

Media release



FROM THE MINISTER FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR NAMED FOR GAMES HANDOVER

The handover ceremony at Manchester's Commonwealth Games in August would provide a spectacular preview of the Melbourne 2006 Games, with internationally renowned artistic director, David Atkins, appointed as producer.

The Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Justin Madden, said Mr Atkins would direct Victoria's performance piece to follow the ceremonial handover of the Commonwealth Games Flag at the Manchester Games.

Melbourne-born, Mr Atkins was the executive producer of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

"This appointment is an indication of the scale of the event Victoria will host when the Games comes to our State in 2006," Mr Madden said.

"Introducing Victoria to the world as the next Commonwealth Games host, Mr Atkins is set to present a spectacular taste of the fantastic event our State has in store for the 2006 Games.

"The 10-minute ceremony will be staged as part of the Games closing ceremony in the new City of Manchester Stadium in front of an audience of 38,000, with an expected TV audience of 500 million."

Mr Madden said both he and Premier Steve Bracks would attend the Manchester closing ceremony.

He said the contents of the handover event and details of performers would remain a closely guarded secret until it took place on August 4, as was traditional with such ceremonies.

"With Mr Atkins's huge experience and talent behind it, the handover event is bound to give a fantastic jump-start to the four-year countdown to the 2006 Games in Victoria."

David Atkins marked his 30th year in show business in 2001 and has produced, staged and created events as diverse as the TV Week Logie Awards, Royal Command Performances and musical theatre such as *Hot Shoe Shuffle*, *Chicago* and his current smash hit *Singin' in the Rain*.

Mr Madden said the Commonwealth Games Flag would be brought to Melbourne from Manchester by the Premier and would remain here until the 2006 Games.

"Meanwhile, we will be working hard to ensure Victoria stages a Games that is inclusive, accessible and a credit to all Victorians," Mr Madden said.

Today's announcement coincides with the arrival in Melbourne of the Queen's Baton – the Commonwealth Games equivalent of the Olympic Torch.