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**Queen's Baton Relay Commences  
Groundbreaking Journey from London to  
Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games**

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II heralded the commencement of the Melbourne 2006 Queen's Baton Relay in London yesterday, when she handed the revolutionary baton carrying her Commonwealth Games opening address to international supermodel and Australian native, Elle McPherson.

The official launch of the 2006 Queen's Baton Relay took place in the presence of the Earl of Wessex, Patron of the Commonwealth Games, the Duke of Edinburgh, and selected dignitaries, within the historic Forecourt at Buckingham Palace, where Her Majesty placed the electronic chip housing Her official message inside the baton, declaring the relay officially underway.

Mike Fennell, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation said in the wake of recent global events, the relay extends an important message of hope and community to the broader Commonwealth family.

Meanwhile, the assembled general public anticipated the appearance of the baton and celebrated as it made its way amid great fanfare through the palace gates, passed from McPherson to Commonwealth Games hero Catherine Freeman. The baton then travelled along the Mall via a succession of international sporting greats, including



Dame Kelly Holmes and Amir Khan, signifying the commencement of its epic 12 month journey to the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games.

The Queen's Baton Relay is the traditional curtain-raiser to the Commonwealth Games and has been an inclusion in the games program since the Cardiff games in 1958. The Melbourne 2006 Queen's Baton will circumnavigate the globe during its marathon journey, visiting each of the 71 nations of the Commonwealth – home to almost 1/3 of the world's population - and spreading the message of goodwill in the lead up to the 'Friendly Games' in Melbourne.

The Melbourne 2006 Queen's Baton begins its relay in Singapore on 5 October 2005 for a series of events before continuing its journey. Said Chris Chan, Secretary General of the Singapore National Olympic Council, "Together with Team Singapore we have started planning to take the Baton to the community at large for the three days that it will be here. In 2002 we had an exciting Queen's Baton Relay with the Baton travelling by London cab, dragon boat, roller blade, bicycles and runners from the schools, Community Development Council (CDC), British Community, and the National Sports Associations (NSAs). We are planning for an even more exciting programme this year."

Said the British High Commissioner to Singapore, Alan Collins, who witnessed the spectacular departure of the baton: "We certainly look forward to the baton's arrival in Singapore and the inevitably innovative and exciting way it will be transported through Singapore. Singapore's reputation and love of sports will be underlined with the city playing host to the 117<sup>th</sup> IOC Meeting on 6 July, when the decision will be taken as to which city will host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Of course we wish London every success in its bid."

The duration and scope of the Melbourne 2006 Queen's Baton Relay make it the longest, most inclusive relay in history. Given previous relays have never before visited more than 23 Commonwealth countries; the scale of the present relay means it truly embodies the principle relay theme of 'Celebrating Community'.

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