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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Sorry John, it's just not cricket

March 8, 2010

Chairperson of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Bev Manton has joined calls for the International Cricket Council to refuse former Prime Minister John Howard's nomination to its executive.

Ms Manton backed the call by Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement CEO Neil Gillespie – father of Jason Gillespie, the only Aboriginal person to play at the test level in the modern history of the game. Mr Gillespie recently wrote to the ICC urging them to refuse John Howard's nomination.

“I commend Mr Gillespie on his stance and assure him that the NSW Aboriginal land rights movement stands right behind him,” Ms Manton said.

“I too was bowled over to hear that a man with John Howard's past could be appointed to a body like the International Cricket Council.

“History has shown John Howard to be opposed to the rights and interests of Aboriginal people.

“During his time as Prime Minister he took away many of our powers, and tried to assassinate our rights. He set out to destroy many of our organizations and representative bodies.

“We thought we were rid of John Howard, but he's popped up again.

“My enduring memory of John Howard will be a red-faced man bashing his hands on the lectern and screaming at the audience during the 1997 Reconciliation Convention.

“That is the same John Howard that the International Cricket Council may soon have in its batting line-up.”

Ms Manton noted that while other sports were moving forward, cricket appeared to take a large step backwards.

“The timing of his nomination is particularly unfortunate for the sport of cricket, given the outstanding work done recently by the National Rugby League in promoting an Indigenous All-Stars game.

“It was a wonderful event, and an exercise in reconciliation and promoting harmony between black and white players.

“The NRL is looking to the future, but it seems International Cricket is looking to the past.”

Ms Manton predicted trouble for the ICC beyond the borders of Australia if it proceeded with the appointment of John Howard.

“John Howard remains the most divisive figure in our recent history, and not just for his appalling attacks on Aboriginal people and their basic human rights.

“Many Australians – indeed many people around the world - will never forget his support for Pauline Hanson and his vocal opposition to Asian immigration.

“For that reason, I’d question his appointment to a Council which oversees a game whose largest fan base is in Asia. I wish the ICC luck in maintaining harmonious relationships with people of colour.”

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