

## Costello plays down PM biography comments

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**Federal Treasurer Peter Costello has downplayed comments he made in a biography of Prime Minister John Howard.**

Extracts of the book, published in Fairfax newspapers today, reveal Mr Costello remains bitter about a leaked 2001 memo from then Liberal Party president Shane Stone, in which he cops much of the blame for the Government's woes.

He is reported as saying he read it as "an attempt to finger him for the Government's maladies."

And Mr Costello appears to blame Mr Howard's office for the leak, telling the book's authors only one copy was written and given to Mr Howard, yet somehow the memo made its way to a reporter.

But Mr Costello says the leak is way down the list of things he worries about.

"To this day I don't really know what it was about and to be frank, I don't really care," he said.

"Of all the things I worry about on a daily basis, including the international economy, the oil price, the state of the Australian dollar, the labour market, inflation and the monetary policy, a Shane Stone memo of 2001 is pretty low down on the list."

Mr Howard has told Adelaide Radio 5AA that he did not leak the memo.

"I never sought to damage Mr Costello," he said.

"I've always sought to promote his role as treasurer. I regard him as the best treasurer Australia has had.

"The Shane Stone memo is of no consequence to either of us, that was 6 years ago.

"But just for the record it was not leaked by me or anybody at my behest."

### Fiscal record

In other extracts from the book, Mr Costello delivers a blunt assessment of Mr Howard's fiscal record.

He is reported as saying Mr Howard's time as treasurer in the Fraser Government was not successful in terms of interest rates or inflation, and he was not a great reformer.

Mr Costello is playing down the revelations, including the fact that he and his wife have never been invited over to dinner with John and Janette Howard, unlike other senior ministers.

"Where I dine with my wife is a matter for me," he said.

"This is not important stuff to me. It doesn't worry me. I'm just as happy eating fish and chips on a beach."



*Peter Costello says he is more worried about the economy than a 2001 memo leak. (File photo) (AFP: Torsten Blackwood)*

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