

Saturday 20 August 2005

Victoria Hosts Australia's Biggest Cultural Festival

The streets of Melbourne and regional Victoria will host Australia's biggest ever festival of arts and culture as part of the 2006 Commonwealth Games celebrations.

The \$12 million Victorian and Federal Government funded *Festival Melbourne 2006* will bring together artists and performers from across Australia and the Commonwealth for a celebration of contemporary music, dance, exhibitions, circus and street theatre.

The Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks was joined by the Federal Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp to unveil the look and content for the festival at Federation Square.

"Festival Melbourne 2006 will be fresh, exciting and contemporary, putting the world's best performers and artists alongside the world's best athletes," Mr Bracks said.

"The vibrancy and diversity of the festival will highlight Melbourne as one of the world's truly cosmopolitan cities, strengthening Victoria's reputation as both an arts and sporting capital.

"Events will be free and open to all members of the public."

Senator Kemp said the Australian Government was proud to be involved with *Festival Melbourne 2006* as part of the Commonwealth Games.

"Festival Melbourne 2006 offers a wonderful opportunity to involve a great many individuals, and organisations from across the cultural sector, showcasing the diversity of Australian culture and arts to the rest of the Commonwealth," Senator Kemp said.

Mr Bracks said the festival encompassed three artistic programs, performing arts, exhibitions and a spectacular youth program.

"The performing arts program will offer an exciting range of acts including circus, street performance, dance, music and acrobatics.

"The exhibitions program will include photography, installations, Indigenous carving, textiles and moving image. The youth program, delivered by Next Wave, will offer a colourful program of dance, music, community art projects, street theatre and visual arts made for, by and with young people."

Mr Bracks also announced that the Victorian Government would present a series of regional festivals and live sites.

"Live sites across Melbourne and regional Victoria will be hubs of festival events and performances as well as broadcasting live coverage of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and competition events," Mr Bracks said.

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Metropolitan live sites will be located at Alexandra Gardens, Melbourne Museum, Docklands, Queensbridge Square, Federation Square and South Beach Reserve, St Kilda.

Regional live sites will also be located in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Moe.

“In addition to the live sites, Melbourne’s renowned cultural venues and precincts from inner city laneways to the leading arts institutions will also host a range of festival activities,” Mr Bracks said.

“These locations include the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, the National Gallery of Victoria, RMIT Gallery, Bourke St Mall and the Arts Centre forecourt.”

Senator Kemp said artists from across the Commonwealth would also work with local artists, choirs, dancers and public workshops to help put together activities and performances.

“Acts like Australia’s Strange Fruit, Jamaican reggae legend Jimmy Cliff, the Tongan Royal Military Corps and the Dream Engine will also show the extraordinary mix of cultures that make up the modern Commonwealth of Nations,” Mr Kemp said.

“Members of the public will also be able to take part in artist-led workshops that range from traditional indigenous carving to crocheting, and Australian artists will exchange knowledge and skills with their overseas contemporaries.”

Senator Kemp also thanked the Australian and international arts communities for their enthusiasm and support for the festival.

“I’d like to thank the many countries, including Australia, all the artists, performers and arts and cultural organisations for their tremendous contributions to *Festival Melbourne 2006*.”

Festival Melbourne 2006 will start in the weeks leading up to the Games with parts of the exhibition program continuing after the Games.

For more information on *Festival Melbourne 2006* visit www.dvc.voc.gov.au/commonwealth_games or call the Commonwealth Games Information Line on 03 9655 2006.

A list of live sites, venues and performers is attached with further information to be released between now and the start of *Festival Melbourne 2006*.

The XVIII Commonwealth Games will be held from 15 – 26 March 2006 bringing together 4,500 athletes from 71 nations.

Festival Melbourne 2006
Key venues and live sites

Melbourne Museum – live site, exhibitions and the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival
Queensbridge Square, Southbank Promenade – live site
National Gallery of Victoria – exhibitions and outdoor aerial performances
CBD – roving entertainers
Sidney Myer Music Bowl – free music and performances
Federation Square – live site, dancing, music, Indigenous showcase and more
State Library of Victoria – Commonwealth Writer’s Prize
Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) – film festival and exhibitions collaborative exhibition with the National Gallery of Victoria
Bourke Street Mall – street theatre and performances
Docklands – youth festival activities and live site
Alexandra Gardens – live site, circus aerial performances, music and more
Immigration Museum – Commonwealth Photographic Award exhibitions
RMIT – textile exhibitions
St Kilda – South Beach Reserve live site.