

AUSTRALIA'S GREEN OLYMPICS

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Introduction

Sydney, Australia's oldest and largest city, is well advanced in its preparations to host the 2000 Olympics around the spectacular harbour that will be the backdrop to the Games.

It will be the second time that Australia, now with a population of 17.8 million, has hosted the Games. In 1956, the world went to Melbourne, capital of the State of Victoria, for what became known as the "Friendly Games."

Sydney's aim is to continue that tradition and to stage an event which will celebrate the spirit of the Olympics and respond to current ecological concerns by managing the 2000 Games as a Green Olympics.

Australia has enjoyed a long connection with the Olympics. It took part in the 1896 Games at Athens and is one of only three countries to have attended every one since.

In the lead-up to the Games, Sydney is:

- redeveloping existing facilities at the major site into an Olympic Park containing an Olympic Stadium and venues for 14 sports, an Olympic Village for 10 000 athletes and 5000 officials, a media centre and a technical officials' village;
- adjusting existing facilities in the Sydney Harbour zone close to the city centre for eight more sports and media broadcasting facilities; and
- accommodating five more sports at other existing city locations.

Olympic Park

Under the Sydney plan, no athlete will have to travel for more than 30 minutes from the Olympic Park to a venue, and none will be more than 45 minutes from training facilities.

Only road cycling, shooting and canoeing and rowing will be held away from the Olympic Park or harbour zone sites and all are within the 30-minute time frame.

Olympic Park is the centrepiece of the Games. Situated at Homebush Bay on the upper reaches of Sydney Harbour, it is only 14 kilometres from the central business district. It already houses sport, hockey and softball centres and construction has begun on athletic and aquatic facilities worth \$300 million.

A new Sydney showground being built on the site will provide exhibition pavilions for four more Olympic sports, indoor training venues and a show arena for the equestrian event in the modern pentathlon.

The Olympic Village for athletes and officials will also be situated in Olympic Park. As well, a media centre will be established nearby, along with a media village which will accommodate 3000.

The biggest additional facility to be built at Homebush Bay will be the 80 000-seat Olympic stadium, which will be started in 1996. At the same time, work will begin on the gymnastics, handball and volleyball venues as well as the upgrading of the Holsworthy shooting range.

In October 1993 the then Premier of New South Wales, Mr John Fahey, emphasised the State's commitment to managing the Games as a Green Olympics.

Addressing State Parliament, he said the Sydney Olympics would be “an international role model for how ecologically sustainable development can be implemented through the construction of facilities, the design of the athletes' village and management of the Games”.

Olympic Village

The Olympic Village will be a model of environmental awareness in architectural design. Environmental guidelines, developed with assistance from Greenpeace Australia, address the problems of global warming, ozone depletion, biodiversity, air, soil and water pollution and resource depletion.

Solar power will be used for street lighting, water heating and air conditioning. Bathing and kitchen water will be treated on-site for reuse on gardens and for washing vehicles.

North-facing buildings will provide warmth in winter and cooling in summer, and there will be a ban on environmentally harmful gases in insulation, refrigeration and air-conditioning units.

Greenpeace says it hopes the International Olympic Committee will apply the environmental criteria used by Sydney for all Olympic bids in the 21st century.

The Sydney Harbour zone, the other major venue for the Olympics, will intro-

duce competitors and spectators to one of the world's most spectacular waterways.

At Darling Harbour, on the edge of the central business district, many activities will take place in a harbour-side setting recently upgraded to a major convention centre.

The Sydney Entertainment Centre, the five halls of the Sydney Exhibition Centre and the Sydney Convention Centre will together provide state-of-the-art venues for basketball, boxing, judo, table tennis and weightlifting.

The Pyrmont-Ultimo region, immediately west of Darling Harbour, will provide the venue for the international broadcast centre for the electronic media and a second media village to accommodate 3000.

Sydney Harbour and the Pacific Ocean beyond Sydney Heads will provide a magnificent setting for yachting events.

Rushcutters Bay, home of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, was chosen in consultation with the International Yacht Racing Union as the location for the shore-based facilities for the Olympic yachting regatta.

The modern Sydney football stadium at Moore Park, with venues in other cities, will host football events up to the semifinals. Nearby, the Commemorative Pavilion will be the venue for all wrestling events.

The number of sporting and supporting facilities already in place or in the planning stage was a key factor behind Sydney's successful bid for the 2000 Games. Plans by the Federal and State Governments to provide \$3 billion for

improved transport infrastructure within the city will enhance this advantage and ensure good access and transport facilities for all Games visitors.

A new bridge between the city and the Olympic Park and a new ferry service to the park are among the facilities that will boost the Games' success.

Harbour city

Sydney Harbour will provide a stunning backdrop to the Games. When Captain Arthur Phillip, in his search for a suitable location for a new British colony, sailed into the harbour in January 1788, he described the sensation as “sailing through granite gates which yield a reluctant entrance to a paradise of waters”.

The harbour, he said, was, “the finest in the world, in which a thousand sail of the line may ride in the most perfect security”.

With 245 km of foreshore, the harbour dominates the city. Golden beaches fronting the Pacific Ocean stretch almost 100 km from Palm Beach in the north to the Royal National Park in the south, and provide an outdoor magnet for Sydney's people.

The Sydney Harbour Bridge, opened in 1932, unites the city and movement to and fro has been significantly upgraded with a new harbour tunnel.

Pittwater and the Hawkesbury River to the north and Botany Bay, Cook's River and Port Hacking to the south provide a combination of bushland and waterscape that is a backdrop for much of the city's housing.

A kind climate, with average temperatures ranging from 18C to 25C in the summer, and from 8.6C to 16C in the winter, is another attraction and temperatures during the Games, from 16 September to 1 October will be ideal, from 16C to 21C.

Sydney is a cosmopolitan city, with a sophisticated lifestyle that reflects Australia's dynamic economy and culture. Its four million people include about 140 separate ethnic groups, with a substantial proportion from Asian countries.

The new cultures have changed the face of the once predominantly British population, with Asian and European restaurants flourishing and ethnic radio and television outlets taking their place alongside the national and commercial broadcasting stations.

This rich mixture of varied landscape, tradition and population has proved a major attraction for foreign visitors. Two thirds of all international visitors to Australia spend at least one night in Sydney and the Sydney Opera House and Darling Harbour are among the attractions that rated Sydney their most popular destination.

Sydney has ample accommodation for the Games and visitors will find a wide range available, from five-star hotels on the harbour to simple camp sites in bushland settings. Eighty five per cent of Sydney's commercial accommodation is within one hour's travel of the Olympic Park.

Australia has always been a self-help society and the 100 000 volunteers who have already signed up to work at the Games continues that tradition.

The Surf Life Saving Association of Australia, a volunteer organisation that monitors the safety of Australia's beaches, has pledged its 70 000 members nationwide to help with the staging of the Games.

The association will also stage an international surf life saving tournament at Sydney's famous Bondi Beach to coincide with the Olympics.

Pre-Olympic festivals

The 2000 Olympics will be held one year before the centenary of the declaration of Australian federation, when the six separate colonies united to form a single nation.

A series of festival activities lasting more than three years and culminating in the Harbour of Life festival in the month leading up to the Games will tell the story of Australian development.

In 1999, Australia will take its culture to the international community with a program called Reaching the World. The best and newest of Australia's performing arts will be presented, interpreting the spirit of Australia and its evolving multicultural society and giving emphasis to the work of Australia's Aboriginal artists and performers.

In 2000, the cultural Olympiad concludes with the Harbour of Life, a great festival of Nations lasting from Friday 23 June to Tuesday 24 October to coincide with the staging of the Olympic Games. It will give expression to humanity's hopes for a better world and for lasting peace, security and friendship.

The variety of the world's cultures, its many faiths and social traditions will be shown, not as a cause for conflict but as the essential condition of a civilising and unifying growth and harmony.

The festival will conclude with a Hymn to the Future of the World, sung by a children's choir drawn from every nation under the Olympic Flag.

Source: DFAT