



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

There's been non-stop action at Games headquarters since the last Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games newsletter.

With less than 18 months before the Opening Ceremony, a small contingent of Games organisers joined representatives from the Victorian and Australian Governments in Athens for the 2004 Olympic Games – the last international multi-sport event before 2006.

I was fortunate enough to witness the awe-inspiring Olympic Opening Ceremony, orchestrated by Jack Morton Worldwide (JMW). It instills enormous confidence in me that this magnificent group of men and women are working on our own ceremonies, and we look forward to working with them over the next 18 months on producing the most spectacular Commonwealth Games ceremonies ever.

Melbourne 2006 representatives also presented updates on preparations for the Games to the Commonwealth Games Federation in Athens, observed a number of key operations and provided a briefing for media and the international travel industry on Games preparations.

In the 2004 Federal Budget in May, the Australian Government announced its contribution of more than \$270 million. This follows the Victorian Government contribution of \$697 million.

The generous Federal commitment includes a cash contribution of \$102.9 million, and is a clear demonstration that the Games will be a truly national event.

I am extremely pleased to welcome the National Australia Group to the M2006 Team as a major official partner. As part of this arrangement, Visa International has also become an official Partner and MLC, a National Company an official Sponsor.

Leading financial firm PricewaterhouseCoopers has been appointed the official professional services advisory company for the Games.

Several other key sponsorship announcements are imminent.

With the Athens Olympics over, it's next stop Melbourne.



Ronald J. Walker AC CBE

NEXT STOP MELBOURNE

COMMONWEALTH ATHLETES SHINE IN ATHENS



Image courtesy AAP Images

Some extraordinary sporting performances in Athens by the world's finest athletes will create an unprecedented level of competition at the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Commonwealth countries won a staggering 122 Olympic medals at the 2004 Olympic Games – 39 gold, 42 silver and 21 bronze – confirming traditional rivalries and igniting new ones.

The emergence of South African swimming, with the men's 4x100 freestyle team winning its first swimming gold medal and breaking a world record in the process, gives Australia's all-conquering swimming team some fresh competition.

Kenya's prowess in the middle distances was enhanced at the Games, winning the trifecta in the men's 3000m steeplechase. Who could forget the three Kenyans urging each other on

along the home straight? And what about Great Britain's Kelly Holmes, who became the third woman in history to win both the 800m and 1500m?

And the performances of the Caribbean countries in the sprints, particularly the women's, sets the tone for an exciting showdown in Melbourne. Jamaica won gold in the women's 4 x 100m relay final and the women's 200m. Tonique Williams-Darling of the Bahamas won the prestigious 400m event.

In cycling New Zealander Sarah Ulmer won gold and broke the world record in the women's individual pursuit.

...continued from page 1

The Australian team also had a remarkable Olympics, recording its greatest ever Olympic medal haul in an 'away' games. It finished fourth overall in the medal tally, and crowned its greatest ever Olympian – Ian Thorpe. Australia won 49 Olympic medals - 17 gold, 16 silver and 16 bronze.

The re-emergence of Australia's female swimmers was a highlight, with stand-out performances from the world record-smashing women's 4x100m medley relay team, and Petria Thomas who won three Olympic gold medals including her first individual gold.

Surprisingly it was Australia's divers that could lay claim as our most successful team. In an amazing performance our seven divers won six Olympic medals - one gold, a silver and four bronze.

Our cyclists have ended their toughest Olympic campaign with a stunning six gold medals, two silver and two bronze.

And what about those Kookaburras? The Australian men's hockey team won its first Olympic gold medal, breaking a 48-year drought.

It was, as International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge declared, an "unforgettable Games" – as will be Melbourne in March 2006.

MASCOT SETS KARAKING PACE

Since his launch in April Karak, the Official Mascot of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, has been busy spreading the word about the Games in his own high-flying way.



Karak's first official outing was with Cathy Freeman, the 'Face of the Games', where the pair visited Melbourne's St James College. Student Ryan Powell, 12, was the hero of his class for winning a promotion through the *Herald Sun* newspaper.

Next on Karak's journey was the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE), the biggest tourism trade event in the southern hemisphere. He was the star attraction at two Games-themed lunches at ATE, with over 3000 guests. He also posed for snaps with visitors to the Melbourne 2006/Qantas stand, and mixed with the VIPs, meeting the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Rt Hon. Donald C McKinnon.

It seems everyone wants to be seen with Karak. In August he joined the Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Mr Justin Madden, in launching the state-of-the-art river barge which will patrol the Yarra River to keep the iconic waterway clean. Days later, he helped Mr Madden and Victorian Education Minister Lynne Kosky launch the 2006 Commonwealth Games education pack, encouraging all school students to become involved.

Top left: Karak and friends at the launch of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games education pack.

Left: Minister Madden and Karak on the litter barge that will patrol the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers.

M2006 IN ATHENS

M2006 Chairman Ron Walker and CEO John Harnden travelled to Athens to observe the staging of the 2004 Olympics, including the stunning opening ceremony, and to promote the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 17 August, they were joined by Victorian Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Justin Madden, Federal Minister for Sport, Rod Kemp and ACGA President, Sam Coffa in reporting to the Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly on Melbourne's planning for the Games. The report was very well received with Michael Fennell, Chairman of the Commonwealth Games Federation confirming that all nations were very much looking forward to coming to Melbourne.

NEXT STOP MELBOURNE FUNCTION

Three days later, it was standing room only as more than 250 guests including Mr Fennell, journalists and international sports representatives attended a 'Next Stop Melbourne' function hosted by the Australian Ambassador to Greece, Stuart Hume, at the historic Zappeion Media Centre.

Speaking at the event, Victorian Tourism Minister John Pandazopoulos said the 2006 Games was the next most significant multi-sport event on the sporting horizon.

"We expect around 40,000 international and 50,000 interstate visitors to come to Melbourne – and indeed Victoria – in March 2006," Mr Pandazopoulos said. "The 2006 Commonwealth Games will be a spectacular celebration of sport and culture."

Two time Olympic 1500m champion, and international ambassador for Melbourne 2006 Lord Sebastian Coe, was among the high profile guests at the function.

"I am particularly excited about the performance of Commonwealth athletes on the athletics field at Athens," Lord Coe said.

"It augurs extremely well for a fantastic athletics competition in Melbourne in 2006, at one of the most iconic sporting venues in the world – the Melbourne Cricket Ground."



AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT JOINS MELBOURNE 2006 TEAM

The Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Volunteer Program and Queen's Baton Relay are just some of the Melbourne 2006 programs provided assistance by the Australian Government in this year's Federal Budget.

The Minister for the Arts and Sports, Senator Rod Kemp, announced in May that the Government's total contribution to the Games was around \$273 million.

Senator Kemp said the Government looked forward to a number of national benefits and lasting legacies from the staging of the Games.

"This funding will ensure that Australia delivers a secure, harmonious and successful event for all Australians to showcase our sporting, cultural and business achievements," Senator Kemp said.

"The Games reaffirms Australia as a major participant in the Commonwealth community and position us as a major participant in the Commonwealth."

Commonwealth Games Chairman Ronald J Walker was delighted by the announcement.

"This generous contribution from the Australian Government will ensure the Games are truly for all Australians," Mr Walker said.

A total cash contribution of \$102.9 million will be directed into specific programs including the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, ensuring they reflect Australia's unique culture and way of life. Federal support for the Volunteer Program acknowledges the vital role volunteers play in the successful staging of large events and in the wider community. Support for the Queen's Baton Relay will ensure as many Australians and Commonwealth nations as possible get to enjoy the thrill of the baton passing through their country and town.



A spectacular Opening Ceremony on 15 March 2006 (top) has been assured after Federal Sports Minister Senator Rod Kemp (above, with Melbourne 2006 Chairman Ronald Walker) announced funding in the May budget.

Other programs funded include:

- Elite Athletes with a Disability program
- Airfare Subsidy Scheme for Athletes from Developing Commonwealth Nations
- Melbourne 2006 Technical Officials Program
- Security services and support
- Non-security related services and support
- Sports assistance through existing Australian Sports Commission
- Visa applications waiver and tax exemptions

Senator Kemp said it was also important to remember that the Commonwealth Games is more than a sporting spectacle.

"The Games will unite all Australians through a shared sense of pride in our country and our capacity to deliver the very best in major sporting events.

"I am confident that by working together, Australia will deliver the best Commonwealth Games ever."

The federal funding follows the Victorian Government's commitment of \$697 million to the Games.

CULTURAL PROGRAM COUNTDOWN

There may be more than 18 months to go until the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, but the guessing game has already begun as to who will take centre stage at the \$12 million curtain-raiser, the Cultural Program.

Regardless of who's there, one thing's for certain – it will be a show-stopping festival over 12 days reflecting the cultural diversity of the Games.

Mr Bracks said an array of free and low-cost events would kick-start the countdown to Victoria's biggest event.

"The Commonwealth Games is the culmination of Victoria's three great loves- sport, art and diversity. We encourage this festival to allow all Victorians to showcase their cultures," Mr Bracks said.

The program, jointly funded by the Victorian and Federal Governments, will be delivered with the help of two leading Australian arts companies. Global Art Projects will coordinate exhibitions, and Arts Projects Australia will coordinate performing arts events.

Federal Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp, said the Australian Government was proud to be involved in the program.

"The Cultural Program provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase the diversity of Australian culture and arts to the rest of the Commonwealth", Mr Kemp said.



Mary Coustas (aka 'Effie') was one of 133 Victorian torchbearers in the Athens 2004 Olympic Torch Relay.

OLYMPIC SPIRIT REIGNITED BY FLAME

Golden girl Betty Cuthbert returned to the scene of her 1956 Olympics triumph, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, on 6 June when the 2004 Athens Olympic Torch Relay turned a grey Melbourne day into pure gold.

More than 130 torchbearers joined Cuthbert as the flame made its 60km journey throughout Melbourne visiting the Royal Children's Hospital, the Lonsdale Street Greek precinct, Albert Park, and the MCG before culminating with basketball star Andrew Gaze lighting the cauldron at Federation Square.

The Melbourne 2006 Queen's Baton Relay team was seconded by the Australian Olympic Committee to coordinate the high-profile leg along with the Victorian Olympic Council and Sport and Recreation Victoria. The Games' Publicity and Media Communications team coordinated all media coverage of the event. More than 10,000 mentions of the torch relay were recorded between 31 May and 6 June alone.



IN BRIEF

ALL VICTORIANS TO SHARE IN COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Melbourne International Shooting Club in Port Melbourne and Lilydale's Melbourne Gun Club will join Bendigo's Wellsford Rifle Range as official shooting venues for the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

In May, Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden announced a Victorian Government investment of \$2.5 million to develop better infrastructure across the three locations.

The shooting program is expected to be contested by over 300 elite athletes from more than 35 Commonwealth nations.

CABINET VISITS GAMES HEADQUARTERS

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks and his Cabinet visited Games headquarters in July to meet the team behind Victoria's largest sporting event.

A team of 16 ministers joined Mr Bracks and Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden to congratulate the team on the successful foundations created for the Games.

"It is an exciting time for all Australians when we know we have such a talented team creating the biggest and best event to ever hit Victoria," Mr Bracks said.

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