



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

As we celebrate Two Years To Go, I'm proud of the many achievements of the Organising Committee.

Most recent was the announcement of the Games Mascot, 'Karak', on April 2 at Government House by Prime Minister John Howard and Premier Steve Bracks. And on March 15, we marked the 'Two Years To Go' milestone with a photo shoot of some of Australia's most talented athletes charging through a giant banner. It could not have been more apt, with our elite sports stars on the hallowed MCG turf where the XVIII Commonwealth Games will burst into life on March 15, 2006.

The energy and enthusiasm of all participants at the photo shoot instils enormous confidence in me that the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games will be the most successful ever staged.

Our Ceremonies Team - featuring Australia's top artistic talent, Nigel Jamieson, Doug Tremlett and their colleagues at Jack Morton Worldwide - are now ensconced at Games Headquarters and are set to thrill the world like never before in 2006.

Another key accomplishment of the Organising Committee has been in sponsorship - an area integral to the success of the Games. Qantas was announced as the inaugural Sponsor just three months ago, with Hudson, a worldwide leader in recruitment and human resource consulting, and 'Australian Law Firm of the Year' Allens Arthur Robinson (AAR) closely following suit. Commonwealth Games sponsorship is one of the most powerful marketing opportunities available to corporate Australia, and more announcements will be made in the near future.

Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games CEO John Harnden and I have briefed interstate Premiers on Games preparations. Their support has been unanimous - both in terms of the Games themselves and the specific programs their communities are interested in.



Ronald J. Walker AC CBE

OFFICIAL GAMES MASCOT REVEALED

The best-kept secret of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games - Karak, the Official Mascot - was unveiled by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. John Howard and the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Steve Bracks, under clear blue skies at Melbourne's Government House on April 2.



Left: The Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. John Howard pats a South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, while the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Steve Bracks, Melbourne Zoo bird handler Tristan Bird and Official Games Mascot Karak look on.

Right: Karak, the Official Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Mascot.

And whilst he was surrounded by VIPs - including Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden, Federal Minister for the Arts and Sport Senator Rod Kemp, Melbourne 2006 Organising Committee Chairman Ronald Walker, and the CEO of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association Perry Crosswhite - it was Karak who stole the show.

Arriving on his own red chariot, a shiny Holden ute, with close friends (and elite athletes) Cathy Freeman, Tim Matthews and Maxine Seear, Karak was given a guard of honour by 20 saxophonists from the Victorian College of the Arts. Celebrity sax player Wilbur Wilde, who led the performers in a rousing rendition of *"The Funky Bird Song"*, then brought Karak to meet the VIPs. A media throng was present at Government House for the first outing of the Games' Official Mascot.

MC Eddie McGuire then introduced the aptly-named Tristan Bird, a birdkeeper from the Melbourne Zoo, who brought a live version of Karak, a South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, onto the stage. Tristan

told the audience about Karak's plight - there are fewer than 1000 South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoos left in Australia.

Finally, school children from Keon Park Primary School excitedly surrounded Karak, before being involved in media opportunities with all VIP guests.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Howard and Mr Bracks said Karak was selected because the South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo embodied the spirit of the Games.

"Karak - named after his birdcall - is distinctly Australian and welcoming to all, making him the perfect Mascot to unite Australia from the bush to the city," Mr Howard said.

Mr Walker said, "Karak is a bit of an Aussie larrikin, encompassing the active, outdoor lifestyle adopted by all Australians."

The most important step in helping protect Karak is to preserve his habitat - existing stringybark and buloke trees.



FREEMAN'S ON TRACK

Almost a year after retiring from athletics at the top, Cathy Freeman's relishing life in the slow lane.

Retiring from athletics has given Commonwealth Games and Olympic golden girl Cathy Freeman time to catch her breath – and find a new passion.

As the Face of the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, Cathy is diverting her boundless energy to helping children.

"I adore working with kids," she said.

"After all, they are our future and their talent and potential has to be looked after, nurtured and nourished as best we can.

"I am passionate about connecting with people, children in particular, so I've been working with my sponsors on some of their youth and community initiatives and working with them towards Melbourne 2006."

Cathy burst onto the Australian sporting scene in 1988, stealing the world spotlight with an unforgettable Commonwealth Games record. She then achieved her childhood dream of winning Olympic gold on home soil, coupled with the honour of lighting the Sydney cauldron.

Her decision to officially retire on July 17 last year has freed Cathy from the demands of training and competition, allowing her the "luxury" of time for family and friends in Melbourne.

But if past efforts have been any guide, her rest will be short lived.

"I haven't found my next big gold medal challenge yet," Cathy said.

"But trust me, when I find it, I'll go after it with the same determination and perseverance."



ON THEIR BIKES!

Premier Steve Bracks and Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden go bush to unveil the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Mountain Bike venue.

Mr Bracks announced the \$3 million project on February 17, promising to upgrade and expand existing trails at Lysterfield Park.

"This venue will be one of the tangible legacies from hosting the Commonwealth Games," he said.

The new State Mountain Bike Course will be at the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, 35km south-east of the CBD. The course will offer about 14km of trails, including a 6km elite competition course.

WALL OF FAME

A host of athletes and officials have signed the dignitaries' wall at Melbourne 2006 Headquarters. Signatories include athletes Louise Dobson (hockey), Monette Russo and Stephanie Moorhouse (gymnastics) and Sarah Fitz-Gerald (squash); politicians from Premier Steve Bracks to the UK's Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn; and the Governor of Victoria John Landy.

Victorian Governor John Landy (left) and gymnast Stephanie Moorhouse sign the "Wall of Fame".





ABOVE: Charging through the specially-made 'Two Years To Go' banner were Kyle Van Der Kuyp (athletics); Irina Lashko (diving); Brooke Hanson (swimming); Hung Pham (badminton); Neil Mottram and Allie Douglas (basketball); Justin Whitehead (boxing); Anna Baylis (cycling); Stephanie Moorhouse (gymnastics); Travis Brooks and Andrew Smith (hockey); Jessie Eva (lawn bowls); Liz Boniello (netball); Alan Thompson (Rugby 7's); Lauryn Ogilvie (shooting); Cameron White (squash); Miao Miao (table tennis); Luke Bell (triathlon); Corran Hocking (weightlifting); Ellen Steele (swimming).

LET THE COUNTDOWN BEGIN

Australia's top athletes came together on the iconic MCG to celebrate Two Years To Go.

With just two years to go until the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, Australia's top athletes were bursting to celebrate.

And what better way to mark the occasion than on the hallowed MCG turf, complete with a giant footy banner (held

up by Melbourne 2006 and Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination staff) proclaiming "Two Years To Go".

Obviously enjoying the spectacle, the athletes tore through the elaborate banner in record time.

Minister for the Commonwealth Games, Justin Madden, joined in the celebrations with President of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association, Sam Coffa.

SPONSORS SIGN UP

Corporate Australia is lining up to be part of the best Commonwealth Games ever.

Big names in business are signing up for their slice of Commonwealth Games glory.

First on board was Qantas, continuing the airline's 50-year relationship with the Commonwealth and Empire Games.

Worldwide recruitment leader Hudson was the next company to sign up, followed by Australian law firm Allens Arthur Robinson.

New sponsors are coming forward as interest intensifies in the Games, both nationally and internationally.

Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Organising Committee Chairman Ronald Walker said sponsorship of the Games was arguably the most powerful marketing opportunity currently available to corporate Australia.

Qantas Chairman Margaret Jackson said the company was looking forward to sharing the spirit of the games by supporting a wide range of activities, including the Volunteer Program and the Queen's Baton Relay.

Hudson Chief Executive Officer Anne Hatton was thrilled to be a sponsor. The firm will also recruit the hundreds of staff required for the Games to run smoothly.

Allens Arthur Robinson, the "Australian Law Firm of the Year", has also signed to work alongside Melbourne 2006 in-house legal team, bringing outstanding legal experience in sports management to the Commonwealth Games.



Margaret Jackson, Chairman, QANTAS.

EAD SPORTS PROGRAM FOR MELBOURNE 2006 REVEALED

Melbourne 2006 will offer more events for Elite Athletes with a Disability (EAD) than any other Commonwealth Games.

The Melbourne 2006 Sports Program will integrate a diverse range of EAD events, thanks to a landmark decision by the Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly in Jamaica last November.

The expanded program, featuring four sports and 12 events (see table) will allow more EAD athletes from developing nations to take part.

“The Commonwealth Games leads the world in terms of integrating Elite Athletes with a Disability into the broader sports program and Melbourne is committed to advancing this process,” Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden said.

Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Chairman Ronald Walker promised a fully integrated EAD Sports Program, building on the outstanding successes in Manchester.

His promise was echoed by Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games CEO John Harnden, who said the expanded program was the best and fairest opportunity for all athletes to excel on a world stage.

“This decision reflects the core values we strongly adhere to in the Organising Committee and those are equality and maximising participation opportunities,” Mr Harnden said.

EAD sprint champion Tim Matthews applauded the decision. “This is going to be a fantastic event where sports for disabled athletes are fully integrated into the overall program,” he said.

“I know all EAD athletes can’t wait to compete in Melbourne in 2006.”

EAD SPORTS PROGRAM

SPORT	EVENT	
AQUATICS – SWIMMING*	50m	Men’s Freestyle
	100m	Men’s Freestyle
	50m	Women’s Freestyle
	100m	Women’s Freestyle
ATHLETICS	100m	Men’s T12 (visually impaired)
	200m	Men’s T46 (amputee)
	Discus	Men’s (seated)
	100m	Women’s T37 (cerebral palsy)
	800m	Women’s T54 (wheelchair)
	Shotput	Women’s (seated)
TABLE TENNIS	Singles	Women’s (wheelchair open)
POWER-LIFTING	Bench Press	Men’s Open

*Swimming disability classifications to be confirmed after the Athens Olympics.

IN BRIEF

IP LAWS INTRODUCED

Laws protecting the value and integrity of Commonwealth Games intellectual property were created by Victorian Parliament in October, ensuring success in both sporting and commercial arenas.

The new laws regulate the use of the Games logo and any other references to the event. They also stop individuals and organisations from making sponsorship deals or links with the Games without authorisation from the Melbourne 2006 Organising Committee.

DELHI AWARDED 2010 GAMES

India has won the right to host the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, marking an historic first for the subcontinent.

The Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly chose Delhi at a recent meeting in Jamaica. It will be the first Commonwealth Games staged in India.

LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES OF A LIFETIME

The Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games will be the biggest event of its kind in Victoria, offering unprecedented opportunities for economic, social and environmental benefits in both the city and the regions.

Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden has briefed representatives from 72 local communities across the state on how they can benefit from the Games. Ideas may include festivals, tourism, new infrastructure, pre-Games training and involvement in the Queen’s Baton Relay and opening and closing ceremonies.

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