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Media Release
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VICTORIA POTS FIRST EVER WORLD RANKING SNOOKER EVENT IN AUSTRALIA

The Victorian Government, IMG Worldwide, the global sports, fashion and media company and World Snooker today announced that Victoria has secured the right to host the first ever world ranking snooker event to be staged in Australia.

The new tournament on the prestigious World Snooker Tour is named the Australian Goldfields Open and this inaugural event will be played in Bendigo from 18 – 24 July, 2011.

The agreement will see a world ranking event staged in Australia for each of the next three years at Bendigo Stadium.

Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher explained what this announcement meant for Victoria.

"The Australian Goldfields Open will be played in Bendigo from 18-24 July 2011 providing an outstanding opportunity to see top sporting action in regional Victoria.

"The Australian Goldfields Open is the latest addition to Victoria's award winning major events calendar of exciting, world-class events that is sure to thrill and entertain Victorians and visitors alike.

"The event will showcase our beautiful and historic Goldfields region through a global broadcast which will reach over 66 countries; including key tourism markets such as China and the United Kingdom.

"This event really puts Bendigo on the map and raises the profile of regional Victoria on the world stage," said Ms Asher.

These events bring an international flavour to regional Victoria and are an opportunity for visitors to take advantage of Bendigo and the surrounding region's tourist attractions during their visit.

"The Coalition Government is committed to supporting tourism in regional Victoria and we are delighted to welcome this exciting event to our state," added Ms Asher.

Martin Jolly, Senior Vice President and Managing Director IMG Asia Pacific said: "As part of IMG's long term relationship with World Snooker, it is our strategy to expand the World Tour into the Asia Pacific region.

"We are delighted that our first new snooker event will be staged in Bendigo, Victoria supported by the Victorian Government. Victoria has an enviable reputation for staging World Class sporting events and it is therefore fitting that they will host the first World Snooker event in Australia.

"IMG will act as the promoter of the event and IMG Media will produce and distribute the world-wide television coverage to a global audience. Our long term vision is to continue to develop the sport of Snooker and Asia Pacific will be a very important focus of our efforts moving forward," Mr Jolly said.

World Snooker Chairman Barry Hearn is thrilled a world ranking snooker event will be staged in Australia for the next three years.

"We're absolutely thrilled to be going to Australia for a world ranking event for the first time. Snooker is going global like never before as we also have new events in Thailand and Brazil within the next few months, plus many more in the pipeline.

"Australia has a fantastic tradition of producing world class sportsmen and it was great for snooker to see Neil Robertson become the first Aussie to win the World Championship last year. I know the fans Down Under have a great passion for sport and I expect them to support this event. It's a great chance for them to see Neil as well as all of the other best players close up," Mr Hearn said.

Neil Robertson, 2010 World Champion and currently ranked # 5, commented on what this announcement means to him.



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"This is a long-standing dream come true for me, as I am sure it is for many snooker players and fans in Australia. To have a world ranking event in my home state will be just unbelievable and I hope to get a lot of support.

"I know some of the other players are excited about coming to Australia and I'm looking forward to showing them around. It's fantastic to see snooker becoming much more of a global game – it looks like we'll be clocking up a lot of air miles in the next few years!" Mr Robertson said.

32 of the world's best players will descend on Bendigo for the Australian Goldfields Open with three in the top 10 in the Official World Snooker Rankings confirmed to participate.

Reigning World Champion and World #2, John Higgins, will be joined by the highest ranked Chinese player and World #4, Ding Junhui. Adding to this stellar line-up is Players Tour Champion and World # 7 Shaun Murphy who will be coming down under for the first time.

World Champion John Higgins welcomed the opportunity to return to Australia for the Open.

"It's great news that we are going to Australia. I won my first tournament, the Australian Masters, over there when I was 18, and I've not been back since. I'm delighted to have the chance to return for the tournament.

"When Barry Hearn got involved in snooker, we all thought it would take a few years for him to expand the game globally, but he's already done so much within 18 months.

"I'll be playing in the World Cup in Thailand and going straight from there to Australia so it's going to be a brilliant time," said Mr Higgins.

Barrie Jones, President of the Australian Billiards and Snooker Council Snooker Australia welcomes the addition of the WSL Ranking Tournament and is pleased to be able to provide two wild card entries for this fantastic event.

"We see that there are many opportunities to be realised from the addition of such a prestigious event being added to the Australian calendar, especially in juniors. The television exposure made available to all Australians will surely renew interest in our sport and we look forward to the challenges in all facets of our sport," said Mr Jones.

The Australian Goldfields Open will be broadcast live on FOX SPORTS.

FOX SPORTS has provided coverage of several leading snooker events including Grand Prix Snooker, Premier League Snooker, Snooker Masters and the UK Championship.

Australia's leading sports broadcaster also provided live coverage of the 2010 World Snooker Championship final which was won by Robertson.

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About IMG:

Operating in 30 countries, IMG Sports & Entertainment's diverse businesses include: consulting services; event ownership and management; fashion events and models representation; licensing; golf course design; and client representation in golf, tennis, broadcasting, speakers, European football, rugby, cricket, motor sports, coaching, Olympic and action sports. IMG Academies are the world's largest, multi-sport training and educational facilities, delivering world-class training experiences to more than 12,000 junior, collegiate, adult, and professional athletes each year.



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