



## **Manchester hosts UK's first 2012 training camp**

Preparation has begun for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, with the very first training camps getting underway in Manchester, UK.

The Telstra Dolphins Australian Swim team, one of the world's biggest and high profile swimming teams, held their training camp at the Manchester Aquatics Centre in preparation for the 13th FINA World Championships in Rome.

Swimming Australia's deal with Manchester will see them train at the Manchester Aquatic Centre for at least three major competitions until 2014; the Rome Championships, London 2012 and the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014.

Swimming Australia's training in the city officially marks the beginning of the 2012 training camps across the UK and is one of the biggest signings for the country to date, further strengthening Manchester's profile and reputation on the international sporting stage.

The deal is set to bring significant economic benefit to the Northwest, with an economic assessment estimating the 5-year deal could be worth in the region of £1 million to the economy of England's Northwest.

It's not only the international arena where Swimming Australia are having an effect but right in the heart of Manchester as well. The team took time out of their busy training schedule to coach school pupils from right across the city, providing them with first class swimming coaching at the Manchester Aquatics Centre.

Councillor Mike Amesbury, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure at Manchester City Council said: "Our main focus for London 2012 is that we can capitalise on the opportunities it presents to get more young people into sport. We have exceptional facilities here in the city such as the Manchester Aquatics Centre, which are not only here to train elite athletes but are available for the whole community to use as well.

Since we offered free swimming to all under 16s in April, figures show that visits by that age group to swimming pools in the city increased by more than 5,000 in the first two months. That really is quite phenomenal and with such a large focus of our 2012 commitment on local level involvement in sports, Manchester and its people are really set to benefit."

The deal with Swimming Australia, which has been struck with Manchester City Council, has also been supported by the Northwest Regional Development Agency

(NWDA), Marketing Manchester, Manchester Sport and Leisure Trust and the Manchester Aquatics Centre.

Swimming Australia Head Coach Alan Thompson said Manchester was an ideal place to prepare for the 2009 FINA World Championships.

He said: “The organisation and facilities are first class and we are certainly beginning to feel quite at home here in Manchester.

“Over the years we’ve come to Manchester for the Commonwealth Games and World Short Course, and the athletes and coaches are becoming more and more familiar with the surroundings and fantastic facilities on hand.

“The bigger picture is to use Manchester as a base leading into the Olympic Games in 2012, and our relationship with the Northwest Regional Development Agency and Manchester City Council is an important part of that planning for the future. To have a familiar base going into London 2012 will be a huge benefit to the athletes and coaches.”

Paul Deighton, Chief Executive of the London 2012 Organising Committee said: “With just over three years to go until the start of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is a pleasure to return to the Northwest and see two Pre Games Training Camps in action. Achieving the deals with Swimming Australia and the Oceania NOC is great news for the region.

“The Northwest has excellent sporting facilities which can help both teams prepare well for their competitions at the London 2012 Games and other major competitions. Hosting the teams is evidently providing exciting opportunities for local young people to be coached by top-class competitors and it is great to see that other social and economic links are also being explored.”

Peter Mearns, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications at the NWDA, said: “The Agency has worked closely with our partners to secure the Australian national swimming team and the training camp shows what we can achieve when we work in partnership. The prestige of having one of the best teams in the world training at our facilities can only help to further strengthen Manchester’s profile as a world-class sporting city.

“To date, the region has already had major success in securing Pre Games Training Camps, with Thailand, Oceania and Swimming Australia all committing themselves to the Northwest. We are also working to ensure the region benefits from 2012 in other ways – from securing Games-related business contracts and involving our schools in the London 2012 Education Programme to encouraging people to take up volunteering opportunities and get involved in the Cultural Olympiad.”

Andrew Stokes, chief executive of Marketing Manchester, the agency charged with promoting the city on a national and international stage, said: “Manchester has long since proved its ability to host world championship sports teams. The Commonwealth Games in 2002 ignited a passion in the city for sport that stretched far beyond our most obvious sporting export. Whilst football will always be central to Manchester’s

sports tourism offer – indeed only this week we launched the city’s bid to become one of the host cities of England’s 2018 World Cup bid - having the Australia swim team train here shows the world the standard to which the Manchester Aquatics Centre is regarded.”

The Australian Swim team will utilise both 50-metre pools at the Manchester Aquatics Centre whenever training in the city. The MAC is a purpose built, state-of-the-art venue which regularly hosts international swimming events and is home to the highly successful British Paralympic swimming team.

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