

# Aitken on a good wicket

RICKY Aitken's ambition to one day prepare a ground for first-class cricket is a step closer.

The Burnie City Council's West Park and Les Clark Oval ground manager, who celebrated his 26th birthday yesterday, will leave today to take up the ground manager's position at the Hong Kong Cricket Club, one of Hong Kong's oldest sporting clubs, which was established in 1851.

The club, which has 1800 members, is a massive and diverse sporting facility, but Aitken's sole job will be to look after its ground and cricket wickets — a role he hopes will take him to the next level of ground management in the future.

"It's basically the opportunity of a lifetime and the opportunity I've been looking for," Aitken said yesterday.

"I've got ambitions to prepare first-class cricket pitches and this is the stepping stone, it puts me in a great position to do that."

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**GOING PLACES:** Les Clark Oval curator Ricky Aitken will leave today to take up the ground manager's position at the Hong Kong Cricket Club. Picture: Jason Hollister.

## Aitken bound for Hong Kong

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Given its colonial roots, Hong Kong has a thriving cricket culture and Aitken said the resources available in Hong Kong were enormous.

"I was completely overawed when I went there for my interview about a month ago because as well as the cricket ground, they have swimming pools, spas, tennis courts, ten pin bowling, lawn bowling greens and indoor golf driving ranges just to name a few," he said.

"My job is to look after the ground itself and the bowling green beside it and I have six Chinese workers at my disposal.

"There are six teams from the Hong Kong club itself who mainly play weekend cricket, but they have kids' sport and other activities on the ground during the week."

Aitken is also an accomplished axeman.

He won the prestigious Burnie Thousands 300 mm title this year, as well as The Advocate points trophy.

His partner, accomplished carnivals runner Keryn Richardson, is remaining on the Coast for the time being.

Aitken has also been partly responsible for producing some of the best gift tracks at the Burnie New Year's Day Carnival in recent years.

"As a group (council staff) took great pride and passion in preparing the track for one of Australia's premier gifts and it was always a thrill to see international-calibre athletes running on it," he said.

Aitken thanked the council, which has employed him for the last seven years and also allowed him to travel to Lord's for two six-month stints.