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BALLARAT TO SHARE IN GAMES TIME CELEBRATIONS

Some of the best artists in the Commonwealth will descend on regional Victoria in March 2006 as part of Games-inspired celebrations.

In Ballarat to announce festivals in four regional centres, the Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Justin Madden, said sport and culture would combine to create an unforgettable moment in local history.

“Commonwealth athletes, officials and spectators will be joined by up to 1,000 top artists in Victoria for the celebrations surrounding the Commonwealth Games,” Mr Madden said.

“Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley are all hosting parts of the Games sport program, and will now host cultural activities as well.”

Details are being finalised, but the festivals are likely to take place in the centre of each town and include a mix of:

- live sites with jumbo screens broadcasting Games events and ceremonies;
- performing arts including music, dance, street theatre and circus acts from India, Canada, Tonga and others;
- collaborative projects between artists and the community to create sculptures, installations and public art reflecting local identity; and
- events focusing on the municipality’s adopted Commonwealth nation.

“These regional festivals are designed to bring people together in one space, offer something to everyone and immerse Victoria in modern Commonwealth cultures,” Mr Madden said.

Festivals will combine with Games-related activities already being planned by Ballarat City Council as part of the Victorian Government’s \$4.5 million *Getting Involved* program.

The Member for Ballarat West, Karen Overington, said the Government would work closely with the Council as it consults with traders, community groups and residents on exactly what shape the festival takes. It’s anticipated the majority of activities will be free or low-cost.

Details of the broader Commonwealth Games cultural festival – including events in Melbourne – will be announced later this year.

Ballarat will host preliminary rounds of the Commonwealth Games basketball program and has adopted India as its ‘second team’.

The XVIII Commonwealth Games will be held from 15 – 26 March 2006 and will bring together 4,500 athletes from 71 nations.