



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Sport and Recreation

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ALL VICTORIANS “EQUAL FIRST” IN COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Better access for people with disabilities, targeted volunteer opportunities for young people and more respect for other cultures are some of the legacies expected to flow from the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Launching the *Equal First* strategy today, Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Justin Madden, said the State Government would work to boost involvement of traditionally underrepresented groups through the Games.

“The Commonwealth Games bring together the different cultures and ways-of-life that make up the Commonwealth so we can also celebrate the shared ideals that unite us,” Mr Madden said.

“In the 1930s, the Games were one of the first international multi-sport events to include women, and remain the only event to include elite athletes with a disability into the main program.

“We want this spirit to be reflected off the field as well, and have developed the *Equal First* strategy to make the 2006 Commonwealth Games an event that welcomes everyone.”

Some of the key initiatives of *Equal First* are:

- making sure critical Games information (ticketing, events) is available in various formats, particularly for the vision and hearing impaired;
- creating a free training course to enable more young people and indigenous groups to become Games volunteers, and giving them transferable skills in the process;
- providing free, wheelchair-accessible shuttle bus services between public transport hubs and main Games venues;
- extending the Companion Card scheme to Games events, enabling a support person to attend without having to pay for a second ticket; and
- helping communication between cultures by identifying volunteers able to speak other languages.

“In practical terms, *Equal First* is about making it easier for people to find out about, get to and participate in Games events,” Mr Madden said.

“This strategy is also about encouraging groups that are often underrepresented – young people, older people, Indigenous groups and ethnic groups – to be part of all our major events.

“More strategies to help Victoria make the most of the Games will be released soon, including a grants program for getting communities involved and initiatives for our workforce.”

For a copy of *Equal First: Promoting inclusiveness and celebrating diversity through the 2006 Commonwealth Games*, visit www.dvc.vic.gov.au/commonwealth_games or telephone (03) 9655 2006.

Media contact: Kym Carter on 9651 5799 or 0419 294 049 www.vic.gov.au