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Page 1 of 1

The Advertiser

New swimming centre already money spinner

THE battle to secure major sporting events has become almost as important to the states as winning new industries.

Events such as Commonwealth Games, Soccer World Cups, even AFL finals matches can mean millions of dollars for a state's economy. South Australia has always been an aggressive bidder for sporting events, matched only by Victoria with its win-at-all-costs mentality.

For many years, SA lagged behind Melbourne because of a lack of facilities.

Now, with the opening of the SA Aquatic and Leisure Centre at Marion, that old adage of "build it and they will come" has been shown to be true.

The centre has earned glowing praise from Olympians Michael Klim, Sophie Edington and Hayden Stoeckel with dual medallist Stoeckel saying it was second only to Beijing's elaborate "ice cube" used at the 2008 Olympics.

Edington described it as "incredible" and Klim dubbed it "the perfect facility".

The construction of the \$100 million swimming centre, with its state of the art water purifying system, will now see a plethora of aquatic events coming to Adelaide - events never considered for the old aquatic centre at North Adelaide.

Since it opened in April, the swimming centre has secured eight major events with three announced yesterday. Among them the 2012 Australian Swimming Championships - the selection trials for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Swimming Australia has also announced we have secured the 2013 Australian Swimming Championships and the 2013 Australian Age Championships.

The Government has described it as a "coup" for SA. It certainly should be, because the state's swim fans will get a chance to see superstars Ian Thorpe and Libby Trickett on the Olympic comeback trail.

The benefits for the state will be enormous, not just in terms of seeing the best of the best in action.

The economic boost will be of great benefit to the state with at least \$4.5 million generated for each of the swimming championships and up to \$3.5 million for the age swimming championships.

Coupled with the media exposure interstate and overseas, the returns to the state are immeasurable. Even an arrogant dismissal of SA's bid by Sydney swimming officials has failed to stop the new aquatic centre from realising some major milestones within months of its opening.