



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION

PRETORIA

Welcome reception for the Australian senior mens' soccer team – the 'Socceroos'

**6.00pm on Thursday 27 May 2010
SANDTON SUN HOTEL, SOUTH AFRICA**

Remarks by Ann Harrap, Australian High Commissioner to South Africa

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to welcome everybody here this evening – and I particularly acknowledge the presence of the King of the Royal Bafokeng Nation – where Australia will be playing our second game against Ghana on 19 June.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen - As many of you would know High Commissioners love the limelight and we very much like talking about our countries, – but we also know when an audience is not really interested in us and would rather engage with more entertaining and dynamic individuals. So I won't take too much of your time – I know your preference is to hear from, and then mingle with, the real stars of the evening – the Australian National Football team, The Qantas Socceroos.

But before I allow you to do so, I do Ladies and Gentlemen just want to say a few quick words about the FIFA 2010 World Cup tournament here in South Africa and Australia's whole-hearted support for it.

First, we are supporting this World Cup by sending a world-class team, and one not-to-be-underestimated, particularly following their strong performance in the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany.

We're particularly proud that Australia was the first team to arrive here in South Africa. Many of the people I have met tonight have said to me that Australia may well be the surprise in this tournament and frankly ladies and gentlemen I couldn't agree more.

Recently the Australian Trade Minister unveiled a new nation brand for Australia – 'Australia Unlimited'. The brand seeks to convey to the rest of the world what we know ourselves as Australians – that we have unlimited capacity, creativity, innovation and diversity.

Australia Unlimited is perhaps also a useful motto for the Socceroos as they take on the world's best – the sky is the limit. Anything can happen – this is football after all and we shouldn't under-estimate the team from 'DownUnder'.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Australia will be one of only five (5) participating teams that will be playing friendly matches here on South African soil in advance of the World Cup – Australia will be playing Denmark on 1 June and the US on 5 June at the Ruimsig stadium. I use the term 'friendly' but my Danish and US counterparts should know that those matches will be anything but.....

To my mind the playing of these friendlies is a real demonstration of our commitment to, and support for, the game and South Africa - because collectively those friendly games will give 10,000 kids from the township areas around Roodepoort a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see a world-class football match. The fact that we have provided that opportunity is I think something about which the Australian team and Football Federation Australia can be very proud.

Australia is also supporting this FIFA 2010 World Cup by sending thousands of fans to support our team, spend money in this economy, and enjoy South Africa's wonderful hospitality. Over 43,000 tickets have been sold to Australians – putting us among the top five nations in terms of ticket sales. By our estimation that means at least 10,000 Aussies on the ground – here to have a great time at what we know will be a fantastic FIFA World Cup.

You all know that Aussies love our sport – we love to compete hard but play fair. But we also like a quality BBQ – or braai – a beer or wine and good conversation, and above all, a positive experience. We know we will get all that and more during this FIFA World Cup here in South Africa.

This is exactly what Australia will be offering to the thousands of South African and other international fans who we hope to welcome to Australia if we are successful in our own bid to host either the 2018 or the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Finally ladies and gentlemen, the Australian Government is proudly and wholeheartedly supporting this FIFA World Cup in South Africa. The Australian Minister for Sport will be in attendance, and depending on how we go in the tournament, others may follow. My ministers have referred openly and publicly to their expectation that this World Cup will be a triumph for South Africa and Africa as a whole. We will also be incorporating a business component with our sporting representation through Business Club Australia - just as the media look to cover action beyond the game, so too does the Australian government look to leverage our love of sport to broaden other linkages.

Of course, there has been much debate inside and outside the country about South Africa's readiness to host this tournament – I think you have well and truly demonstrated that you are ready and we very much look forward to the African showcase over the next month.

I know that most of you will all be supporting *Bafana Bafana* but we certainly hope that the second blow on your vuvuzelas will be for the 'Qantas Socceroos'.

I thank you again Ladies and Gentlemen for joining us tonight. I wish you a very enjoyable FIFA World Cup.