



EMBARGO: 5:00 pm

## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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### ELECTORATE TALK

It is quite clear that the Soviet Union has no intention of withdrawing its invading troops from Afghanistan. It is now almost 5 months since Soviet tanks rolled onto Afghanistan soil.

It was the first time that Russia had stepped outside its iron curtain to suppress, with its own forces, a sovereign, non-aligned Third World country.

Since then, the Soviet Union has steadily increased its invading forces, and built up the infrastructure to support them. The situation for the people of Afghanistan has worsened in recent weeks.

All this is in complete defiance of international law and contemptuous of the overwhelming United Nations vote which soundly condemned the Soviet invasion.

We recognised at the outset, and that recognition has since been hardened, that boycotting the Moscow Games is the most effective way of bringing home to the Soviet people, and their masters, that the invasion of Afghanistan is internationally condemned.

We also recognised then, as now, the sacrifice we would be asking our athletes to make. As I told Federal Parliament in February, asking the Australian team to stay away from the Moscow Games is not a step to be taken lightly or happily, least of all by a country like Australia which has a distinguished Olympic record.

Australia is a great sporting nation. It is a nation which remains committed to the Olympic ideal, but it is also a nation which has a role in international affairs.

We are not, and cannot be, detached from international events in a world as tense and inter-dependent as it is now. Whether we like it or not, the decision on whether or not Australia goes to Moscow is one that goes far beyond sport.

When the Government first announced its response to the Soviet invasion, we included a request to the Australian Olympic Federation that it not send a team to Moscow. In doing so, Australia was one of the first countries to support the call of its ally, the United States, for a boycott of the Moscow Games.

Our decision was immediate. It was necessary. It was right then, and it has been proved right since.

The Australian Olympic Federation has been aware of our views on the Moscow Games from the start and we have spoken and written to the Federation on a number of occasions. I have met with its President and Secretary, while Mr. Anthony, as Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Peacock and Mr. Ellicott, spoke to its full Executive last month. Mr. Anthony also addressed the full Federation meeting before it considered its position on April 19.

At that meeting, the Australian Olympic Federation took a most responsible decision which allowed it to continue to monitor the international situation. It was aware, when it voted then, that the United States Olympic Committee had decided against participation in Moscow. I am sure this fact weighed heavily in the AOF deliberations.

Later this week, the Australian Olympic Executive meets again to take a decision on whether an Australian team will go to Moscow. Since its last meeting, there have been a number of significant events, which I trust the Australian Olympic Federation will again take into account.

First, the West German Parliament voted by a margin of 446 votes to 8, with 9 abstentions, that their Olympic team should not go to Moscow. The West German Olympic Federation announced just two days ago that it would not go.

The situation is the same in Canada, where the Olympic Association voted by 137 votes to 35 to reject the invitation to go to Moscow.

So the United States, West Germany and Canada have decided not to go to Moscow. And when to that is added all the other countries - many from our own region - it is clear that an effective boycott is already in place.

The Japanese Government has made a public announcement favouring a boycott. In doing so, it noted that the aim of the Olympic Games is to help build a better and more peaceful world through sport, thereby creating international goodwill.

It noted that the host Government of the Olympic Games is required to observe strictly the Olympic spirit, and has to bear the heavy responsibility of ensuring an atmosphere which enables the athletes of participating countries to take part in the Games with the blessing of the whole world.

The armed intervention into Afghanistan by the Soviet Union evoked a severe condemnation by international public opinion, to the effect that the Soviet action harmed the spirit of peace and friendship. The Japanese Government could not be other than seriously concerned over those facts.

In Latin America, in recent days, Argentina has become the first major nation in that region to reverse its previous decision and now supports a boycott.

In our own region alone, China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Fiji, have at Government level, and in many cases at Olympic Committee level, decided to support a boycott.

The number of teams which will attend gets smaller every day. It is in these circumstances that the Australian decision on attendance at the Moscow Olympics must be made.

It is my view, it is the view of the Government, that an Australian Olympic team should not go to Moscow, that it should support the effective boycott which is now in place.

I am sure that that is also the view of a great majority of concerned and responsible people right around Australia.