



PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

Thank you for writing to me about Iraq.

Everybody hates war because people get hurt. That is why we try to solve problems by talking. But sometimes talking is not enough.

Saddam Hussein was a very bad leader. He was cruel to his people and did not look after them. He was also a very bad neighbour and bullied and had wars with the countries around him. Sometimes when he was fighting he used weapons which are not allowed. Almost all the countries in the world agree not to use these weapons because they can't be controlled and are made to hurt people who aren't soldiers. Even one bomb can kill thousands of people.

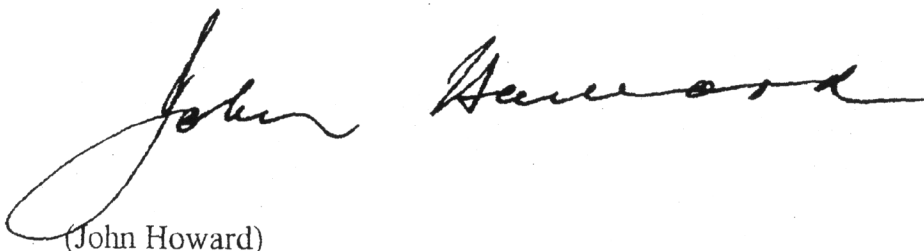
He promised the world that he would get rid of these weapons. But he lied and hid them away. The other countries of the world didn't believe that he got rid of these weapons, so for 12 years they have been trying to get him to admit his lies and keep his promise.

Some countries thought the only way to make sure Iraq doesn't have these weapons was to go into Iraq and destroy them. We joined them because we think that if he gets to keep these weapons other countries will want them and the world will become a more dangerous place for everybody, including Australia.

Saddam Hussein tried to stop us, so there is fighting in Iraq. Even though it is dangerous, many people in Iraq are happy we are fighting Saddam Hussein, because they don't want him for their leader. They want the same type of freedoms that you enjoy. They want to be able to disagree with their government without getting into trouble.

I am sorry the fighting in Iraq has upset you and I am glad you wrote to tell me how you feel. I send you my best wishes for your birthday.

Yours sincerely



(John Howard)