



Media Release – EMBARGOED until 5am Tuesday 9 March

Auckland's Rugby World Cup 2011 build-up gains momentum

9 March 2010

With exactly 18 months to go until Rugby World Cup 2011 kicks off, Auckland is building up to the event with a wealth of infrastructure projects powering ahead right across the region.

Auckland's RWC 2011 spokesperson Michael Barnett says the new and upgraded infrastructure will not only help make the region a great host for RWC 2011 but will also deliver benefits well beyond the Tournament.

"What is being built now means Auckland is well placed to maximise the opportunities that this once in a lifetime event provides," Mr Barnett says.

"You only need to take a quick spin around the region to see major capital projects charging ahead."

Eden Park

Eden Park's redevelopment is leading the way with the new six-level, 21,500-seat south stand almost structurally complete. The finishing touches are being added including the installation of seats, while construction of the east stand, transport hub and western concourse continues. The redevelopment is on track for completion by November this year, providing a number of opportunities to fully road test the stadium ahead of RWC 2011.

Transport

Outside the ground, work to upgrade Kingsland railway station, the improvements to Sandringham Road and the creation of a link lane between Sandringham and Walters roads are all well underway. The station is due to be completed in time for the All Blacks test with South Africa on 10 July. The link lane is also expected to be used for that match.

"These upgrades combined with the comprehensive traffic and transport planning around both Eden Park and North Harbour Stadium will ensure fans will easily be able to travel to and from matches in Auckland," Barnett says.

On the all important airport to CBD route, the new Manukau harbour crossing will be ready seven months earlier than planned. The \$230 million project, which will cut up to 20 minutes from the journey between the airport and central Auckland, will now open in August 2010.

Training venues

With Auckland hosting at least 12 teams during RWC 2011, upgrades to training venues across the region are kicking off. Improvements to fields, lighting and buildings at Western Springs Stadium, Onewa Domain, and Mt Smart Stadium will ensure a world-class experience for the teams.

Waterfront, city and airport

On the waterfront, work has begun on the new Marine Events Centre on the Halsey Street wharf. The centre, due to be completed by July 2011 for use during RWC 2011, offers 3000sqm of hospitality space with adjacent public spaces.

Adjacent to the Marine Events Centre site, the first stage of the Wynyard Quarter development (Jellicoe Street and the public plaza at its western end, as well as a retail and entertainment precinct on North Wharf) will be complete by RWC 2011.

“Add to that confirmation from the Government that Queens Wharf will be opened up for use during the Tournament and we can be confident that piece of the puzzle will be in place for the opening celebrations on 9 September 2011,” Barnett says.

He says RWC 2011 is a catalyst for gaining greater public access to the waterfront and is a great example of what major events can do for the amenities that Aucklanders enjoy.

“You only need to look at what the America’s Cup did with the evolution of the Viaduct Harbour to see that major events deliver significant long-term benefits for us all.”

In other key central city projects, Aotea Square’s major redevelopment will be completed by October this year and the \$121 million restoration and expansion of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki will open to the public in the middle of 2011.

Accommodation in the region is being boosted with two new hotels at the airport. Last month Auckland Airport announced they’re building a 125-room 2-star Formule 1 hotel, while a 4-star 260-room Novotel is currently being built next to the international terminal. Both will open in time for RWC 2011 and will be operated by Accor.

“When you see all these things happening on the ground you know we are building towards something big,” Barnett says.

Auckland’s RWC 2011 Regional Steering Group has been driving the region’s planning for more than three years. Tournament organiser Rugby New Zealand 2011 (RNZ 2011) said this cooperation across the region’s many interested parties was a tribute to the organisational muscle being brought to bear to maximise the opportunity RWC 2011 presents.

“We’re really pleased that Auckland is so well prepared this far out,” said RNZ 2011 CEO Martin Snedden. “It recognised early on after New Zealand won the bid to host RWC 2011 that it needed to get moving if we were to make the most of the Tournament.

“However, these are not easy challenges for a major city and to see so much work on track for completion this year alone is both reassuring and a great example for other regions.”

RWC 2011 will generate up to \$267 million of direct economic benefits for Auckland.

Ends

About the RWC 2011 Auckland Regional Steering Group

The RWC 2011 Auckland Regional Steering Group is made up of key Auckland organisations including all Auckland councils, Tourism Auckland, transport agencies, business groups, rugby unions and match and training venues. The group and its workstreams are preparing Auckland for RWC 2011 in areas such as transport, business programmes, tourism, training venues and supporting events.

For more information on Auckland's preparations for RWC 2011 visit www.auckland2011.com

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