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Leader of the Opposition



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22 July 1986

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1
ENGLAND

Already covered
OK.
31/7.

My dear Prime Minister,

I would like you to know that there is wide understanding and support for your position over the South African sanctions issue here in Australia.

I believe that the majority of Australians regard the Commonwealth as a valuable body. We would all be the poorer if it were seriously weakened or worse still, broken up over this issue.

It is therefore disturbing to me and many of my colleagues that a number of Commonwealth members have ignored a basic Commonwealth principle - viz. the right of each member country to fully determine its national policy.

There are many of us who believe that the recent attacks on Britain and you in particular have been both hypocritical and irrational.

I know that you are as keen as anyone else to see the end of apartheid but that you do not see this being achieved by the use of punitive economic sanctions which would effectively destroy the South African economy. That is a view shared by the Liberal and National Parties here in Australia.

I hope this message of support and understanding is helpful.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

John Howard
(John Howard)