



Victorian Greyhound Racing Assets & Infrastructure Discussion Paper

FOR INDUSTRY CONSULTATION

February 2024

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Introduction and context

The Victorian Greyhound Racing Industry conducts over 15,000 races annually at nearly 1,300 race meetings conducted across 13 registered Clubs and racetracks throughout Victoria (excluding coursing tracks and events).

The industry sustains more than 4,700 full-time equivalent jobs involving more than 13,600 participants, support staff and volunteers across the network and contributing more than \$640 million in annual economic contribution to the state*.

Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) is the statutory body responsible for promoting and controlling the sport of greyhound racing in Victoria. Maintaining the highest levels of greyhound welfare, care and safety, is essential in ensuring a strong and sustainable future for the sport.

GRV regulates the sport under the Racing Act 1958 (Act), which includes setting rules and standards and ensuring they are met by participants. GRV must do this in a way that meets its legislative obligations under the Act and community and government expectations while also fostering a positive relationship between GRV and participants.

GRV's 2023-27 Strategic Plan is built on four strategic priorities to deliver sustained success:

- 1) invest for now and the future;
- 2) world leading integrity and welfare;
- 3) grow the audience and fan base; and
- 4) proactively share our stories.

Inherent in the delivery of these priorities is ensuring the key greyhound racing industry components of the greyhound, participants, Clubs, racing and training infrastructure, the racing program and breeding are considered and operating as effectively as possible.

**Economic contribution and employment data: Size and Scope of the Victorian Racing Industry: IER April 2022*



Introduction and context

This Victorian Greyhound Racing Assets & Infrastructure discussion paper considers the current environment and assesses the potential future needs of the industry based on information available at this time.

Maintaining and upgrading the racing infrastructure at tracks across Victoria to the highest possible standards is currently and will continue to require ongoing significant investment.

The current macro-economic and global socio-political environment has led to spiraling costs associated with construction projects across Australia. This means that now, more than ever, investment decisions need to be made very carefully with a view to ensuring the needs of the industry in the future are being appropriately considered and addressed.

Circumstances may change in the future and therefore flexibility will always be required to ensure the delivery of the best outcomes for the Victorian greyhound racing industry.

This paper has been prepared for consultation purposes and GRV will consider all feedback received from stakeholders, before completing a final 10-year Victorian Greyhound Racing Industry Infrastructure Plan.

The scope of this discussion paper includes racing and training requirements at registered Victorian greyhound racing Clubs and does not include coursing tracks or private properties. Improving safety for competing greyhounds, Club & GRV staff and industry participants, to the extent possible, are key factors to be considered in the development of the plan.



GRV is inviting written submissions from all interested parties wishing to have their views considered.

Written Submissions are to be emailed to racingassetsplan@grv.org.au by **31 March 2024**

GRV will consider all submissions in combination with other research and consultation that will be conducted in parallel to this consultation process.

GRV proposes to publish the finalised Infrastructure Plan by the **end of 2024.**

Victorian Greyhound Racing Industry Snapshot

\$643 MILLION in annual economic contribution to Victoria*

4,700+ full-time equivalent jobs*

13,600+ participants, support staff and volunteers*

13 registered greyhound racing clubs (11 regional, 2 metro) conducting **1,283** race meetings and **15,067** races

\$77 MILLION prizemoney and other returns to participants

\$3.43 BILLION domestic wagering turnover on Vic greyhound races

2,688 greyhounds rehomed

640 litters and **4,000** Victorian bred pups whelped

*Economic contribution and employment data: Size and Scope of the Victorian Racing Industry: IER April 2022

GRV's 2023-27 Strategic Plan

The GRV Strategic Plan has been refreshed to cover the next four-year horizon from 2023 to 2027. The Strategic Plan sets the key priorities for Victorian greyhound racing over that timeframe starting with our purpose and vision. Four key priorities are underpinned by three strategic enablers and principles that define the approach to delivering the plan which is based on being Future Focused, having Enabled People and ensuring Meaningful Engagement.



Executive Summary

This racing assets & infrastructure discussion paper seeks to provide an outline of the key issues and factors to be considered in the development of key principles, objectives, plans and actions required for a 10-year industry infrastructure plan.

The paper proposes the following key objectives and actions:

Racing Program

The structure of the racing program in the future is a key driver informing future infrastructure requirements. Over the next 5-10 years, GRV is aiming to:

- maintain the number of meetings conducted annually within the 1,220 to 1,250 range and the number of races run within the 14,500 to 14,850 range. Some flexibility will be required subject to the macro-economic environment and the greyhound population in future years.
- maintain a consistent weekly program of volume and type of meetings, with flexibility to modify the program to meet emerging needs for trainers and the greyhound population;
- maximise racing at the best performing tracks from a racing and wagering perspective to help ensure financial viability;
- explore opportunities to modify the program at certain times of the year where the greyhound population and nominations are lower, or where weather or track works may impact the ability to conduct meetings, or where opportunities may exist for Clubs to attract higher attendance or wagering outcomes at certain times of the year;
- recognise the uniqueness of each track and variances in demand and usage based on a range of factors that include, but are not limited to, race programming, location, track type and shape, race distances and venue availability;
- ensure tracks can be maintained at their optimum levels and that tracks should not be used for racing and Trialling more than 5 days per week (i.e., 3 race meetings and 2 club trial sessions), however will require flexibility for limited periods where required;
- develop a stronger and deeper pool of greyhounds capable of racing competitively at 380m and beyond as the option to conduct short course races (less than 350m) at the two turn city tracks is not supported due to inherent safety risks;
- enhance racing options for female greyhounds by programming more female only races, including female and male only maiden races to provide improved winning opportunities for female greyhounds; and
- make informed decisions about the racing program that do not compromise greyhound welfare or safety or the integrity and reputation of the sport.

Executive Summary

Racing Safety & Greyhound Welfare

Ensuring the welfare of greyhounds and commitment to reduce injury rates and fatalities is a key priority of the GRV Strategic Plan, and future decisions regarding racing infrastructure investments will need to carefully consider this focus and priority.

GRV proposes to:

- prioritise racing infrastructure projects and initiatives that have the potential to have a positive impact on the welfare and safety of greyhounds in racing and training;
- prioritise investments, based on best practice standards, to continually improve track shape, width consistency, layout and design, track surface preparation methods and equipment, track maintenance and diagnostics programs, drainage, irrigation systems and practices, starting positions, catching pen / finishing design, track cambers, transitions, lure operating systems, alignment and rail composition;
- consider options where additional and/or upgraded greyhound training and education facilities can be managed by and provided at greyhound Clubs, or at nearby properties to meet the needs of trainers and educators in the region; and
- in conjunction with Clubs, explore opportunities and options to address the industry need for strengthening long-term access to and availability of specialist greyhound veterinary services in various regions around the state.

Racetracks

GRV is committed to ensuring the necessary capability and capacity of racetracks in Victoria for racing and trialling subject to continued Club, participant and community support, along with adherence to operating, OHS and greyhound safety standards ensuring that participant and greyhound welfare is not compromised. Some flexibility will be required should circumstances change.

Victorian greyhound racetracks will be subject to contemporary asset management practices that ensures a sustainable multi-year maintenance, renewal and replacement program using a systematic, planned program that adheres to the key strategic priorities and industry principles.

Executive Summary

Racetracks (cont'd)

In addition to the retention of the existing country racetrack network GRV proposes, in conjunction with Clubs, to:

- continuously improve facilities and services at country venues to ensure participant & staff safety and greyhound welfare & safety are maintained at the highest standards;
- identify options for a potential greenfield site in the Southeast area with long-term capacity to accommodate a one-turn track, straight track, plus trialling and additional training facilities. Ideally this site would have the capacity to operate unimpeded seven days/nights per week as and when required;
- identify options for at least one additional straight track for training and/or racing to be located at an existing Club or greenfield site;
- identify options to improve the provision of trial kennel facilities across racetracks to assist trainers and supporting greyhound welfare outcomes;
- identify options at the two metropolitan tracks to maximise the use of these valuable assets from a racing and training perspective including alternative track configuration, and additional training, greyhound care and veterinary facilities;
- progressively upgrade track lighting to LED at all venues conducive to the conduct of night and twilight racing;
- upgrade raceday kennels at all tracks to stainless steel to improve greyhound welfare conditions, ease of operations and maintenance;
- identify and assess options to continuously improve lure and rail systems from a greyhound, staff and participant safety perspective including options for cableless lure systems and non-steel rails;
- address shared site risks such as lease longevity, return on investment and realisation benefits when considering investment and sustainability;
- consider provision of administrative base adjacent to or within existing metropolitan and regional Club facilities bringing administration closer to the core of the sport and industry, while also reducing overall costs; and
- enable and support Clubs to take a leading role in managing certain infrastructure improvements and upgrade projects, while utilising good practice, fit-for-purpose procurement and project management techniques (e.g. lighting and fencing upgrades).

Executive Summary

Metropolitan Racetracks

With respect to the future racing and infrastructure requirements at The Meadows and Sandown Park, it is proposed that:

- premier level 1 metropolitan racing will continue to be conducted twice weekly between The Meadows and Sandown Park predominantly on Thursday and Saturday nights;
- GRV will work with both metro Clubs to develop and assess master planning options for each of the sites, including assessing options for alternative track designs including evaluation of the sustainability of two-turn tracks aimed at continuously improving greyhound safety and the long-term viability and attractiveness of racing at each track; and
- GRV will work with the metropolitan Clubs in assessing long-term options as to the feasibility of whether relocation to a new site could potentially unlock valuable assets for reinvestment and provide opportunities to reconsider the emerging needs of the industry for the next 25-30 years, including training, veterinary and education facilities.

Country Racetracks

The key priorities for country racetracks over the next 5-10 years includes:

- long-term options for racing and training in the Cranbourne & SE region (currently under consideration);
- raceday kennel and kennel building improvements and upgrades;
- upgrades to track lighting to LED at all twilight/night venues;
- development of on-site and/or off-site training facilities and services to managed by Clubs;
- water recovery, irrigation and methods unique to local conditions; and
- explore strengthened veterinary support in regions.

Executive Summary

Training and education facilities

In addition to the racing, track and hospitality-based facilities it is important to recognise the industry's training requirements and existing racetrack network. GRV proposes, in conjunction with Clubs, to:

- identify opportunities to ensure adequacy of training facilities throughout Victoria, and across each of the regions while considering racetracks and other locations where demand is strongest;
- include, where practical, a full suite of necessary training facilities, including, but not limited to:
 - Gallop runs,
 - Slipping tracks,
 - Competition runs,
 - Education / bullring.
- consider the use of existing coursing tracks for potential training and trialling facilities, including year-round maintenance and management;
- enable and support registered Clubs to take a leading role in managing and maintaining the provision of supplementary training facilities, that are not necessarily at existing racetracks;
- further consider other capabilities and services such as veterinary care, greyhound rehabilitation, temporary kennelling, rehoming / adoption hubs, participant resource centres.

Executive Summary

Greenfield Sites

GRV will explore options, in conjunction with Clubs, to identify opportunities to acquire and/or lease land at alternative sites where it makes practical and economic sense to do so, particularly where options are available to capitalise on the value, or strategic importance of current industry and Club owned assets.

This approach includes options to capitalise on opportunities and future proof the industry against factors potentially impacting the current racing & training venues including:

- restrictions on accessibility and usage for racing or training;
- urban and population growth;
- rising costs and accessibility to suitable land and housing for industry participants;
- future planning restrictions and/or legislative changes;
- uncertainty of or short-term tenancy at leased sites;
- future rehoming needs;
- access to specialist veterinary services; and
- accessibility for the population of trainers and greyhounds

Conclusion

In developing the final priorities for a revised Racing Assets & Infrastructure plan, GRV will work directly with Clubs, key stakeholders, state and local governments, and other relevant parties to develop and deliver a racing assets and infrastructure program that promotes the sustainability and growth of the greyhound racing industry in Victoria.

GRV will leverage stakeholder knowledge and input and its historical evidence base, while conducting detailed modelling to design, develop and deliver initiatives that improve the quality, and enable delivery, of the long-term racing assets and infrastructure plan.

GRV will not be in a financial position over the next five years to fully fund all the priorities of such a program, particularly the potential redevelopment of metropolitan sites. Funding capacity will be limited by future wagering revenue and profit generation outcomes.

GRV will work with all relevant parties to develop funding options including co-funding, loans, government grants and alternative commercial arrangements to enable delivery of the racing assets and infrastructure plan.