



Victorian Greyhound Racing Assets & Infrastructure Discussion Paper

FOR INDUSTRY CONSULTATION

February 2024

Racetracks

The capacity of the current network of racetracks across Victoria to operate the current and future racing program is impacted by several key variables including availability, operational resourcing and track maintenance requirements. Ideally, all racetracks should be available for racing and Trialling on any day or night of the week, subject to maintenance, other co-tenant requirements and participant demand.

The current footprint of tracks ensures that there are racetracks across all regions of Victoria where a reasonable number of greyhounds are currently in training, providing a variety of opportunities for trainers and for people and communities across the state to enjoy and engage with greyhound racing.

GRV intends to retain all currently operating racetracks in country Victoria for racing and trialling subject to continued Club, participant and community support, along with adherence to minimum, OHS and greyhound safety standards ensuring that participant and greyhound welfare is not compromised. Some flexibility will be required should circumstances change.

In addition to retention of the existing country racetrack network, over the next 10 years, 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/Gippsland 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 at the two metro Clubs to maximise the use of these valuable assets from a racing and training perspective including alternative track configuration, 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 options to add, improve or upgrade training facilities at, or operated by, registered greyhound Clubs for the use of trainers; and
- 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.

Racetracks

METROPOLITAN

GRV proposes that metropolitan stakes (Level 1) racing will continue to be conducted twice weekly between The Meadows and Sandown Park predominantly on Thursday and Saturday nights.

The Meadows and Sandown Park are two of Australian greyhound racing's showpiece racetracks, conducting over 200 race meetings annually between them and they are home to some of the world's most prestigious and sought after races including the Melbourne Cup, the Phoenix, Australian Cup, Topgun, Bold Trease and Sandown Cup.

Both tracks were built or last upgraded more than 20 years ago, and both will require refurbishment or redevelopment within the next five years. The land upon which both tracks are located is freehold land owned by the respective Clubs.

GRV proposes to work with both Clubs to develop and assess master planning options for each of the sites, including assessing options for alternative track designs aimed at improving safety and long-term viability and attractiveness of racing at each track.

Given the current difficulty in filling fields for four meetings per week at the metro tracks, this would include consideration of options and practicalities for one, or both tracks to be redeveloped as a one-turn (horseshoe) track as opposed to the traditional two-turn tracks in place at both Clubs currently.

GRV proposes to also work with the 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.

GRV will not be in a financial position over the next five years to fully fund redevelopment of tracks at both sites. Funding capacity will be limited by future wagering revenue and profit generation outcomes. Both Clubs are currently in a strong financial position and funding arrangements will most likely be a co-funded partnership arrangement dependent on the circumstances.

Ideally redevelopment of the two metro tracks will need to be staggered to ensure reasonable continuity of the racing program. During any period of redevelopment at either of the metro tracks, race meetings will be transferred to other venues on a suitability basis. Metropolitan Stakes meetings would most likely be conducted at the remaining city track (i.e. 2 Metro Level 1 meetings per week) whilst the other track is unavailable for racing.



Racetracks

COUNTRY

Ballarat has a current lease at Morshead Park until 2033. A new racing operations centre and kennel block is currently under construction with an expected final completion and operating for racing in March 2024.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include LED lights

Bendigo has a current lease until 2029 at a complex shared with the Bendigo Harness Racing Club as co-tenants. The Bendigo Club provides training facilities including a straight track for the use of members.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include stainless steel kennels

Shepparton has a current lease until 2039 at a complex shared with the Shepparton Harness Racing Club as co-tenants.

Future major racing infrastructure project needs are likely to include irrigation upgrade and LED lighting upgrade

Healesville has a current lease with the Yarra Ranges Shire Council until May 2026 at the Don Road Sporting Complex. The Don Road Sporting Complex is the main sporting complex in Healesville, utilised by more than 10,000 residents and home to the Healesville Senior Football Club, Healesville Netball Club and Healesville Soccer Club.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include upgrade of outside fencing and an upgrade or redevelopment of the kennel block and racing operations building, resurfacing/sealing of entry road and car park



Racetracks

COUNTRY

Warragul has a current lease with the Baw Baw Shire Council at Logan Park until 2031. The site is shared with the Warragul Harness Racing Club, along with a variety of other community and sporting Clubs. The long-term future of greyhound racing at the current site is not guaranteed as the local Shire considers future options for the use of the site before the expiry of the current lease. The Club also has a lease with the Shire Council until 2031 for a straight training track at Darnum which is maintained and managed by the Club. The racetrack has recently been upgraded with LED lights.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include new kennel block or kennel block upgrade. Long-term alternative options for racing and training in the Warragul region may need to be considered.

Traralgon has a current lease at Glenview Park until 2037. Glenview Park is Council owned freehold land jointly occupied by the Greyhound Club and the Latrobe Valley Racing Club, under separate lease agreements. The long-term future at Traralgon is secure, however there are no training facilities operated by the Club at the site – they were not reinstated in the latest redevelopment. There are no specific track redevelopment needs at this time, albeit that some consideration may need to be given to contingencies to better accommodate finish on trials and back up for the battery-operated lure.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include training facilities.

Sale has a current lease with the Sale & District Agricultural Society until 2042. The track was upgraded in 2023. The Club also operates a gaming, bistro and sports business on the site. The Sale Club also owns approximately 17ha of freehold land on the northern side of Maffra-Sale Rd which was previously earmarked for relocation of the greyhound track. The current track was upgraded in 2023 with new rails, outside fencing, irrigation system, drainage system, LED lights and new head-on cameras. Whilst the Club currently has a secure lease, long-term options for racing and training in the Sale region need to be considered as contingencies for any future developments at the site.

Future major infrastructure project needs under consideration include a straight track at separate site for trialling in the region and potentially development of the site for racing in the long term.

Cranbourne has a current lease at the Cranbourne Racing Complex until 2025 and is currently exploring options to retain the current racetrack site for training and trialling options. The Cranbourne track was closed for racing and trialling in January 2022. Following an assessment of options to rebuild a track at the site, GRV has determined that it does not propose to resume racing at the current Cranbourne site which is also shared with harness and thoroughbred racing Clubs. The Club also operates a slip track and competition gallop runs at the site for the use of local trainers.

Long-term alternative options for racing and training in the Cranbourne region are being considered.

Racetracks

COUNTRY

Geelong has a current lease at Beckley Park with the City of Geelong under the control of the Beckley Park Committee of Management until 2039. Other tenants at Beckley Park include Geelong Harness Club, Geelong Karting Club and Beckley Park Community Market. The Geelong facility includes a one-turn track along with an inner two-turn track.

The two-turn inner track is currently underutilized for racing. Over the past 3 years, around 50 races annually (less than 4% of total races) have been conducted on this track. Conversely around 50% of all trials are conducted on the inner track at Geelong. Future consideration will need to be given to whether the inner track can be better utilised for racing and trialling, weighing up against the cost of maintenance and operation.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include upgrade of lighting to LED and a full irrigation upgrade.

Horsham has a current lease at the Horsham Showgrounds until 2042. The Horsham Rural City Council has published a Wimmera Regional Multi-sport Precinct Feasibility Study which identified that the Council will, in conjunction with the Showgrounds Committee of Management and GRV, develop a 20-year strategy for the Showgrounds. The proposed objective would be to open this asset up to the community, whilst ensuring the greyhound racing Club activities are secured for the safety of the public. The land is also subject to significant flooding associated with the Wimmera River under 1–100-year flood event.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include stainless steel kennels. Upgrade of lighting to LED is also a consideration being developed in conjunction with the Club.

Warrnambool has a current lease at the Warrnambool Showgrounds until June 2037, under the control of the Warrnambool Showgrounds Committee of Management, on an allocated Crown land reserve. The Showgrounds are shared with several user groups and businesses including the Warrnambool Agricultural Society (Warrnambool Show), Dennington Pony Club, Warrnambool Adult Riders Club, Warrnambool Poultry Club, Merrivale Football Netball Club Sunday Markets, Springers Gymnastics Centre, Warrnambool Caravan Repairs and a Fresh Flower Market.

Future major infrastructure project needs are likely to include stainless steel kennels and an upgrade of lighting to LED. Options for training facilities at the Club, or in nearby proximity, will also need to be considered.

Greyhound Training, Trialling & Education Facilities

TRAINING FACILITIES AT RACETRACKS

GRV proposes to continue to provide support to Clubs in the development and maintenance of training and education facilities at racetracks.

The following training facilities (in addition to racetracks) are currently made available by Clubs:

- The Meadows – straight slip track
- Bendigo – straight slip track, competition gallop runs and walking machines
- Ballarat – straight slip track
- Sale – bull ring
- Shepparton – competition gallop runs
- Cranbourne – straight slip track and competition gallop runs
- Warragul – Darnum straight slip track
- Melton Coursing track has the potential for development as a training facility under the guidance and/or management of MGRA.

Other Safety Considerations

Constantly improving the safety of the greyhound racing and training environment for people and greyhounds is an important key consideration in determining future racing infrastructure needs.

Key considerations include, but are not limited to, lure & safety rails, lure operating systems, catching pen gates & operations and starting boxes.

LURE RAIL SYSTEMS

Lure rails, safety rails and rail posts around Australia and New Zealand are largely constructed of steel to accommodate the traditional cable driven lure systems predominantly in use in Australia.

Steel rails and posts can potentially be a source of serious or catastrophic injury for greyhounds when struck at high speeds. Steel is also expensive to source, construct and is expensive and difficult to maintain.

In recent years, some new battery operated cableless lure systems have been trialled in Australia with varying degrees of success. Cableless lure systems may present options to modify or eliminate the need for steel rails.

Alternative inside rail systems incorporating plastic or padding are in use in other jurisdictions around the world that may be instructive for use in Victoria. In the UK and Ireland uPVC plastic inside rails are used. A single overhanging rail is normally used in the straights and double rail around the bends. This system is possible in the UK because the lure runs in a rail channel below the ground on the outside circumference of the track.

GRV proposes to explore and consider options for alternative rail systems aimed at achieving continuous improvement in safety outcomes for greyhounds. This will be done in collaboration with Clubs and other state greyhound racing bodies around Australia.



Traditional steel post & lure rail system with plastic safety rail used in SA



Traditional Victorian steel post & lure rail system with irrigation sprays on safety rail



UK PVC plastic inside rail system, single rail in straights and double on bends



USA steel inside barrier system, covered with foam padding and cableless lure operating on rails below the inside barrier

Other Safety Considerations

LURE OPERATING SYSTEMS

All tracks in Victoria, apart from Traralgon, operate on the cable and roller lure system. This is the traditional system utilised at most tracks around Australasia.

The traditional cable system involves the cable being pulled by a large electric motor, with a series of spindles or pulleys around the rail maintaining the cable's tension. This can make the system expensive to operate and maintain and the multiple moving parts can create several potential hazards for humans and greyhounds and potential points of failure. Re-splicing a snapped cable cannot be performed quickly and requires specialist skills.

In recent years, the Safechase™ battery-operated lure system has been trialed at various tracks around Australia, including at Traralgon in Victoria. It is a remotely-controlled electric carriage powered by rechargeable lithium-ion battery technology. It requires no cable or live electric contact system.

GRV proposes to continue investigating and trialling alternative lure operating systems that can be accommodated by the existing infrastructure at Victorian tracks with the objective of reducing the number of moving parts and potential points of failure and further reducing risks to greyhound and people safety. This will be done in collaboration with other state greyhound racing bodies around Australia conducting similar trials and roll-out of new systems.

CATCHING PENS & OPERATING SYSTEMS

Catching pens and operating systems to catch greyhounds at the conclusion of races have been modified in Victoria in recent years to improve people and greyhound safety. This has included lengthening the run for the greyhounds from the finish line to the back of the pen as well as the installation of new remote hydraulically-controlled, electronically operated lure flap systems.

Over the next 10 years GRV proposes to continue investigating alternative catching pen operating systems that can be accommodated by the existing infrastructure at Victorian tracks with the objective of further reducing the potential points of failure and risks to safety.



Traditional cable and roller lure system in operation at most tracks across Victoria



The Safechase™ cableless battery operated lure system has been implemented at Traralgon and multiple tracks around Australia.



UK lure operated from an underground rail and cable on the outside

USA cableless electric lure system operates on electrified rails from under the inside rail

Priority Projects for delivery

IN PROGRESS AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

The following priority projects are currently in progress or under consideration or development for delivery in conjunction with Clubs within the next two years.

- **Ballarat Kennel Block and Racing Operations Centre (completion due Mar 2024)** - This project will produce a new kennel fully enclosed building providing natural light, larger 14 race kennel bays and dog wash areas, stewards room, veterinary room, swab kennel bay, private isolation kennels, storeroom and grassed outdoor areas.
- **Upgrading of track lighting to LED lights at 5 tracks** Warrnambool, Ballarat, Geelong, Shepparton, The Meadows, Horsham
- **Stainless Steel kennels at multiple tracks**

PROJECTS UNDER CONSIDERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The following major projects are under consideration for delivery beyond the next two years. Timelines and scope of works are subject to consultation and have not yet been finalised.

- **SE/Gippsland Greenfield Site** – feasibility study being currently undertaken
- **Sandown Park track reconstruction or redevelopment**
- **The Meadows track reconstruction or redevelopment**
- **Warragul Kennel Building refurbishment or redevelopment**
- **Healesville Kennel Building refurbishment or redevelopment**

Funding Options

Projects at Clubs have historically been either partially or fully funded by GRV and in some cases the state government's Victorian Racing Industry Fund (VRIF) Racing and Training Facilities Program through grants, loans, a hybrid of these forms or another commercial arrangement.

Since 2016, GRV has invested \$30m in Racing and Training projects, and the state government, through VRIF, has contributed up to 50% for major works. Most of these projects have been managed by GRV and funding for the projects has been provided to Clubs as grants. Because these assets are passed on to Clubs by way of grants, they cannot be capitalised by GRV and therefore are expensed annually in GRV's P&L at the time the expenditure is incurred.

The VRIF Racing and Training Facilities program supports racing Clubs and organisations to improve infrastructure and facilities, which enable the delivery of quality training and racing environments at racing venues across Victoria. This is a 3-code fund and grants are provided on a cash co-contribution basis of up to 50 per cent of the total eligible budget expenditure.

To be eligible for a VRIF grant, the project must:

- be located at a racing venue which holds or intends to hold, regular training and/or racing events in Victoria
- comply with all local government planning requirements, including obtaining appropriate permits (as required)
- have the required public liability insurance and other relevant insurances
- have a positive impact on the racing industry and surrounding community e.g., by supporting local businesses.

GRV Grants

- Where the dominant purpose of the project is non-revenue generating racing infrastructure (such as track remediation or upgrade, starting boxes, safety equipment and greyhound amenities) the project may be provided by way of grant.

GRV Loans

- In the case of infrastructure which provides a commercial benefit to the Club, the preferred funding distribution may be a loan to the Club. A loan may also be appropriate in the case of non-revenue generating racing infrastructure projects that facilitate a commercial development or benefit to the Club.

Commercial Arrangement

- As an alternative to either a Grant or a Loan, projects may be funded in return for an equity position or some other form of commercial arrangement.