

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia's sporting greats launch new National Sports Museum at MCG

Some of the biggest names in Australian sport today launched the National Sports Museum at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), prior to tomorrow's official opening to the public.

At a special media preview of Australia's first fully-dedicated sports museum ahead of tonight's gala event on the MCG arena, a number of Australia's most famous sporting personalities – including **Ron Barassi**, **James Hird**, **Collingwood Football Club** (Australian football), **Liz Ellis** (netball), **Shane Gould** (swimming), **Cathy Freeman** (athletics), **Shane Warne** (cricket) and **Tony Charlton** (media) - were revealed as National Sports Museum ambassadors.

"Australia's sporting history is marked by great successes, great stories and truly great moments," The Hon. Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister of Australia said. "Sport speaks a universal language in this country – we are a nation of players and enthusiasts. The new National Sports Museum will tell the Australian sporting story – from its early beginnings to the present day – and will offer all Australians the opportunity to celebrate the heroes, the moments and achievements of our rich sporting culture."

The National Sports Museum will showcase a range of sporting subjects, including Australian football, basketball, boxing, cricket (including the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame), cycling, golf, hockey, netball, Olympic and Paralympic Games, rugby union, rugby league, soccer and tennis.

It will also tell the MCG story, feature the Sport Australia Hall of Fame and include an extensive interactive area. Visitors will enter via Gate 3 and immerse themselves in some of the finest sports-related artefacts in the world.

The National Sports Museum will open for the first time at 10am tomorrow, Thursday March 13.

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“Today signals the end of the northern stand redevelopment journey which started some nine years ago and which, for the National Sports Museum, has involved the transformation of an empty concrete shell to the magnificent facility we view today,” said Melbourne Cricket Club president David Meiklejohn.

“The museum provides a substantial footprint to further showcase our Olympic and other sporting artefacts which have been collected, donated or loaned to the club over many years.”

Some of the more well-known items in an extensive collection include Don Bradman’s baggy-green cap, Australia’s first ever Olympic gold medal, Ian Thorpe’s swimsuit, the inaugural Brownlow medal and the Malvern Star bicycle that Hubert Opperman rode in his record-breaking 24-hour cycling marathon in Sydney 1940.

MCG Trust chairman John Wylie said the National Sports Museum would not be possible without our athletes, many of whom attended today’s launch.

“The MCG is the home of sport and holds a cherished place in the hearts and minds of the people of Victoria”, said Mr Wylie. “On their behalf, I acknowledge all those athletes, past and present, who have donated or loaned their valuable mementos to be shared with the broader community.”

For more details about opening hours, admission prices and other background information, please visit www.nsm.org.au or contact one of the media liaison personnel listed below.

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The National Sports Museum is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Department of Health and Ageing.

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**Digi-Beta vision of the National Sports Museum will be available for TV networks who were unable to attend this morning’s launch.