



## Beazley warns on Kokoda Track:

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**FEDERAL Labor leader Kim Beazley has warned Prime Minister John Howard not to bungle the heritage of the Kokoda Track as had happened with the preservation of Gallipoli.**

Mr Howard has sent a high-level delegation to Papua New Guinea to inspect the proposed mine site on the historic World War II track, where Gold Coast-based company Frontier Resources plans to extract an estimated \$1.3 billion worth of gold.

Mr Beazley said he was "seriously concerned" about the mine proposal.

"We already know from our experience at Gallipoli what happens when John Howard takes his eye off the ball," the Labor leader said in Melbourne.

"He took his eye off the ball in Gallipoli and actually encouraged, and his ministers encouraged, a process where critical elements in the battlefield were in fact ruined by changes.

"We must not see that happen on the Kokoda Trail. It's very important.

"We'll be keeping a very careful watch on what John Howard does to make sure that the Kokoda Track is not wrecked."

More than 600 Australian soldiers died along the track during World War II and thousands of Australians make the pilgrimage to Kokoda every year.

Mr Howard told Southern Cross Radio today while he respected the laws of Papua New Guinea, Kokoda was enormously important to Australia.

"I'm quite concerned about it and I did send a mission," Mr Howard said.

"I'll be getting a report from them ... and I'll be interested to hear what they've got to say.

"We are very interested and we don't intend to have it run away from us without anything that can be done being done."

Frontier has warned against "foreign government intervention" in the proposal.

The 96km Kokoda Track runs through Frontier's 540sq km exploration area, which also contains nearly \$400 million worth of copper.

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