

Australia bats for Test championship

Cricket Australia (CA) has strongly backed the inclusion of a Test Championship in the international schedule after the current Futures Tours Programme (FTP) ends in 2012.

The Test Championship concept, in a four-year cycle, is likely to provide a fillip to the traditional format.

'Let's face it, generally speaking, the FTP is currently a hotch-potch of bilateral tour arrangements that, given the current volume of international cricket, produces matches that no longer linger in the memory or have lasting meaning,' CA chief executive officer James Sutherland said in his address to International Cricket Council (ICC) member's forum.

Sutherland also said that Twenty20 cricket should complement and not compromise other forms of the game.

'It is not only our foundation, but for all members, possibly with the exception of India, we couldn't survive without it. International cricket is our lifeblood ... we compromise it at our peril.

'To that end, Twenty20 cricket ... whether it is IPL, Champions T20, Pro20, The Big Bash, whatever ... Twenty20 must be designed, structured and promoted so as to complement, not compromise, international cricket.'

Sutherland also warned that the introduction of private ownership of teams - like in the IPL - will also provide challenges to international cricket. 'Given the significance of IPL and its relationship with the BCCI, it is not unreasonable for us all to expect that IPL will seek to preserve and protect international cricket on behalf of all ICC members.'

He also said that international cricket's success depended on all three of its formats being in good shape. 'Unfortunately, in my view, there is currently too much talk of ODI cricket as the problem child or the ugly duckling. The financial success of the modern game has been built on ODI cricket,' he said.

'We owe it to ourselves to ensure that ODI cricket continues to be a popular force in the game.'

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