

WALES TEACH AUSTRALIA A LESSON IN RUGBY



The economic benefits Australia derives from hosting Rugby World Cup 2003 will be vastly different than the Welsh experience as co-host in 1999, according to the Australian Trade Commission's (Austrade) Chief Economist Tim Harcourt.

Mr Harcourt said Rugby World Cup 2003, being staged by the International Rugby Board and the Australian Rugby Union, stands to bring substantial direct and indirect economic benefits, not only during the Tournament itself also in the lead up to the event.

Mr Harcourt has predicted Australia will experience most of the benefits that Wales achieved as co-host in 1999, plus many more.

"In terms of direct benefits, the Australian economy is expected to get a boost of around \$800 million to \$1 billion, however a major indirect economic benefit is the opportunity for international business to network around the Tournament," he said.

"Wales co-hosted Rugby World Cup 1999 with three other nations, and there were long periods of time where there were no games in the country. The proximity to the other co-hosting nations meant visitors had the option of staying for a short period of time and then moving on," said Mr Harcourt.

"There are clear international business benefits from rugby networking given the sports' global standing, strong professional base and corporate involvement. Austrade research shows that 50% of all new Australian exporters are 'accidental exporters', that is, they enter exporting by a chance meeting or contact - something which is bound to happen at Rugby World Cup 2003.

"International visitors to Rugby World Cup 2003 in Australia will be more likely to attend matches and stay for longer periods, with spin-offs for local hospitality and tourism. The tyranny of distance will be actually working for us on this occasion.

"With this in mind, the Australian Government has set up Rugby Business Club Australia. The program, which is spearheaded by Austrade and endorsed by the Australian Rugby Union, will bring together Australian and international business people who are coming out to watch the Tournament. Over 1,000 companies have already signed up, 41 per cent from overseas markets."

"The development of infrastructure, however, is one area where Wales has benefited considerably. The Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, built specifically for Rugby World Cup 1999, now stands as one of the major sports venues of the world.

Australian Rugby Union Managing Director and CEO John O'Neill has unveiled the first Rugby World Cup ticket ahead of a mass mail-out of more than one million tickets in July. To date the ARU has sold one million tickets to Australian fans for the Tournament that begins with the Opening Ceremony and Opening Match on October 10th and concludes with the Final on November 22nd.



Inspired by the values of Australian Rugby such as national pride and camaraderie, the design centres around a contemporary illustration of a ball in motion mirroring the dynamic movement and fluid nature of the game. The striking blue/green landscape chosen reflects the colours of the Rugby World Cup 2003 logo as well as the "True Colours" of Australia and rugby. The design incorporates a hologram foil stamp and barcode, to prevent forgery.

At a development cost of over \$600 million, Telstra Stadium was purpose built to host the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. It was the largest, most technologically advanced Olympic Stadium ever built, seating over 110,000 people. The stadium has had major redevelopment work done throughout 2001 and 2002 to reduce the size and convert the playing field into an oval shape to enable Australian Football to be played. Stage two of the project was completed in March 2002 and included the removal of the two stands at either end, remodelling of the lower level of seating into an oval shape. Stage two of the project will include a roof at either end which used to be occupied by the two large stands, as seen in the photo above, this will be completed in 2003.

