

## AUSTRALIA'S RICHEST SPORTING TROPHY ARRIVES IN TOKYO

(April 26, 2007: Tokyo, Japan) Australia's premier racing club, the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) has arrived in Tokyo to promote the bilateral trade, tourism and investment links between Australia and Japan businesses, at an exclusive business dinner, which will also see a special tribute to Emirates Melbourne Cup winner, *Delta Blues*.

Visiting Japan as part of an international tour of the Emirates Melbourne Cup - which has seen the world famous trophy travel to destinations such as London, Dubai, Ireland, New York and Hong Kong - the VRC will highlight Melbourne's business opportunities to prominent racehorse owners and business leaders at an exclusive dinner event hosted by respected racing journalist Mr Naohiro Goda, at the Grand Hyatt Tokyo on Thursday, 26 April.

The dinner, which is supported by the Japan Racing Association, will make a special acknowledgement to *Delta Blues*, with special guest attendance by owner representative and breeder, Mr Katsumi Yoshida, trainer, Mr Katsuhiko Sumii and jockey, Mr Yasunari Iwata. The VRC also plans to present Mr Katsumi Yoshida with the 2006 Emirates Melbourne Cup breeder's trophy, introduced in 2005 to recognise the breeder of the Emirates Melbourne Cup winner.

Speaking in front of a packed media conference today, Deputy Chief Executive of the Victoria Racing Club, Ms Sue Lloyd Williams stated: "The Tour aims to capitalise on networking and business building opportunities between Australian and international businesses around the positive and dynamic atmosphere of Australia's most prestigious sporting, social and cultural event - the Melbourne Cup Carnival.

"With *Delta Blues* becoming the first Japanese horse to win the Emirates Melbourne Cup, we thought it fitting to include Tokyo in this year's Tour, as an opportunity for the VRC to celebrate this significant achievement in Japan while also speaking to the owner of *Delta Blues*, Mr Katsumi Yoshida, about the possibility of returning to Melbourne this year to defend the title."

The Emirates Melbourne Cup is valued at approximately ¥\$506 million, making it the richest handicap race in the world. The race attracts a worldwide television audience of more than 700 million people in 120 countries and territories, with millions more either viewing or listening to the event on the Internet.

Jockey Yasunari Iwata - in his first race outside of Japan - rode *Delta Blues* to a spectacular win and straight into the history books as the first Japanese horse to win the world famous race in its 146-year history.

Trainer Katsuhiko Sumii also achieved a significant accomplishment with *Delta Blues*' stablemate, *Pop Rock* - ridden by famous Australian jockey Damien Oliver - placing second in the race, making Mr Katsuhiko only the ninth trainer to have two horses feature in the quinella in the Melbourne Cup.

Irish trainer Dermot Weld is the only other international trainer to have won the Melbourne Cup, with *Vintage Crop* in 1993 and *Media Puzzle* in 2002.

"Racing is a massive industry in Australia - worth an estimated ¥795 billion annually - and provides employment for approximately 250,000 people," said Ms Lloyd Williams. "Significant economic benefits come from tourism and live horse exports, with most of the buyers coming from Asia - mainly Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and the Philippines - and more recently from the UAE.

"Our country is ranked third in the world after America and Japan for holding the most horse races each year, and is the second largest thoroughbred industry in the world in terms of thoroughbred horse population, producing 17 per cent of all foals globally."



“Australia is also home to a strong and innovative economy and its business people are keen to foster ties with international contacts,” said Ms Sue Lloyd Williams. “With this in mind, the VRC has developed the Melbourne Cup Business Network to help facilitate networking and business building opportunities between Australian and international businesses around the positive and dynamic atmosphere of the Melbourne Cup Carnival.

Referred to in Australia as ‘the race that stops a nation’, Emirates Melbourne Cup attracts approximately 120,000 to Flemington racecourse and is a day of national celebration. It is the linchpin of the Melbourne Cup Carnival and has played a principal role in establishing Victoria’s Spring Racing Carnival as Australia’s major annual sporting event.

Over the four-day Carnival, in excess of \$1.5 billion in prize money is presented to owners and more than 420,000 racegoers flock to Flemington. The Cup draws competitors from all over the world with the annual invasion of northern hemisphere-trained stayers.

The Emirates Melbourne Cup is also an important economic contributor to the State of Victoria and generates some \$27 billion towards the State’s coffers, with fashion playing a big role in delivering financial returns to the retail sector.

Last year, fashion conscious racegoers pumped more than \$2 billion into the retail industry, splashing out on some:

- 56,000 pairs of shoes
- 30,000 handbags and
- 44,000 hats

The four-day cavalcade of fun extends beyond fashion through to fine foods and car trunk parties; picnics on the lawns and fine dining, with racegoers enjoying the best of Australia’s fresh produce, consuming:

- 8 tons of eye fillet steak
- 2 tons of salmon
- 18,000 prawns and 18,000 oysters
- 950,000 strawberries
- 425,000 bottles of beer
- 30,000 bottles of wine and
- 100,000 bottles of champagne.

“The Melbourne Cup Carnival offers a week of world-class thoroughbred horse racing action intermingled with an exciting array of high profile and prestigious on-course and off-course social and business events,” said Ms Lloyd Williams. “This presents the perfect platform to network, build relationships and entertain clients across a range of relaxed environments.”

“The VRC recognises that Tokyo is home to one of the world’s most thriving business bases, driven by positive and ambitious people, and that is why it was selected as one of the Tour’s key international destinations this year,” said Ms Lloyd Williams.

For further information and to register for the Melbourne Cup Business Network visit <http://www.melbournecupbusinessnetwork.com.au/>.

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