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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **MADDEN DROPS THE BALL ON THE FUTURE OF VICTORIAN SPORT**

Labor's Minister for Sport and Recreation Justin Madden must get serious about attracting and retaining talented sportspeople in key Victorian sports.

Victoria prides itself as the sporting capital of Australia but Justin Madden has dropped the ball.

Victorian sportspeople are under represented at the elite level of major Australian sports such as tennis, cricket and basketball due, in part, to the Bracks Government's failure to provide opportunities and programs that enable them to participate.

Despite winning the Pura Cup two years ago, Victorian cricket has been rocked by player departures and has just two representatives, Shane Warne and Brad Hodge, in the national team. Victoria has had few representatives at the national level for more than a decade and we must explore the reasons why the state has been unable to develop national representatives.

Victoria also has only one team in the National Basketball League, the Melbourne Tigers, after the financial collapse of the Giants franchise. This means there are limited opportunities for many talented Victorian basketballers to play at the elite level in Australia.

Two Victorian-based Australian Institute of Sport programs for tennis and golf are currently suspended and may be abandoned. The loss of these two key programs will reduce opportunities to train talented young players in two sports in which Victorians have traditionally done very well.

Tennis coaches have expressed concerns about the lack of promising young players coming through and there is an obvious need to ensure that recent changes to the Victorian state development program will produce results.

Justin Madden could begin to reverse this negative trend by lobbying the AIS to attract the residential hockey program which is currently based in Perth. The AIS hockey program could provide a significant boost to Victorian hockey, another sport in which the state's level of representation has not always been as strong as might be expected.

The most worrying aspect of sport in Victoria is the decline in sporting activity and physical education in schools. If these activity levels continue to fall, where will the future Victorian sports champions come from?

Victoria has an outstanding resource in the Victorian Institute of Sport, world-class sporting facilities and a strong support base in communities across the state but there are indications of long-term decline in several sports that have long been jewels in the state's sporting crown.

Justin Madden must get his act together with a plan to assess the attraction and retention of talented youngsters, skill and development programs, sport and physical education activities in schools and the training and recruitment of coaches, sports administrators and volunteers.

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