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## AUSTRALIA'S RICHEST SPORTING TROPHY ARRIVES IN DUBLIN

**(Sept 13, 2008: Dublin, Ireland)** The Victoria Racing Club (VRC) has arrived in Ireland with its world-famous 18-carat gold Emirates Melbourne Cup trophy - valued at approximately €71,000 - ahead of a special event to be held in conjunction with The Irish Field St Leger this Saturday.

Visiting Ireland as part of an international strategy - which has seen the world-famous trophy travel to destinations such as London, Dubai, Singapore, Tokyo, Los Angeles, New York and Hong Kong - the VRC will highlight Melbourne's business and tourism opportunities to prominent racehorse owners and business leaders at an exclusive event at The Curragh this Saturday as part of its Australian-theme day.

Aimed at promoting the link between The Irish Field St Leger and the Emirates Melbourne Cup, the Emirates Melbourne Cup will be on display during the course of the day, with 1993 Irish St Leger and Melbourne Cup hero Vintage Crop also making a special guest appearance.

"Ireland and Australia share a mutual love of thoroughbred racing, which is why we have brought the famous Melbourne Cup trophy to Dublin to celebrate two of the world's most famous races - The Irish Field St Leger and the Emirates Melbourne Cup," said Ms Sue Lloyd-Williams, Deputy Chief Executive of the Victoria Racing Club.

"Ireland has also played a special role in the history of the Melbourne Cup with champions Vintage Crop and Media Puzzle being the only European trained horses to win the event, both by master trainer Dermot Weld.

"The Victoria Racing Club and The Curragh have also had a strategic alliance since 2005 aimed at developing greater links and professional cooperation," said Ms Lloyd-Williams. "Since this time, we have taken several progressive steps including the development of a staff exchange program and the further expansion of this weekend's Australian-themed raceday.

It is no secret that Ireland and Australia share a healthy passion for sport, and Melbourne, the home of the Emirates Melbourne Cup, is counting down to one of the biggest sporting long weekends ever witnessed in Australia. Between 31 October and 4 November, the city will stage the rugby league clash between Australia and England; the international rules football match between Ireland and Australia; Derby Day, the first day of the Melbourne Cup Carnival, and will culminate with in the running of the Emirates Melbourne Cup.

The fact that there are an additional two international sporting events being staged on the same weekend as the start of our Melbourne Cup Carnival provides great synergy and an opportunity to promote the weekend as a major sporting blockbuster," said Ms Lloyd-Williams. "For Melbourne it provides an outstanding opportunity to attract international visitors, while for the VRC it is bound to add to the already large numbers of international guests at Flemington during the four-day event."

To help celebrate the Australian-themed raceday at The Curragh, a Melbourne Cup Business Network cocktail reception will be officiated by Her Excellency Ms Anne Plunkett, Australian Ambassador to Ireland, and will include a special appearance by members of the Irish International Rules team. The seven-race program will also see Aidan O'Brien hoping to write himself into the history books by becoming the first trainer since 1935 to win all 5 Irish Classic races in the same year.

O'Brien came a respectful third in the 2007 Emirates Melbourne Cup with champion stayer Mahler, and will be returning to Melbourne again this year in his bid to bring the Melbourne Cup back to Ireland.

Referred to in Australia as 'the race that stops a nation' <sup>-TM</sup>, the Emirates Melbourne Cup is a day of national celebration and is the only event that literally halts the entire nation from working. The race is valued at approximately €3.18 million, making it the richest handicap race in the world, and attracts a worldwide television

audience of more than 700 million people in 120 countries and territories, with millions more either viewing or listening to the event on the Internet.

It is the linchpin of the Melbourne Cup Carnival and has played a principal role in establishing Victoria's Spring Racing Carnival as Australia's major annual sporting event.

The four-day Melbourne Cup Carnival is considered a marketing phenomenon in Australia and an important economic contributor to the State of Victoria, generates €240 million towards the State's coffers.

"The Melbourne Cup Carnival offers a week of world-class thoroughbred horse racing action intermingled with an exciting array of high profile and prestigious on-course and off-course social and business events," said Ms Lloyd Williams. "This presents the perfect platform to network, build relationships and entertain clients across a range of relaxed environments."

To register for the Melbourne Cup Business Network visit <http://www.melbournecupbusinessnetwork.com.au/>.

**For further information contact:**

Ms Sue Lloyd-Williams  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Victoria Racing Club  
+61 412 329 227  
[s.lloydwilliams@vrc.net.au](mailto:s.lloydwilliams@vrc.net.au)

Bridget Marcou  
Managing Partner  
Wrights  
+61 407 846 672  
[bmarcou@wrights.com.au](mailto:bmarcou@wrights.com.au)