



PROUD: Traditional landowner Garry Imri starts the torch run on the Kokoda Trail. Picture: GREG GARAY

# Torch relay run in a league all Bai itself

THE PROSPECT of playing his first game of rugby league in almost two months couldn't keep Melbourne Storm winger Marcus Bai away from his country's biggest celebration since independence.

Suspension and injury had kept Bai on the sidelines for the past seven weeks and he was due to return this weekend.

But when the star player heard he had been selected by the Papua New Guinea sports federation to run in the Olympic torch relay in Port Moresby yesterday, he postponed his return to the game.

"It was a little bit hard to make up my mind, but once I thought about it, I couldn't say No," Bai said.

"It was a once in a lifetime chance and I couldn't pass it up."

Bai said the opportunity to carry the Olympic flame in his own country ranked right alongside winning the ARL grand final, but this was a more personal honour.

"I have never seen these

people so happy and excited about anything," he said. "The South Pacific Games here in 1991 were pretty big, but this is the most people I have ever seen out on the streets getting behind something."

Bai said he owed a great debt to his club's management for allowing him to miss his eighth successive week of football.

"When [coach] Chris Anderson heard about it two weeks ago, he encouraged me to come up here, I can't thank him enough," he said.

Bai ran the second last leg of the relay, passing the flame on to PNG Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta.

The torch was flown by helicopter yesterday to PNG's Kokoda Trail in its 17,000km odyssey to the Sydney Games on September 15.

The flame arrived at Jackson's International Airport in Port Moresby from Honiara, Solomon Islands.

It had been carried from Mount Olympus, Greece, to Guam, Palau, the Federated

States of Micronesia and Nauru.

It was greeted by the drums, rattles, wind flutes, singing and dancing of six native dance and song groups, bedecked in tribal masks, swaying Bird of Paradise feathers, grass skirts and unadorned breasts.

Sir Mekere said the honour of hosting the Olympic flame would go down in the history of PNG's folklore and act as an inspiration to all its peoples, specially hopeful Olympic athletes.

"PNG is no longer an island - we are caught up in the process of globalisation," he told the crowd and the VIP guests, who included Australian High Commissioner Nick Warner.

Soon after its arrival, the flame was carried by Iroquois helicopter 60km up into the Owen Stanley Ranges for the start of the PNG relay from Ower's Corner on the Kokoda Trail and down the winding mountainside to Port Moresby's outer suburbs.

# Homeless get room service

By KATHRYN SHINE

HOMELESS people may be put up in hotel rooms originally booked by SOCOG during the Olympic Games.

NSW Housing Department deputy director-general Carol Mills said rooms in cheap hotels would be made available to homeless people as part of a contingency plan for the Games.

She said the department had received some of the accommodation from SOCOG, which did not need all the rooms it had booked.

She would not say how many extra beds would be provided or where the hotels were located.

"I can only give you a very broad picture at this stage," Ms Mills said. "We will be releasing details of our plans shortly."

"I can say that the accommodation is in metropolitan Sydney."

Housing Department director-general Andrew Cappie-Wood first raised the contingency plan in

December. At that stage the plan was to place homeless people in cheap hotels or boarding homes as well as surplus government sites such as unused nurse quarters, during the Olympics.

Ms Mills said most of the accommodation was not expected to come from the private sector.

"We have been successful in securing commercial accommodation and therefore we will be less reliant on government sites than we had expected to be six months ago," she said.

Rod Plant from housing agency Shelter NSW said he doubted the department would be able to secure enough hotel rooms.

"I think it's a positive that the Department of Housing is preparing to deal with homelessness during the Games," he said.

"Our key concern remains, will there be enough?"

"No-one can say how many extra homeless people there will be, including those driven out of their regular sleep-outs by the turmoil of live sites

## Gold 'not for Gosper'

PHIL Coles and Kevan Gosper were not perceived to be susceptible to bribery in the early days of the Salt Lake City bid, according to documents released yesterday.

The two IOC members are mentioned in reports, believed to have been written in 1992, which were released by the US Department of Justice.

They show that Salt Lake City bidders identified eight IOC members who would be receptive to "gold" - German for gold.

IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch referred the report to the IOC Ethics Commission.

- JACQUELIN MAGNAY

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