NT GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

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BIGGER AND BETTER ARAFURA 2009

Arafura Games will continue to provide a quality competition for emerging athletes from our region, as well as open up the Games to more elite sporting events, Sports and recreation Minister Kon Vatskalis announced today.

Mr Vatskalis made the announcement following a Heads of Delegation meeting in Darwin today, which included delegates from various countries meeting to discuss future plans of the Games.

"Sport is an important part of our great Territory lifestyle. The Arafura Games is a significant event on our sporting calendar, and the NT Government is committed to seeing the Games improve." Mr Vatskalis said.

"This is why the Heads of Delegations meeting is a very important event on the Arafura Games calendar, as it provides us with essential feedback for the future improvement of our Games.

The Heads of Delegation today decided to open the competition to guest countries, incorporate more elite closed sporting events, and incorporate permanently the Oceania Paralympics Championships into the Arafura Games.

"Today we agreed to continue to promote increased participation from member and non-member countries – so by Arafura Games 2009 we will have even more countries competing at events.

"Arafura games organising committee will ensure that competition is protected through communicating the standard of competition in each sport – and communicating with delegates prior to 2009."

The Arafura Games has seen over 2,600 athletes coming, representing 42 countries in 23 sports.

"The meeting also acknowledged the brilliant work of our volunteers. Without these volunteers and their tireless efforts, these Games would not run as smoothly as they have."

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