

Friday 27 August, 2004

BOOST FOR BENDIGO GAMES ACTIVITIES ON AND OFF THE FIELD

The Minister for Youth Affairs and Member for Bendigo East, Jacinta Allan, today gave starter's orders for Victorians to get set to participate in the 2004 Commonwealth Youth Games.

At a launch in Bendigo, the host city for the event, Ms Allan unveiled the Games program and ticket information and announced a further funding boost of \$20,000 for the Bendigo community to get involved in cultural and volunteer activities off the field.

Ms Allan said the \$20,000 Community Engagement Program took the Bracks Government's investment in the major youth sporting event to \$770,000.

"The Commonwealth Youth Games is an opportunity for budding sports stars to develop their talent, but it is also an opportunity for the people of Bendigo to leave a legacy to the region from this world-class event," she said.

The Community Engagement Program will involve:

- organising a Cultural Day on 4 December 2004;
- an 'Adopt a Commonwealth Country' project for school students;
- a Youth Games Forum for young people to brainstorm ideas for off-field events;
- creating volunteering opportunities for the local community

The Minister for Commonwealth Games, Sport and Recreation, Justin Madden, welcomed the program, saying it would provide lasting social benefits to Bendigo.

"The community program also underlines that hosting the Games is about more than sport – it's about bringing people together and celebrating our great diversity," Mr Madden said.

He said the experience of the Youth Games would put Bendigo in pole position to coordinate the region's celebrations of the XVIII Commonwealth Games in March 2006.

The second Commonwealth Youth Games will held in Bendigo from 29 November to 4 December 2004, and will bring together 1000 junior athletes from 24 countries to participate in 10 sports including: Athletics, Badminton, Boxing, Cycling, Gymnastics, Lawn Bowls, Rugby 7's, Swimming, Tenpin Bowling and Weight Lifting.

Tickets will be available for purchase from Wednesday 1 September through Ticketek. For full games information visit www.bendigo2004.com