

## **MELBOURNE CUP CELEBRATES 150 YEARS**

### ***Celebrations for the 150th running of the Melbourne Cup commence with announcement of increased prizemoney and inspirational re-design of the iconic trophy***

With the 2009 Emirates Melbourne Cup now part of history, the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) is already looking ahead to 2010 when it will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> running of the 'race that stops a nation' in an diverse program of initiatives, focusing on the rich heritage of the Melbourne Cup.

The VRC today announced it would partner with the Victorian State Government to ensure the occasion is appropriately recognised with a range of events and activities planned both nationally and overseas.

"The VRC is delighted to receive the support and participation of the Victorian State Government in the Melbourne Cup's 150 year celebrations," said VRC Mr Rod Fitzroy, Chairman, VRC.

"The program of events will provide an opportunity to reflect on the impact that the Cup has had on the development of our city and our nation," said Mr Fitzroy "For almost 150 years, the Melbourne Cup has remained a constant in an ever changing world.

"The countless triumphs and tragedies that are synonymous with the running to the Cup each year now form part of our national identity."

To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> running of the Melbourne Cup, the VRC plans to highlight the rich history of the race and celebrate the role it has played in the lives of all Australians, since its first running in 1861.

"It will be a celebration which is intrinsically linked with the past, present and our future, which acknowledges the heroic tales, epic battles and significant interweaving of the sport with the social fabric of communities throughout Australia, across the Tasman and around the globe," said Mr Fitzroy.

"The Melbourne Cup has had such a significant impact on Victoria, from its humble beginnings in 1861 to the international phenomenon it is today," said Victorian Premier, Mr John Brumby. "It is the people's race and has become ingrained in Australian culture, a position that has not been cemented just over the last decade, but for a large part of this country's written history.

"Victoria has played a significant role in this rich heritage and we are proud to be partnering with the VRC in 2010 to celebrate this momentous milestone," said Mr Brumby.

To commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> running of the Melbourne Cup, Mr Fitzroy announced that the 2010 Emirates Melbourne Cup would receive a substantial boost in prizemoney, which has been made possible through the partnership of the VRC and its principal partner Emirates.

"The VRC is pleased to announce that the 2010 Emirates Melbourne Cup prizemoney will be elevated to \$6 million, an increase of \$500,000," said Mr Fitzroy. "This will see the Emirates Melbourne Cup retain its position as the richest handicap race and the most iconic 'two-mile' race in the world, and ensure its impact continues to be felt around the globe."

Mr Fitzroy also announced that the 2010 Emirates Melbourne Cup trophy would return to the design zenith, of the illustrious 1930 Cup won by the legendary Phar Lap.

"The 'three handled loving cup' was first conceived by 'master jeweler' James Steeth in 1919, who continued to refine the design each year until 1930, where it would seem he was happy he had created a trophy fit for the nation's great race," said Mr Fitzroy.

"However, for economic imperatives, the size and gold content of the Melbourne Cup was reduced after 1930 and has not been made to those generous proportions ever since.

“From 2010 onwards, the Emirates Melbourne Cup trophy will be made to reflect the high point of James Steeth’s craftsmanship,” said Mr Fitzroy. “It will remain 18ct gold and weigh 4kg including the traditional blackwood base, with the total value increasing from \$125,000 to \$150,000, and in the great tradition of the trophy, still be hand crafted by the VRC’s appointed jewelers, Hardy Brothers.”

The VRC and the Victorian State Government will unveil a number of events and initiatives to be staged for the Melbourne Cup 150 year celebrations in the coming months, but have confirmed that the program will ensure all Australians have the opportunity to be part of this significant milestone event.

“We will celebrate our great heroes, and our great stories, but we want every Australian to unite in the celebrations as we position the Melbourne Cup for the next 150 years, ensuring it provides an enduring legacy for all Australians while retaining its place on the world stage,” said Mr Fitzroy.

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**The following is not for publication**

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