



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

FRIDAY 23 MAY 1980

OLYMPIC GAMES

The Government has learned with regret that the Executive of the Australian Olympic Federation, in exercising its own independence of government, has rejected the strong advice of the Australian Government and today decided to send an Australian team to Moscow.

In recent days, the Executive has been kept closely in touch with the view of the Government and with latest developments. The Government had indicated that an effective boycott is already in place with the United States, Canada and West Germany, amongst 40 countries determined to stay away from Moscow.

The decisions of these countries have been taken against the background of the continued Soviet invasion and repression of the people of Afghanistan, of the build-up of Soviet strategic facilities in Afghanistan, with certain consequences for the reach of Soviet military power over the Middle East and the Indian Ocean.

The Government had stressed to the Executive of the Olympic Federation that the decision being made today was not one involving sport and sport alone. It was one involving the future of all Australians, especially of young Australians.

I pray that those Olympians who do go to Moscow will not pay the price that many of those who went to the Berlin Olympics paid once the World War started in 1939.

I pray that the Soviet Union will not interpret this and other decisions of Olympic Federations as a weakening of Western will, as Nazi Germany did in 1936.

The Government has repeatedly stated that the highest interests of national security are involved; that the Western world is now, with all the energy and determination that it can command, seeking to prevent the early years of the 80's slipping inevitably to global conflict as did the later years of the 1930's.

The Executive of the Australian Olympic Federation had an opportunity to contribute to that paramount objective by placing Australia first. It is with profound regret that I recognise that they did not take that opportunity.