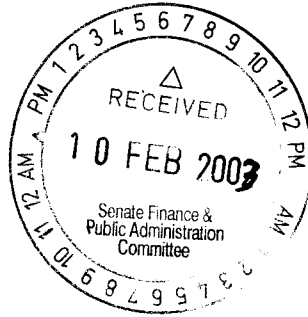




THE HON ALEXANDER DOWNER MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Mr Malcolm Gray
President
International Cricket Council

- 7 FEB 2003

Malcolm
Dear Mr Gray

As you will know from public statements, it is the Australian Government's firmly held view that the World Cup matches currently scheduled in Zimbabwe ought not to be played in that country.

Furthermore, Australia's position is that current arrangements should be altered on a one-out-all-out basis with no World Cup matches to be played in Zimbabwe.

I understand that Australia's position is shared by the governments of the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the Netherlands, although we accept that there is no consensus on this issue amongst the governments of ICC members.

Our opposition to the World Cup matches proceeding in Zimbabwe is motivated partly by the desire to prevent the Government of Zimbabwe from using the Australian cricker team as a propaganda tool to portray Zimbabwe as a normal and safe country, when in reality this could not be further from the truth. The Government of Zimbabwe continues to subvert democracy, human rights and the rule of law well beyond the failures enumerated in the 2002 Commonwealth election report, and Australia has joined a number of other countries in imposing targeted sanctions against members of the Mugabe regime.

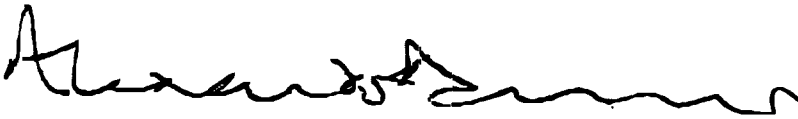
However, we are also deeply concerned about the closely related issue of security - not just the immediate security of the players themselves, but also the safety of spectators and the general public.

I have been following developments in Zimbabwe closely, particularly in the lead-up to the World Cup, and I am aware of the ICC's positive assessments of security arrangements for the scheduled matches in Harare and Bulawayo. I have also received a detailed report from Australia's High Commissioner to Zimbabwe, Jonathan Brown, on security preparations in Bulawayo, following Mr Brown's visit to that city from 29 to 31 January. A copy of the report was sent to you on 3 February.

The report raised a number of disturbing issues – in particular, the concern that a disproportionate police response to demonstrations planned to coincide with World Cup matches in Zimbabwe would inflame the situation and give rise to violence. Unfortunately, the Zimbabwean security forces have a clear record of heavy-handed responses even to peaceful and legal gatherings.

The Australian Government believes that in a society such as ours we should not seek to restrict the movement of Australian citizens who are engaging in lawful activities. Therefore while our position is that matches should not be played in Zimbabwe, we recognise that the World Cup is an event organised by independent sporting organisations and that it is a matter for those organisations to decide whether or not the matches are played in Zimbabwe as scheduled.

Yours sincerely



Alexander Downer