



PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

**MESSAGE: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
STRENGTH BASED STRATEGIES 2006**

I am delighted to send my greetings to all those attending the International Conference on Strength Based Strategies being held in Hyderabad, India from 10-12 November 2006.

Community engagement has many great rewards, helping individuals enrich their lives through greater connection with their communities, and helping to build stronger and more cohesive communities. Government, business, communities and individuals working together can achieve far more than any group acting alone could.

This International conference, which being convened in India has a high level of involvement by Australians, allowing maximum value to be obtained through the engagement of local practitioners. I am very proud that there are many Australian experts participating. In Australia we do very well in this important area, but we have a lot to learn from others in an international context. This conference provides an excellent opportunity to explore issues of interest to the Asia-Pacific Region and India to share experiences of community engagement and best practice and to develop more effective ways for us all to work productively together.

The Australian Government recognises the value of individuals and communities contributing to the development of innovative responses to social issues. The government funds a range of activities that encourage communities to develop locally based solutions to social issues under the \$490 million Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

I am delighted by the high level of interest shown in this conference. The topics to be explored span a broad spectrum including strength based approaches to substance abuse, the provision of aid and developing the leadership role of young people within local communities. This forum provides a valuable opportunity to discuss these important issues. I wish you every success over the next three days of the forum.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'John Howard'.