



**REVAMP:** Manuka Oval's lights may be ready for next year's Prime Minister's XI cricket match.

# Manuka Oval integration with nearby shops, pool

By David Polkinghorne

The ACT government wants to re-integrate Manuka Oval with the nearby shopping precinct, historic swimming pool and Canberra Services Club as the oval undergoes a major facelift over the next five years.

Minister for Sport Andrew Barr also said he hoped the ground's lights would be ready for next year's Prime Minister's XI cricket match.

The government will allocate \$3.18 million in Tuesday's budget to design a \$35 million redevelopment of Manuka Oval that will include new stands and new entrances at the northern and southern ends, as well as incorporating commercial ventures such as cafes, shops and possibly a hotel.

Mr Barr wants the oval to become part of the community rather than a "colosseum" that only operates on game day.

A plaza will be built at the southern end, inspired by how the oval looked in the 1920s.

"It will never be a colosseum-style [ground], it won't be a fully wrapped around MCG-style redevelopment," Mr Barr told *The Canberra Times* yesterday.

"We still want to maintain grassed areas ... and the objective is also to better integrate with the Manuka precinct on the southern end and Telopea Park on the northern end, and configure our public transport options to that.

"One of the things that we're looking at is having some of the facilities within the oval footprint actually viable commercial operations year round, so it's not a lockout, some of the cafes operate all year round outside of match days."

Capacity will gradually increase from 15,000 to 19,000 with more undercover seats and a "distinctly Canberra" grandstand to be built on the eastern side, allowing television viewers to recognise it as Manuka Oval.

The Hawke and Menzies stands will be replaced and increased to a similar size as the main Bradman stand.

Mr Barr estimated the upgrade would be finished by the 2017-18 financial year.

Building lights will be a much faster project and will be completed before "the middle of 2013".

Six lights towers, 47-metres high, will be built, with work to begin next financial year.

The federal government announced \$2.5 million in its budget and the ACT government will confirm a further \$2.847 million for the lights tomorrow.

It will allow Greater Western Sydney, which will play three AFL games at Manuka Oval each year for the next 10 years, to play night games in Canberra.

The lights will also allow the Prime Minister's XI one-day game to become a day-night match.

And under the glare of prime-time television, Mr Barr wants viewers to instantly recognise Manuka Oval.

"[We want] what you see as the backdrop on the TV broadcast is distinctly Manuka and distinctly Canberra, so when people see the ground on the TV coverage they'll know instantly that it's Canberra."

"We're looking for something that meets the heritage requirements but is also distinctively Manuka Oval," he said.

Mr Barr said surveys showed the oval was an integral part of Canberra's sporting landscape, which meant an upgrade was the logical step for the ground. He said the redevelopment was a better option than returning Canberra Stadium to an oval or to develop another ground, such as Phillip Oval.

In March, Mr Barr announced a new rectangular, roofed stadium would be built to replace Canberra Stadium and would be completed by 2020.