

Media release



FROM THE MINISTER FOR SPORT AND RECREATION, MINISTER FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

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2006 GAMES WILL BE UNIFYING FORCE - MADDEN

The Commonwealth Games in Manchester this year and in Melbourne in 2006 would demonstrate the unifying effect of sport in troubled times, the Victorian Commonwealth Games Minister, Justin Madden, said today.

Mr Madden was addressing a Commonwealth Heads of Government luncheon in Coolumb, Queensland, hosted by Melbourne 2006 the organisers of the Melbourne Games.

Other speakers at the luncheon were British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his Australian counterpart, John Howard.

"The Commonwealth Games is a hugely significant event that celebrates diversity and strengthens the bonds between our countries," Mr Madden said.

"It can provide lasting sport and community legacies and plays an important role in improving the lot of developing nations.

"I am confident that Melbourne will strive to match and even exceed the efforts of Manchester."

Mr Madden said that preparations in Victoria were well advanced with work underway to select a developer for a purpose-built athlete's village, to redevelop the Melbourne Cricket Ground and to expand the main swimming venue.

"We are determined that Melbourne will add value to the Games and we are committed to doing all we can to help future hosts benefit from this special event," Mr Madden said.

The 2006 Commonwealth Games will take place from 15 to 26 March and will mark the 50th anniversary of the Melbourne Olympics.

The Games will involve 6,000 athletes and team officials from 72 countries and are expected to attract a global viewing audience of 1.7 billion people or one-third of the world's population.

Mr Madden said the Bracks Government was providing extensive support to help ensure the 2006 Commonwealth Games were a truly memorable event, in keeping with Melbourne's reputation as one of the world's great sporting capitals.