

2 November 2005



MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SINGAPORE

The Hon Alexander Downer  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
Australia

*Dear Minister Downer*

I received your letter of 25 October 2005 with a heavy heart. I fully understand why the family of Mr Nguyen Tuong Van and many Australians must find it hard to accept the President's decision not to grant clemency.

I can only say this: in advising the President, the Cabinet carefully considered all relevant factors of Mr Nguyen's case including his sad personal circumstances and his value as a potential source of information. However, due to the seriousness of the offence and the need to hold firm our national position against drug trafficking, we are unable to change our decision. It was not a decision taken lightly.

I accept that the Australian Government must try its best to help Mr Nguyen. I have also been informed that the Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives has written to the Singapore High Commissioner to convey to the Singapore Speaker of Parliament the text of a resolution passed on 31 October 2005 appealing for clemency. We, on our part in Singapore, have a responsibility to protect the people of Singapore from the scourge of drug addiction, which has destroyed many lives and inflicted great suffering on many families. We also have a responsibility to prevent Singapore from becoming a conduit for the trafficking of illicit drugs in the region. Mr Nguyen imported almost 400 grams of pure heroin which would have supplied more than 26,000 doses to drug addicts.

As the public has been informed that you have written to the Singapore Government, I am releasing this reply to the media.

*Yours sincerely*

*George Yeo*

GEORGE YEO