



Victoria

The Place To Be

Media release

From the Premier of Victoria

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\$363 MILLION BOOST KEEPS AUSTRALIAN OPEN IN MELBOURNE

Melbourne Park will remain the home of the Australian Open for generations to come thanks to a multi-million dollar transformation of the world-class sporting precinct.

Premier John Brumby said a major facelift to Margaret Court Arena – including the installation of a new retractable roof and an additional 1500 seats – and a new Eastern Plaza that will house 21 new courts, were the major highlights of the \$363 million first stage of the redevelopment.

“Victorians are passionate about their sport and the Australian Open is one of the major highlights on Melbourne’s world-class international sporting calendar,” Mr Brumby said.

“The Open is the biggest sporting event anywhere in the world for the month of January and is the largest annual event in the southern hemisphere – that’s why the Victorian Government is making this significant investment to keep this prestigious tournament in Victoria.

“More than 600,000 people attended the 2009 Australian Open, with a third of those coming from interstate and overseas, generating more than \$160 million for the Victorian economy.

“This major redevelopment is the single biggest investment in the precinct since the Australian Open moved to Melbourne Park from Kooyong more than two decades ago and it will ensure Melbourne continues to lead the way as the world’s best sports city.

“The world’s best players love coming to Melbourne and our significant investment in Melbourne Park will guarantee the Australian Open remains in Victoria until at least 2036.”

Mr Brumby said Stage One of the redevelopment included:

- A major upgrade to fully enclose Margaret Court Arena, including the installation of a retractable roof and additional seating to increase crowd capacity to 7,500;
- A new Eastern Plaza, incorporating eight new indoor courts and 13 outdoor courts for elite training and general public use as well as change room facilities and a gymnasium;
- Refurbishments to Rod Laver Arena and Hisense Arena; and
- Additional parking and a footbridge linking Melbourne Park to the Rectangular Stadium.

Sports Minister James Merlino said the project was a major boost for both players and fans.

“The Australian Open is one of our great events and its popularity will continue to grow, with annual crowds of more than one million people forecast in the next 20 years,” Mr Merlino said.

“That’s why the Brumby Labor Government is investing heavily in our sporting infrastructure, like the Melbourne Park precinct, so we can continue to attract the big sporting events to our state.

“As well as extending the life of Rod Laver Arena, Margaret Court and Hisense Arena, our \$363 million investment will also help open up opportunities for other sports, such as netball and basketball, as well as concerts and other events.”

Tennis Australia President Geoff Pollard said the redevelopment provided a major boost for the tournament and the future of the game in Australia.

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“This is an historic day for tennis and the culmination of a lot of work by a lot of people,” Mr Pollard said.

“Full credit goes to the Victorian Government for its ongoing support, and its foresight in recognising the future growth of tennis and the Australian Open.”

Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust Chairman Russell Caplan said the announcement would help Melbourne Park continue to attract big events.

“This redevelopment reinforces our position as the world’s premier sporting and entertainment precinct,” Mr Caplan said.

Mr Brumby said immediate works would begin shortly after the Australian Open and include improved connections between Rod Laver and Hisense Arena, the installation of new underground water recycling facilities and re-landscaping of the oval.

“Melbourne Park is part of the Melbourne and Olympic Parks Precinct, which each year hosts around 600 events and attracts more than two million people,” Mr Brumby said.

Stage One of the project is scheduled for completion in time for the 2015 Australian Open.