

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**  
Acting Premier  
Minister for Education  
Minister for Mental Health



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## **SOCCER'S WORLD-BEATING MATILDAS TO CALL MELBOURNE HOME**

A purpose-built Home of the Matildas will be created in Melbourne's north, providing a Victorian launching pad for the Australian women's soccer team, ahead of a 2023 FIFA World Cup to be contested on home soil.

An historic \$101.1 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* has secured the state-of-the-art facility for La Trobe University's Bundoora Sports Park in a major advancement for women's sport in Australia.

The next Sam Kerr or Aaron Mooy will also be able to hone their skills on Bundoora's fields, with the centre to host Football Victoria's high-performance program for young soccer stars as well as its administration base.

Grassroots clubs will have access to the centre's pitches and community-level programs, including training for volunteers and administrators, referees and coaches conducted on-site.

The Andrews Labor Government last year invested \$1.5 million to plan for the facility, which will boast a marquee pitch with grandstand seating, four other pitches, and high-performance facilities including a gymnasium and wet recovery area, medical and rehabilitation centre, meeting areas and player lounge.

With the Federal Government having pitched in \$15 million towards the project, the Labor Government's investment means work will now begin on detailed designs for the Home of the Matildas, which will also incorporate the Victorian State Rugby Centre.

Construction is expected to start in December and be completed in time for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, which will be played across Australia and New Zealand in July and August. Five World Cup games will be played at Melbourne's AAMI Park, including a quarter final.

Not only will this investment create new jobs during construction, it will also reaffirm our state's reputation as the nation's sporting capital – and support the thousands of Victorians employed in our sports industry.

Soccer participation in Victoria has been growing strongly – particularly among women and girls. The most recent Ausplay data showed the number of females playing club-based soccer in Victoria had more than doubled in five years to 55,000, including 25,000 girls.

As part of the commitment, pitch use will be offered to community clubs at a discounted rate, and La Trobe students will enjoy free access to the facilities for around 20 hours a week.

This will mean more than 6,000 hours of use over an average year by the national teams and development pathway programs – including approximately 140 days of use by the Matildas.

The Victorian State Rugby Centre will boast a show pitch with grandstand seating and two additional pitches, along with high performance facilities including a gymnasium, sport science, medical and recovery areas and a training and match day home for the Melbourne Rebels' Super W team.

Since 2014, the Labor Government has invested more than \$1 billion in community sports infrastructure, including female friendly facilities, improving access and opportunity for women and girls of all ages and abilities across the state.

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The dual-sport super site at Bundoora will also encourage research collaboration between high-performance experts and academics at La Trobe University.

La Trobe University has invested more than \$80 million to develop its Sports Park, including a stadium, research laboratories and soccer, Australian rules football, cricket and baseball facilities.

**Quotes attributable to Acting Premier James Merlino**

*“We can’t wait to cheer on the Matildas at the World Cup in Melbourne in 2023 – and with this investment, we’ll give our female soccer stars a world class home in the heart of Melbourne.”*

*“When we say we’re serious about improving the visibility of our female athletes – we mean it. Not only will this investment deliver new facilities, it will mean more young soccer fans get to see their heroes up close.”*

**Quote attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula**

*“Our women’s soccer and rugby teams are world leaders. This new base will help keep it that way, and provide the facilities that our young stars need to climb the ladder and eventually take over from their heroes.”*

**Quote attributable to Minister for Women Gabrielle Williams**

*“The Matildas are an inspiration to girls across Victoria. It’s fantastic that we can provide elite facilities for our top-flight women and better community access as well.”*

**Quote attributable to Football Victoria president Antonella Care**

*“Football Victoria and Football Australia’s target of 50/50 male-female participation by 2027 is ambitious, but this announcement provides us with the launch pad to make that ambition a reality for Victoria.”*

**Quote attributable to Melbourne Rebels Chair Paul Docherty**

*“In 133 years, Victorian Rugby has never had such a wonderful opportunity to grow the game and share its benefits with all Victorians. We are thrilled with the State Government’s unprecedented commitment to the sport.”*

**Quote attributable to La Trobe University Vice-Chancellor Professor John Dewar**

*“To have some of the world’s very best professional women’s sports teams housed in this exceptional new development at La Trobe’s Sports Park will be a huge boost for our students, for sports science research, and for the community in Melbourne’s north.”*