**Heat rule has players in dark**

**By Margie McDonald**

It was more than just the heat causing confusion as Melbourne Park baked in mid-40°C heat—it was the Australian Open’s controversial heat policy.

For the first time in this year’s tournament Tennis Australia [TA] closed the roof on Rod Laver Arena while play was suspended on outside courts until 6.30pm.

The men’s and women’s doubles matches scheduled for Margaret Court Arena were moved over to Hisense Arena with its retractable roof.

The junior boys and girls singles, and legends doubles, on 14 outside courts were suspended as players and spectators alike fled to the shade, or the air-conditioning of on-site cafes and merchandise stalls.

On Rod Laver Arena, the early women’s quarter-final match between Carla Suarez Navarro (Spain) and Elena Dementieva (Russia) was played with the roof open.The players were given a 10-minute break after the first

set, when the mercury reached 39.6°C,

so they could change their dripping clothes and get further hydration in the air-conditioned locker rooms.

But the roof remained open when the players returned and Dementieva wrapped up the match 6-2 6-2.

It was later closed during the following quarter-final featuring Serena Williams and Svetlana Kuznetsova.

Dementieva, the world No 4, was

a little confused as to why the roof was not closed before the match began if tournament organisers knew—as the rest of Victoria did—that Melbourne was set for heatwave conditions …

The reason it wasn’t closed earlier was that TA’s heat policy is driven by the wet-bulb globe temperature which the on-site meteorologist monitors until it reaches a dangerous level.

That level is not contingent on the temperature alone but also considers on-court radiation and humidity …

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Cool change: The roof closes on Rod

Laver Arena

