



The Hon Graham Annesley MP

Minister for Sport and Recreation

MEDIA RELEASE

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THE UNITED NATIONS OF AFL

Minister for Sport and Recreation, Graham Annesley, today welcomed footballers from around the world to the Harbour City when launching the 2011 AFL International Cup under the watchful eye of Sydney's most famous landmarks the Harbour Bridge and Opera House.

The Australian football carnival kicks off a two week international tournament at Blacktown in Western Sydney tomorrow and involves teams from: Canada, China, Denmark, Fiji, France, Great Britain, India, Ireland, Japan, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peace Team (comprising of both Israeli and Palestinian players), Sweden, South Africa, Timor Leste, Tonga and USA.

“*The International Cup* is another excellent example of the cultural power of sport and the AFL is to be congratulated for their innovative concept linking cultures from around the world,” Mr Annesley said.

“I’m particularly pleased to see the Peace Team involved in the competition as it highlights sport as a universal language which unites people and breaks down barriers.

“This is a valuable lesson to all of us,” Mr Annesley added.

The Peace Team comprises 13 Palestinian and 13 Israeli players who have been training together for the past nine months in readiness for the Australian Rules International Cup which commences on Saturday 13th August.

For the first time five women’s teams will also participate; Canada, Ireland, Papua New Guinea, USA and a combined Australian multicultural and Indigenous team.

Community venues in Western Sydney will host matches from Saturday August 13 to Saturday August 20 and the carnival will continue in Melbourne at Royal Park on Wednesday August 24 and Friday August 26.

Mr Annesley said, “I’m very pleased organisers selected the Blacktown International Sports Park to host the Inaugural **Festival of Nations**.

“I’m confident the *International Cup* will create plenty of interest in the region especially with the pending entry of the GWS Giants into the AFL competition in 2012.

“Yet again the O’Farrell/Stoner Government is honouring its commitment to have major sporting events brought back to Sydney and regional NSW,” Mr Annesley said.