

Media release



FROM THE MINISTER FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

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COMMONWEALTH GAMES QUEEN'S BATON BRINGS TASTE OF 2006

Victoria will get a taste of things to come in 2006 when the Commonwealth Games Queen's Baton arrives tomorrow en route to Manchester.

The Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Justin Madden, said hosting the Queen's Baton the Commonwealth Games equivalent of the Olympic Torch – had special significance for Victoria this year.

"As Commonwealth Games host in 2006, Victoria is already sensing the excitement connected to this major event and is set to enthusiastically welcome the Baton as it passes through on its way to the Manchester Games," Mr Madden said.

"Arriving in Melbourne on one of the most significant dates on the Australian calendar, ANZAC Day, the Baton will be viewed by a crowd of 90,000 when it visits the Essendon versus Collingwood blockbuster at the MCG.

"Over the subsequent day-and-a-half, the Baton will visit a number of the key venues to feature in the 2006 Games, before being the focus of a special city parade and ceremony.

"I urge all Victorians to get behind the events organised to welcome the Queen's Baton, keeping in mind the next time it comes to our State will be when Victoria is the final destination as host of the 2006 Commonwealth Games."

Mr Madden said the Baton contained a message to the Commonwealth from the Queen

that would be read out at the opening ceremony of the Manchester Commonwealth Games on 25 July.

Tomorrow, Victorian Governor John Landy will join Mr Madden in the official party to receive the Queen's Baton on behalf of all Victorians, while marathon legends Rob de Castella and Steve Moneghetti will be among the famous athletes to run the Baton around the MCG.

Having departed Buckingham Palace on 11 March, the Baton will pass through 23 Commonwealth countries before a 50-day tour of the UK and Northern Ireland and then the Manchester Games.

The Baton's next port of call after it leaves Melbourne on Friday will be New Zealand.