



# Australia and Human Rights: Situating the Howard Government

*Caroline Fleay*

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## **Australia and Human Rights: Situating the Howard Government** Caroline Fleay

The Howard government's term in office in Australia from 1996 to 2007 is often portrayed as one where Australia retreated from its international human rights obligations. Throughout this era a range of government policies attracted much criticism for downplaying or ignoring human rights. Less attention has been given to the human rights policies of previous Australian governments and the heritage they provided for the Howard government. Situating the policies of the Howard government within those of previous Australian governments provides a greater understanding of human rights in Australia. This book examines human rights policies in Australia in three key areas: human rights in Australia-China relations; responses to asylum seekers and refugees; and, engagement with human rights at the United Nations. These areas highlight where the Howard government clearly deviated from some of the more positive human rights policies of its predecessors. The book also challenges the perception that Australia has a proud history of human rights policy by revealing where the Howard government continued or revived policies of earlier Australian governments that were not consistent with international human rights standards. Such an understanding of human rights in Australian policy is imperative for informed analysis and debate on current and future policy trends.

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