mother pleading for information on her missing son — and the

one that really cut me deep, the story of one man whose two young daughters were killed by an explosion outside their house.

Kevin Rudd, I appeal to you, set in motion the changes necessary to undo the callous and shameful policy of the previous government that has sent so many asylum-seekers back into harm's way. Review all the reject cases, and please ensure that any further asylum seekers are permitted the right to appeal their cases, a right denied so many under John Howard and his ilk.

**R. Stephens**  
Mt Isa, Qld

THANK God for SBS! After watching *A Well-founded Fear*, the current John Howard documentary on the ABC, *The Howard Years*, is like some rotting carcass of the past.

Even the legacy of his economic management is now revealed as just the capricious fortune of the global economic cycle.

**Jager Non**  
Enmore, NSW

TOM Switzer ("Former PM with manners of steel", Opinion, 20/11) is right on the mark. Although he has been retired for only a year, John Howard has displayed far more class and dignity than the other living former prime ministers.

Since Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating left office, they have sulked, then spitefully sniped from the sidelines, sully their reputations and legacies in the process. Howard is the perfect role model for retiring public figures, and history will subsequently be kinder to him.

As Switzer reminds us, Winston Churchill and John Major are good role models; he could have added George H.W. Bush. In Australia at least, Howard is in a class of his own. Mind you, did anyone expect he would not accept defeat with dignity and grace?

**Sandra Sentosa**

Paddington, Qld

OF course John Howard was not wearing his thinking cap when Laurie Oakes asked him to opine about Barack Obama. Howard was always a gauche person. The idea that any American wouldn't instinctively leap to the defence of his country — particularly a basketball player who knows all about "hardball" — was unthinking of Howard.

Still, Kevin Rudd appears to be a superb replacement in the foot-in-mouth category.

**David William Hall**  
Southport, Qld

SO Ayman al-Zawahiri doesn't seem to be overjoyed that Barack Obama has been elected to be the next US president. Presumably John Howard's outrageous comments that al-Qa'ida would be delighted if Obama won the election will now be withdrawn and the president-elect will get an appology.

**Barry Everingham**  
Malvern

OBVIOUSLY al-Qa'ida No 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri didn't fall for the line "Change we can believe in".

**A. Khat**  
Ryde, NSW

ALLEN Arthur (Letters, 20/11) claims those critical of the achievements of John Howard and his Government, are "Howard haters". Those trumpeting such achievements must be Howard hagiographers.

**Chris McKimm**  
Karangi, NSW

TO revisit the lies and deceit of the Tampa and children overboard is too much, causing me for the first time ever, to switch ol' Aunty off. Will now read Obama's book, I suppose.

**Des Wallace**  
Brisbane, Qld