

World-class basketball, soccer and baseball eyed for Victoria among talk of Olympic bid

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World-class basketball, soccer and baseball are being targeted for Victoria's sports calendar as the possibility of an Olympic Games bid is discussed.

Melbourne United chief executive Vince Crivelli said bringing a US National Basketball Association (NBA) team or game to Melbourne would attract crowds and build interest in local basketball.

"We would absolutely love an NBA team to tour Melbourne, especially as we as a consumer base react positively to world-class events and the NBA would certainly fit that criteria," Crivelli said.

The NBA schedules its overseas trips several years in advance so it's understood any visit to Australia would not happen until at least 2017.

Basketball Australia chief executive Anthony Moore said he would love to see the NBA in Melbourne but venue, funding and timing would need to be addressed.

"With seven Australians performing at high levels in the NBA, we would be delighted to assist in any way to bring an NBA team or an NBA game to this market, especially if some of the NBA Boomers players were involved," Moore said.

"Partnering with the NBA is critical to growing the sport in this country and we will always be happy to work with the NBA if they are willing to have that conversation."

The Committee for Melbourne has also revealed it is lobbying for a 2032 Olympics bid.

The state government announced on Tuesday that Victoria's major events program would be reviewed for the first time in 20 years.

Premier Daniel Andrews told Triple M radio he feared Victoria was "coasting a little bit" in major events.

"This has been a really busy summer but if you look to the future, there's not quite the number of events that we need," he said.

The Victorian Visitor Economy Review will be done by the end of April and, despite allocating less than eight weeks for the review, Mr Andrews said it would be "thorough" and "wide-ranging".

Victorian Major Events Company chairman Rod Eddington will chair a reference group while consulting firm KPMG and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources will review the government bodies responsible for tourism and major events.

Tourism and Major Events Minister John Eren said Victoria could potentially host basketball games, international soccer matches and baseball. He also backed the Melbourne Grand Prix, which cost Victorian taxpayers \$59.97 million in 2014.

"When you have major sporting events such as the grand prix as part of your calendar you tend to attract other sporting events that would take benefit from it," he said.

Lord mayor Robert Doyle said conferences and major events were of particular importance to Melbourne.

Cr Doyle said Victoria had built strong cooperation between local and state governments, event organisers and venues. "I think we do that better than other cities," he said.

He said the major events review was "a very good thing to do, particularly when you are at the top of the game, which we are, you look at that to make sure you can stay there."

He said Melbourne was open for any conferences, but should focus on attracting "long stay, high spend, high value, high profile type conferences".

He said these events were "just gold and they are hotly contested around the world".

According to the Melbourne City Council, the 2014 Aids conference in Melbourne had more than 13,300 participants from 170 countries with an estimated economic impact of approximately \$80 million.

More than 80 per cent of conference attendees were from outside Australia, with 17,072 room nights booked at 44 different hotels in the Melbourne area.

Opposition Tourism and Major Events Minister Heidi Victoria accused Mr Andrews of "calling review after review in the absence of real action". "While he dawdles with yet another review, [Mr] Andrews has failed to renew funding for world class events such as White Night Melbourne," she said.

Greens MP Greg Barber said there had to be more transparency around Victoria's major events. "We need more information on the costs and benefits of events, particularly the grand prix," he said.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/worldclass-basketball-soccer-and-baseball-eyed-for-victoria-among-talk-of-olympic-bid-20150310-140cm6.html>