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STATEMENT

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John Howard on Ansett executive payouts

In contrast to the Howard Government's tough talk before last year's election, today the Prime Minister had no observation to make on the reported \$25 million in payouts to executive staff following the Ansett collapse.

When asked in Parliament whether it is fair that executives can award themselves such payouts when Ansett's most loyal workers are still waiting for their full entitlements, the best he could do was say such payouts are "a bit rich". Amid the waffle, one sentence stood out:

"I make no observation on the particular conduct."

Before the election, sniffing the public mood, the Howard Government was falling over itself to condemn the Ansett and Air New Zealand managers –

"we will stand in the shoes of the individual employees and we will seek recovery from Air New Zealand" (John Howard, Hansard 19/9/01)

"The idea that senior management in Ansett should be paying themselves huge bonuses at the time that they were flying their airline into the ground borders on the obscene." (Tony Abbott, Hansard 18/9/01)

"I think if you want to look to the real causes behind what happened to Ansett, I think the managers there, have a pretty heavy responsibility. Now, this is obviously going to be worked out in the courts." (Peter Costello, Press conference, 3/10/01)

"The Government has made clear that those responsible for the Ansett collapse will be vigorously investigated to the full extent of the law." (John Anderson, Press release, 15/10/01)

Since the election, there have been no prosecutions by ASIC and no further criticisms from the Howard Government.

The workers and creditors who were left without a secure future by the Ansett collapse deserve better than the Howard Government's silence and inaction on corporate mismanagement.

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