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Architects Appointed to Roof Margaret Court Arena

A joint venture between Melbourne's NH Architecture and international firm Populous will design a major refurbishment of Margaret Court Arena, Minister for Major Projects Denis Napthine announced today.

Dr Napthine said the project, also known as the Western Precinct project, will include a roof for the arena and will increase the venue's capacity, providing a major boost for Melbourne's sporting facilities.

"Building an operable roof over Margaret Court Arena and enlarging its capacity is the final element of the \$363 million first stage of the Melbourne Park redevelopment," Mr Napthine said.

"The project will provide the Australian Open with a third all-weather court and will benefit other sports including netball and basketball.

"NH Architecture is a respected Melbourne firm which designed the award winning Melbourne Convention Centre and the recently opened Myer Melbourne Redevelopment.

"Design partner Populous is an internationally renowned firm which specialise in sports arenas, having worked on the redevelopment of Wimbledon. Populous also worked on the Melbourne Park Masterplan with COX Architects ensuring consistency with the overall precinct design."

The Western Precinct project will add an extra 1,500 seats to the 23-year-old Margaret Court Arena, bringing its capacity to 7,500 and filling an important gap in Melbourne's famous suite of sporting venues.

"When complete, Margaret Court will provide a useful mid-range venue for netball and basketball, filling the gap between the 3,500-seat State Netball and Hockey Centre and 11,000-seat Hisense Arena," Dr Napthine said.

"Having a venue of this size will be an important part of the growth of these popular sports and the continued development of Victoria's unparalleled sports precinct.

"Fans will benefit from a new undercover concourse connecting Margaret Court Arena to Rod Laver Arena as well as a more comfortable environment to watch matches," Dr Napthine said.

Melbourne and Olympic Parks Chairman Russell Caplan said the Western Precinct project was an exciting development which reinforced Melbourne's international reputation as the home of sport and entertainment.

"The Margaret Court Arena refurbishment adds to our outstanding suite of world-class venues. The Melbourne and Olympic Parks precinct will boast three international standard arenas, all with retractable roofs - an international football stadium, and elite training and recreation facilities," Mr Caplan said.

A process to select a builder for the project is underway with an appointment expected later this year. Construction will start in mid 2012 and is scheduled to be operational in 2015.

Elsewhere at Melbourne Park work is underway on the Eastern Plaza tennis facility featuring 21 new indoor and outdoor tennis courts.