

Promenade bridge takes easy way out



An artist's image of the pedestrian bridge linking Melbourne icons.

A \$28 million, 350-metre pedestrian bridge linking the MCG, Melbourne Park and Birrarung Marr will be the key Commonwealth Games initiative in tomorrow's state budget.

The bridge, revealed first in *The Age* on April 26, will stretch from an undecided point in Birrarung Marr over CityLink, tram and rail tracks and Brunton Avenue, to Jolimont Terrace on the MCG's north-west side.

During the 2006 Games, more than 100,000 pedestrians of an estimated 350,000 daily spectators are expected to use the bridge.

Announcing the project yesterday, Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden said the "promenade" bridge, 12 metres at its widest with several entry and exit points, was needed to avoid pedestrian logjams at the Games and would give spectators an easy route between the sports and city precincts. Darren Gray

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Footbridge will link park to MCG

Work is due to start early next year on a large pedestrian bridge that will link Birrarung Marr to the MCG.

The bridge will start in Birrarung Marr near the bells and stretch over Batman Avenue, railway and tram tracks, Brunton Avenue and into Yarra Park on the north-west side of the MCG. The bridge, a Commonwealth Games project, will cost \$27.8 million and is

scheduled to open in late 2005. Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden said the link had recently been endorsed by an independent planning advisory committee. "It will make it safer and easier for people to make their way to and from AFL matches, the Australian Open, concerts, and of course, the Commonwealth Games," he said.

'Brutal' footbridge will ruin park, say designers

Martin Boulton, Royce Millar

Leading landscape architects have slammed the State Government's \$28 million pedestrian bridge linking the MCG and parkland across the Yarra River as a "brutal" treatment of Melbourne's award-winning Birrarung Marr park.

Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden yesterday outlined new plans for the 525-metre bridge, to be built in time for the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

The bridge will run from outside the MCG to Birrarung Marr, crossing the Jolimont railyards and Batman Avenue.

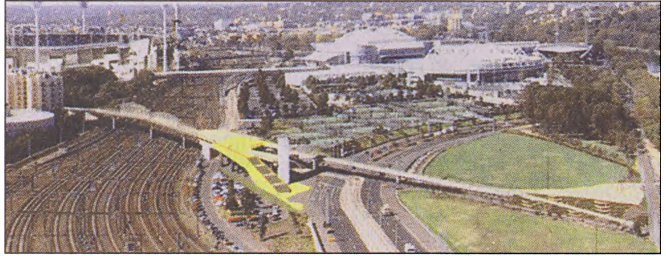
Mr Madden said it would encourage public transport use and improve access to concerts and sporting events. It is expected to carry 350,000 people a day during the Games.

Mr Madden said the Government would ensure it was "sensitive to its environment".

But Ron Jones, who worked in urban design for the Melbourne City Council for 14 years and played a leading role in the design of Birrarung Marr, said the Government had been "brutally insensitive to the designers of the park".

Mr Jones, who now works in private practice, said Birrarung Marr had been designed as a series of distinct levels to accommodate events. The "middle terrace" — where the bridge would land — is now compromised as an event space, he said.

"Landing the bridge on the middle terrace drives a thoroughfare through one of those activity spaces, in fact, through the one space most protected from through traffic."



Birrarung Marr recently won an Australian Institute of Landscape Architects award for excellence in design and master planning. Institute president Tim Hart said the Government had used a "closed shop" consultation process. "It's a \$28 million project (that) is basically being railroaded through without consulting anyone," he said.

Mr Jones said the Government could have got a better result for a fraction of the cost by upgrading existing walkways along the river. He said the bridge appeared to be at odds with long-term plans to deck the Jolimont railyards between Federation Square and the MCG.

The chairwoman of Melbourne City Council's major projects committee, Cr Kate Redwood, said the council had asked the Government to plant trees in Exhibition Street "to ameliorate the visual impact of the bridge". She said the council's preferred arrangement was a bridge that landed on the east of Batman Avenue, not in the park.

Mr Madden said the design of the bridge had been endorsed after community feedback and assessment by an independent advisory committee. He said key groups consulted included the MCG Trust, the East Melbourne Residents Group and public transport operators.

An artist's impression of the pedestrian bridge linking the MCG and Birrarung Marr.

It's a \$28 million project (that) is basically being railroaded through without consulting anyone.

TIM HART, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects president

Troubled water over bridge

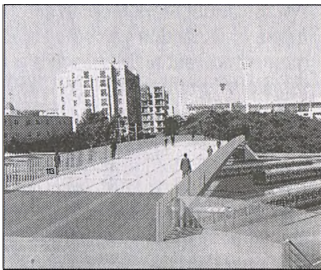
Misha Ketchel

Tensions between the Melbourne City Council and the State Government deepened yesterday — over a bridge.

Lord Mayor John So attacked Government plans for a \$28 million pedestrian bridge linking the MCG, Melbourne Park, Birrarung Marr and Federation Square.

The 350-metre bridge, announced in this year's state budget, will span the Jolimont railyards, from Birrarung Marr, near Federation Square, to Yana Park and the MCG.

Due to be completed in time for the 2006 Commonwealth Games, it is expected to carry as many as 350,000 pedestrians a day. But according to Cr So, the proposals are flawed and include an unnecessary section extending over Batman Avenue.



Artist's impression of the proposed footbridge.

He said it would be cheaper and more efficient to build a ground-level pedestrian crossing on the 60 km/h road.

Cr So also said the council wanted to build decking over the Jolimont railyards and it would be a waste of money to build something that would eventually have to be pulled down. "There is no point building a bridge that needs to be

pulled down in 10 years' time, when the decking project could reasonably commence," he said.

The council is also reluctant to pay for maintaining the bridge. It has called on the State Government to cover it.

But a spokeswoman for Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden said the Government expected the council to meet its responsibility to maintain the bridge under the Local Government Act. She said the final design had not been decided but the Government was committed to a pedestrian bridge to improve safety and access to the MCG.

The council is preparing a submission to the Government's planning advisory committee detailing its criticisms of the bridge proposal and seeking alterations.

Melbourne's latest landmark a step closer to completion

SOME time between 1am and 3am on Sunday, the two halves of Melbourne's newest bridge finally met. The link between the MCG, Melbourne Park and the city is almost complete, with one section of the bridge to be lowered and a couple of finishing touches to be added in the next fortnight. Work has taken place early in the morning to avoid disruption to trains in the railyards below. The bridge will make the walk from the city to the MCG about eight minutes shorter than the Flinders Street and Wellington Parade route. Once finished, it is expected that it will

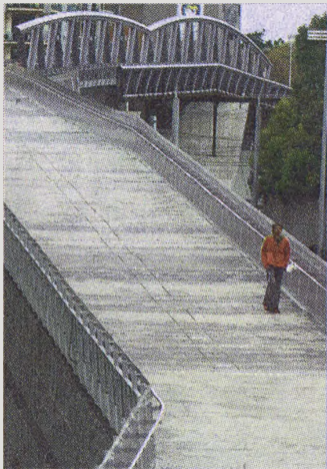
carry between 11 and 20 per cent of pedestrians in and out of the MCG.

Commonwealth Games Minister Justin Madden said a name for the 525-metre-long bridge had been decided but would be under wraps for five weeks. The bridge will go to parklands at the western end of the MCG during the Games and later be extended to reach the stadium concourse. Separately, Mr Madden said landscaping could push back the November 30 handover of the Parkville athletes village by up to a week.

PETER KER



The bridge will cut the walk to the MCG from the city. PICTURE: MICHAEL CLAYTON



East Melbourne's William Barak

Council tries to bridge maintenance gap

IT COST \$30 million, is named after an Aboriginal diplomat and was proudly unveiled by the State Government prior to the Commonwealth Games.

But six months on, the William Barak pedestrian bridge is awash with graffiti and litter, according to Melbourne City Council, sparking an "inundation" of complaints from the public.

"It is quite disappointing," planning committee chairwoman Catherine Ng said.

"We were very clear in 2003 that we would have no responsibility for ongoing maintenance.

"And it is now coming back to haunt us because the Government is not doing it."

She said the council would carry out maintenance if the Major Projects Department paid for it.

A spokeswoman for Major Projects Minister John Lenders said the bridge, which links the CBG with Melbourne's sporting precinct, was cleaned when required.

But the council claims there is no maintenance arrangement in place, and will vote this week on whether to try to take over management of the bridge from the Government.

RACHEL CLEINMAN