

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Acting Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events



Saturday, 10 April 2021

WELCOMING THE BULLDOGS BACK TO MARS STADIUM

The Andrews Labor Government is supporting the return of AFL to Mars Stadium, one of the state's premier regional stadiums, for the first time today since 2019.

Acting Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Mary-Anne Thomas acknowledged a sold-out crowd of 7000 for the Western Bulldogs clash with the Brisbane Lions later today, urging visitors and locals alike to soak up the atmosphere in a COVIDSafe way.

The match marks an important return of the AFL home and away season to regional Victoria after last year's scheduled games in Ballarat were cancelled due to the global pandemic.

Mars Stadium is one of Victoria's best sporting venues and to make sure it stays that way the Labor Government is rolling out a \$6.6 million upgrade which includes new entrances, new ticket boxes and covered areas, and increased accessible seating in the Western and Eastern stands.

Having already delivered \$38.47 million in funding support to redevelop the Eureka Sports Precinct in 2016, these latest works are part of \$11.8 million in funding which includes important upgrades to the nearby Ballarat Sports and Events Centre.

The Government's investment has enabled Ballarat locals to enjoy five AFL matches at Mars Stadium since 2017, attracting more than 40,000 spectators from across Victoria and interstate and providing a significant boost to tourism and small businesses in Western Victoria.

With support from its *Regional Events Fund*, the Victorian Government will also showcase Ballarat to a national audience through integration of destination vignettes into the television broadcast.

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Tourism Sport and Major Events Mary-Anne Thomas

"This investment is ensuring Mars Stadium and the surrounding precinct is a world class sporting venue in the heart of regional Victoria."

"The Bulldogs-Lions clash is attracting thousands of footy fans who are helping to support regional Victoria's visitor economy, providing a major boost for small businesses and tourism operators."

Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

"We warmly welcome the Bulldogs supporters to Ballarat and hope that they enjoy, not only a great day at the footy, but also the great hospitality that our city has to offer."

Quote attributable to Member for Buninyong Michaela Settle

"It's fantastic to welcome back sport and tourism to Ballarat, and I know locals can't wait to enjoy AFL again at Mars Stadium."

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