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ARAFURA GAMES TO INCORPORATE COMMONWEALTH JUNIOR WEIGHTLIFTING CHAMPIONSHIPS

In a first for the Arafura Games, the 2007 weightlifting competition will incorporate the Commonwealth Junior Weightlifting Championships.

Minister for Sport and Recreation Kon Vatskalis said the competition to be held at the Darwin Entertainment Centre was a huge win for the Arafura Games and the sport of weightlifting in the Territory.

"The 2005 Arafura Games weightlifting competition incorporated the Oceania Junior Championships providing the emerging champions of the South Pacific the thrill of international competition," Minister Vatskalis said.

"Hosting the Commonwealth Junior Championships will take the competition to another level by providing athletes with the opportunity to compete against the best in the Commonwealth in the Under 20 junior ranks. 15 countries are expected to compete in the event with the invitation now open to Commonwealth countries.

"The Territory is home to some of Australia's weightlifting rising stars such as current NTIS athletes Rebecca Brooke, dual Silver medallist from the 2005 Games and Amy Hardy and William Turnor who will take their place in their first Arafura Games.

"Also a first for the Arafura Games 2007 is to have a sport host its competition in the Central Business District. With the added convenience of the venue and free entry we are expecting good crowds to come and see some of the best weightlifters in the world compete for Arafura Gold," Minister Vatskalis said.

Games Weightlifting coordinator and NTIS Weightlifting Head Coach Andrew Forrest said the competition was a magnificent opportunity for our local lifters as well as our National junior team.

"To have an event of this nature in Australia is not common, and here we have an event with World class lifters right in our own backyard," Mr Forrest said.

The first Commonwealth Junior Weightlifting Championships were held in Western Samoa this year. Weightlifting has been a part of the Arafura Games since 2005 where it had over 60 participants from 11 countries.

Arafura Games 2007 are on from the 12 - 19 May 2007. For more information visit www.arafuragames.nt.gov.au.

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