

# Her Majesty The Queen launches Queen's Baton



## Her Majesty The Queen launches Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Queen's Baton on record long global journey

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has set the Gold Coast 2018 Queen's Baton Relay in motion during a star-studded commencement ceremony today at Buckingham Palace as part of Commonwealth Day celebrations.

Accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Edward The Earl of Wessex, The Queen placed her message to the Commonwealth and its athletes inside the distinctive Baton.

The Queen's Baton will now travel through the entire Commonwealth for 388 days, covering 230,000 kilometres to its final destination, the Opening Ceremony of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games (GC2018) on 4 April 2018.

Australian Paralympic champion Kurt Fearnley OAM delivered the Queen's Baton starting from Marlborough House up The Mall and into the Palace Forecourt, accompanied by the eminent Band of the Scots Guards, who played by permission of Major General BJ Bathurst CBE, The Major General Commanding The Household Division.


Louise Martin CBE President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, Peter Beattie AC Chairman of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation (GOLDOC) and Yugambeh Elders Patricia O'Connor and Ted Williams accompanied Her Majesty in the ceremonial party.

Emily Dean, a nine-year-old middle distance runner from Southport, England, had the remarkable role of holding the message for Her Majesty before it was placed into the Baton. Emily was identified through the Adopt-a-Commonwealth Country program, part of GOLDOC's international Schools Connect initiative.

For the first time at a commencement ceremony at Buckingham Palace, representatives of the Traditional Custodians of the land where the Commonwealth Games will be held, the Yugambeh Language Group People, delivered a moving invitation to all First Nations peoples of the Commonwealth to join in the celebrations of the Games on Yugambeh land.

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The invitation reaffirmed the Commonwealth's 2017 theme of 'A Peace-building Commonwealth'.

Australian cycling legend and Commonwealth and Olympic Games gold medallist, Anna Meares OAM, was honoured with being the first person to receive the Baton from The Queen after her message was placed safely within.

The recently retired champion and GC2018 Ambassador took the Queen's Baton through the Palace Gates to longtime rival and arguably England's most successful track cyclist Victoria Pendleton CBE, in a moment that was symbolic of the Commonwealth's long-held belief that friendly competition helps build lasting friendships and strong communities.

Together the star cyclists carried the Baton around the Queen Victoria Memorial, sharing the excitement with the public who were gathered to witness the start of the historic Relay.

The ceremony was capped off in classic Australian style when the Baton departed the Palace in the hands of world-renowned Gold Coast singer and environmental champion Cody Simpson aboard a Kombi van loaded with surfboards as a nod to the Baton's final destination, Gold Coast, Australia.

Earlier in the ceremony Cody endeared the international guest list with a stirring acoustic rendition of 'I Still Call Australia Home'. The audience was also treated to an original performance by Sydney artist Lucy Mason.

Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill DBE played a special role in the Commonwealth Day celebrations, taking the Baton down the aisle at the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey.

Also in attendance at the ceremony was Queensland Premier The Honorable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Gold Coast City Mayor Tom Tate and Mayoress Elizabeth Tate, Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment The Honorable Steven Ciobo MP, President of Commonwealth Games Australia Sam Coffa AM JP, and Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom The Honorable Alexander Downer AC.

The Queen's Baton will take flight on 15 March to Sierra Leone, the first stop on the 288-day international journey to all nations and territories of the Commonwealth.

The Baton will arrive back in Australia and start its Australian journey on 25 December 2017. It will visit every state and territory across the country for 100 days.

GC2018 is currently calling on the Australian public to nominate people in their community to be batonbearers for the Baton's home stretch.

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**GOLDOC Chairman Peter Beattie AC:**

"Today's ceremony was a moving start to what is going to be an inspiring journey. Our mission to share the dream of the Gold Coast 2018 Games with the world is now underway.

"This is a truly inclusive Relay and the Baton's path through the Commonwealth will give children and people that can't make it to the Gold Coast a chance to be involved in an unforgettable experience.

"By the time the Baton reaches Australia many thousands of people will already have been a part of its journey. And I urge all Australians to join in the festivities. Being a Batonbearer for the Queen's Baton Relay is a unique opportunity to be involved in GC2018."

**Commonwealth Games Federation President Louise Martin CBE:**

"Launching the Queen's Baton Relay on Commonwealth Day at Buckingham Palace is a fitting start to an inclusive and inspiring community relay that connects our diverse Commonwealth in celebration and anticipation of the next Games.

"We passionately believe that friendly rivalry on the level playing field of sport can be a tool for building strong and peaceful communities and this has never been more relevant, as the Relay launch heralds the start of the Commonwealth family's themed year of a peace-building Commonwealth.

"Her Majesty's message to the Commonwealth and its athletes, carried safely inside the Baton, will be in great hands with many thousands of community batonbearers. I look forward to following its remarkable journey and hearing the stories of all the athletes, communities and citizens involved."

**Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk MP:**


"We are delighted to bring the Queen's Baton to the entire Commonwealth, sharing the excitement of the Games through a record distance Relay that set off today.

"It's a proud time for the Gold Coast, Queensland and Australia. This Baton will place our city and our Games firmly on the world map.

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“Millions of people across the 70 nations and territories of the Commonwealth will, like us, start counting down the days to watch these world-class Games in 2018.”

**Australian cycling legend and GC2018 Ambassador Anna Meares OAM:**

“Receiving the Queen’s Baton from Her Majesty was an experience that will be hard to top. And it was a privilege to be able to share the moment with my longtime friend and fellow competitor Victoria Pendleton.

“It’s a truly unique opportunity to be able to carry the Queen’s Baton and her message. Batonbearer nominations are now open in Australia and I’m telling everyone I know to think about who inspires them to be great and to nominate them.”

**England’s cycling champion Victoria Pendleton CBE:**

“The Commonwealth Games are an unforgettable experience for athletes and fans and I have very fond memories of my time in Melbourne the last time the Games were held in Australia.

“The Queen’s Baton Relay is a tradition that engages people all around the world and I’m so honoured to have taken some of the first steps on its journey.”

**World-renowned singer songwriter Cody Simpson:**

“Performing at Buckingham Palace and representing the Gold Coast and Australia is an honour.

Growing up on the Gold Coast gave me the energy and motivation to get out there and run after my wildest dreams. It’s great to see the international spotlight turned on the Gold Coast for the Games. It’s my home town and I know it’s a world-class playground for people who dig sports, music, being social and active. It offers something for everybody.

The Queen’s Baton Relay is a prestigious tradition. These endeavours can provide global inspiration and an opportunity for people to connect and celebrate all that we share in common.”

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**Paralympic gold medallist and GC2018 Ambassador Kurt Fearnley OAM:**

“It’s been an amazing experience to be involved with both the unveiling of the Baton’s design in Australia and now its global launch in London. I’m proud to be a part of a Relay that has been designed for the people and where there are no barriers to being a Batonbearer.

“Taking the Baton down the Mall was an unforgettable experience.”

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