

# Shaping the Future of Harness Racing in Victoria

Positioning the  
venue network to  
deliver a safer, more  
sustainable and  
competitive future



# CONTENTS

---

FORWARD	<b>03</b>
INTRODUCTION	<b>04</b>
WHY THIS MATTERS NOW	<b>07</b>
THE FUTURE WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS	<b>24</b>
THE VENUE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK	<b>41</b>
ENGAGING THE INDUSTRY	<b>48</b>

# FOREWORD

---

This White Paper sets out a clear and necessary direction for the future of harness racing in Victoria.

The industry has a proud history and remains a vital part of regional communities, but it is also facing structural challenges that require thoughtful, transparent and decisive action.

Our objective is not to reduce the footprint of harness racing, but to ensure that the venues which make up our network are safe, sustainable and capable of supporting the sport for decades to come. This requires a more deliberate approach to how venues are used, funded and developed.

The framework outlined in this paper introduces clearer roles for venues, aligns investment with those roles, and provides a transparent basis for decision-making. Importantly, it also recognises the ongoing importance of community venues and the role they play in maintaining harness racing's regional presence.

We are committed to working closely with clubs, participants, government and communities as this process progresses. No decisions will be made without consultation, and every club will have the opportunity to contribute to shaping the future network.

This is a plan for long-term sustainability, not short-term change. By acting now, we ensure the sport remains strong, relevant and connected to the communities it serves.



Bernard Saundry  
Chair,  
Harness Racing Victoria



Matt Isaacs  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Harness Racing Victoria

# INTRODUCTION 01

## 1.1 Purpose of This Paper

---

Harness Racing Victoria is responsible for the management and development of harness racing in Victoria. That includes oversight of the racing programme, support for clubs and participants, and stewardship of the venue network that the sport relies on. Victoria's harness racing venues are spread across metropolitan and regional areas, and they are central to how the sport operates, how participants experience it, and how communities connect with it.

The industry is facing a period of sustained structural pressure that is unlikely to reverse in the near term. These pressures require deliberate reshaping of the venue network rather than incremental adjustment. Wagering conditions are tougher, horse numbers and participation have softened, venue infrastructure is ageing, and the cost of keeping a large network safe and operational continues to rise. These pressures are not new, but they are deepening, and the current approach of treating every venue broadly the same way is no longer realistic. Section 2 of this paper sets out the evidence in detail.

The purpose of this White Paper is to bring that evidence together in one place, set out a clear direction for the venue network, and explain the principles and framework HRV will use to guide decisions over time. It introduces a structured approach to defining venue roles, setting realistic expectations, and focusing investment where it strengthens the sport most. It also provides the basis for an open, evidence-based conversation with clubs, participants, government, and communities about what the network needs to look like to keep harness racing strong and sustainable in Victoria.

The direction set out in this paper will be implemented progressively over the next five years, with structured engagement at each stage. HRV is committed to working with the industry through that process, being clear about the evidence, transparent about the approach, and open to input that improves the outcome.

## 1.2 What This Paper Is Not

---

This paper sets out a direction and decision-making framework. It is not a set of final decisions about individual venues or clubs.

Its purpose is to establish the basis on which future venue roles will be assessed, including questions of racing frequency, operating model, investment priority, and, where necessary, whether a venue should transition out of regular racing use.

This paper does not apply a fixed or mechanical process without consultation. Any allocation of tiering to clubs will be informed by evidence and shaped through engagement with clubs, participants, government, and communities.

At the same time, this paper does make one point clear: maintaining the current network structure unchanged is not a viable long-term option. The framework is therefore intended to support a structured, transparent, and evidence-based process for assessing what role each venue should play in the future.

## ***What the Range of Outcomes May Include***

Depending on that assessment, outcomes for venues may include:

- continued participation in the network, with investment aligned to that role
- continued participation, subject to governance or operational improvements
- reduced racing frequency, aligned to a redefined venue role
- shared management or consolidation with nearby clubs
- transition to community or event-based use
- where safety or viability cannot be maintained, transition out of regular racing use

These outcomes will be determined through consultation and evidence-based assessment. Every club will have the opportunity to understand its assessment and engage with HRV before any classification or outcome is confirmed.

## **1.3 Who This Paper Is For**

---

This paper is written for everyone with a stake in the future of Victorian harness racing. That includes racing clubs and their committees, participants including trainers, drivers, owners, and breeders, local and state government partners, and the regional communities where harness racing venues are located.

It has been written in plain language so that the reasoning behind the direction is accessible to all readers.

## **1.4 How This Paper Is Structured**

---

Section 2 sets out the evidence for why the current approach to the venue network cannot continue. It covers wagering performance, horse numbers and participation trends, infrastructure condition, the pressures on clubs, and what happens if nothing changes.

Section 3 sets out the direction HRV is working towards. It starts with what is at stake and how the venue network connects to HRV's five strategic pillars, then describes the principles that will guide decisions, what the network needs to deliver, and the three venue types that will structure roles, expectations, and investment across the network.

Section 4 explains how venues will be assessed using a structured, evidence-based scorecard covering seven components.

Finally, section 5 describes how HRV will consult with the industry on the framework and engage individually with clubs through the classification process.

# WHY THIS MATTERS NOW 02

**02 | WHY THIS MATTERS NOW**

Harness racing is an important part of Victoria's sporting and regional life. It supports jobs, local businesses, volunteers and community events, and it brings people together in towns where there are not always many big events on the calendar. Harness racing contributes around \$613.5 million to Victoria's economy and supports 4,469 jobs, with much of that impact in regional communities.

<b>Victorian Harness Racing at a Glance</b> <i>Key figures that set the context for the venue network discussion</i>	
<b>\$613.5m</b> <b>Economic contribution to Victoria</b>	<b>4,469</b> <b>Full-time equivalent jobs supported</b>
<b>73%</b> <b>Of economic impact in regional Victoria</b>	<b>46</b> <b>Racing and training clubs across the state</b>
<b>436</b> <b>Race meetings per year</b>	<b>~3,600</b> <b>Races conducted annually</b>
<b>3,282</b> <b>Horses raced in Victoria</b>	<b>~2,200</b> <b>Licensed participants</b>

Sources: HRV Annual Report 2024-25 (race meetings, races conducted, horses raced, licensed participants); IER, Size and Scope of the Victorian Racing Industry (2022) (economic contribution and employment figures).

At the same time, the venue network that supports the sport was largely built for a different era. The sport is now operating in tougher conditions. Wagering is harder to grow and less predictable than it used to be. The horse and participant base has softened, which affects field sizes and meeting strength. The cost of keeping venues safe, compliant and fit for purpose has increased, and many facilities are reaching the point where major work is needed rather than small fixes.

If the network stays as it is, the more likely outcome is gradual decline rather than a single crisis point. More time and money will be absorbed by keeping venues going at a basic level, with less available for planned upgrades and broader improvement. That would place even more pressure on clubs and volunteers just as expectations around safety, welfare and governance continue to tighten.

This section sets out the main pressures driving the need for a clear plan for the venue network, and why acting early gives the sport more options than waiting until problems become urgent.

Over the past two financial years, HRV has implemented a series of changes to the racing calendar, incorporating elements of an external review that identified a range of initiatives to improve the industry's long-term financial sustainability.

The calendar optimisation strategy has focused on increasing the use of Melton and larger regional tracks to drive stronger wagering performance, improve operating efficiency and support better participant welfare outcomes.

Key outcomes to date include:

- Ten clubs hosting 85% of all race meetings.
- Average race turnover at these venues outperforming the statewide average, despite the broader decline in Australian racing turnover.
- An estimated 1.56 million fewer participant travel kilometres between 1 July 2024 and 1 April 2026, equating to approximately \$563,000 in fuel cost savings.
- Operational savings of approximately ~\$300,000 through reduced staff travel, lower staffing hours and leaner resourcing requirements.

## 2.1 The Industry Has Shifted and the Old Model No Longer Fits

### 2.1.1 Wagering Is Under Pressure

Wagering is one of the main ways money flows back into harness racing. When wagering is strong, the sport has more room to support prize money, keep venues in good condition, and help clubs deliver safe, well-run meetings. When wagering is under pressure, that room tightens. What makes this harder is that wagering is not just “up or down” as a single number. It is more competitive than it used to be, and performance varies a lot depending on where and when racing is held. Some parts of the programme consistently attract stronger betting interest, while other parts struggle to cut through.

The figures on the next page show how wagering has tracked over time and how turnover per race differs across venues and across days and timeslots.

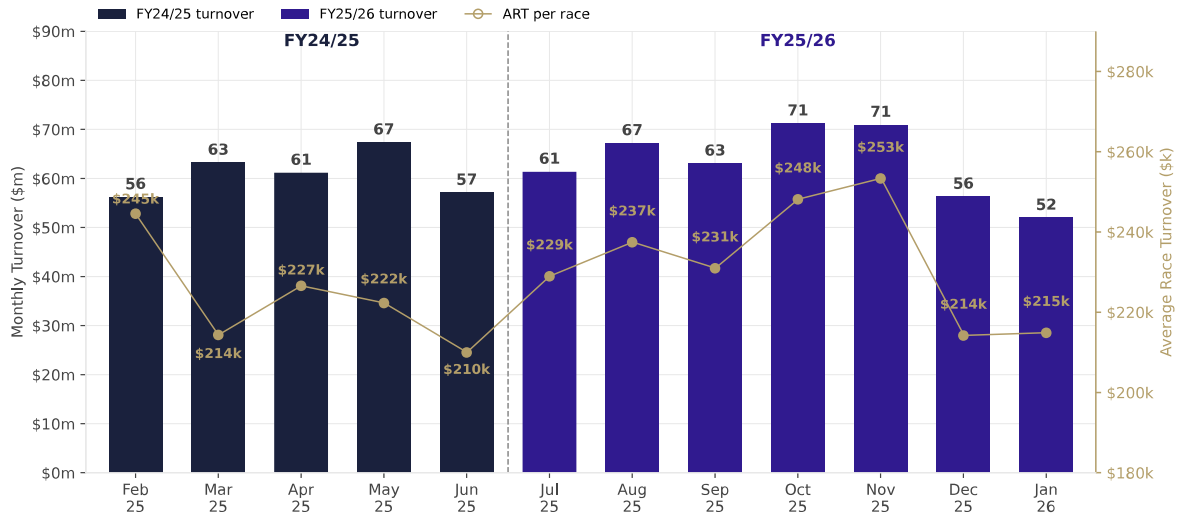
Overall, wagering performance varies sharply across venues and timeslots. A relatively small part of the programme generates most of the return, while lower-performing slots still attract much the same delivery cost.

This matters for the venue network because staging a meeting carries real cost wherever it is held. If a meaningful share of racing sits in weaker wagering windows or at venues that consistently underperform, the sport is paying similar delivery costs for less return. Over time, that reduces the funds available to reinvest in the things that keep the sport healthy, such as prize money, planned venue upkeep, and support for clubs that are already stretched. It also reinforces the need to be deliberate about where the industry concentrates its strongest racing and which venues are expected to carry more of the calendar. In a tougher wagering market, the venue network and the racing programme must work together to give the sport the best chance of strong, reliable wagering outcomes.

The case for network rationalisation is not primarily about reducing meeting delivery costs. Roughly 70 per cent of HRV’s club funding is variable (tied to running the meeting itself and excludes other indirect fixed funding support) and that cost follows the race card wherever it is held. The greater pressure sits within capital and fixed costs: infrastructure renewal, club administration, and base operating support that accrues regardless of how many meetings a venue runs. A network of more than 20 venues spreads limited capital across too many sites. The result is that few venues can get what they need.

## Monthly Wagering Turnover / Average Turnover per Race

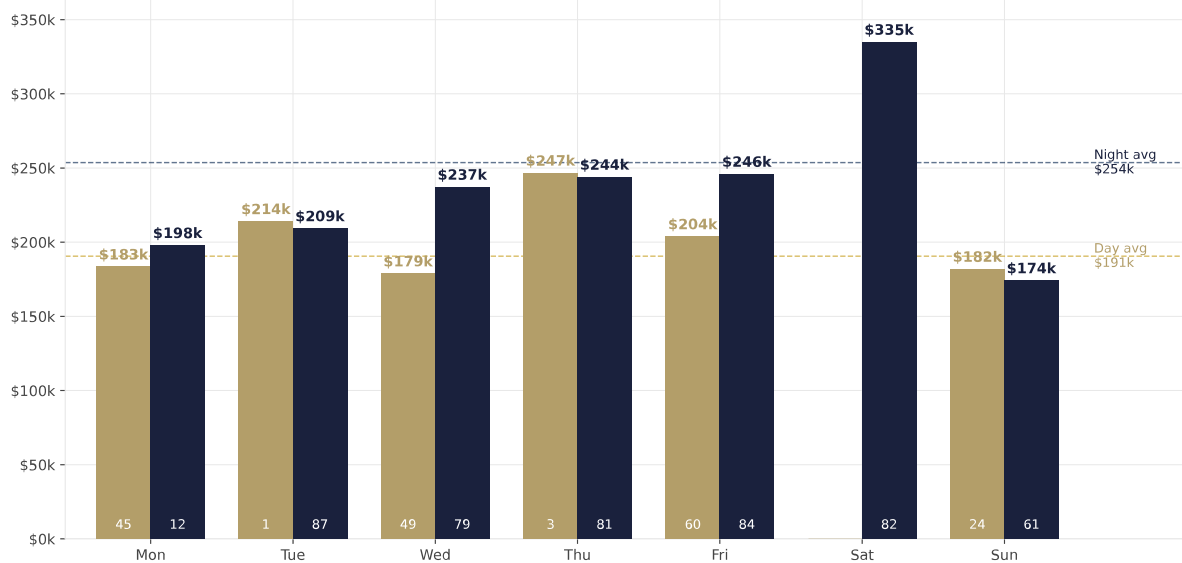
Data based on 12 months to January 2026



Source: HRV wagering data, February 2025 to January 2026. Turnover = total wagering handle. ART = total turnover / total races per month.

## By Day & Timeslot: Average Turnover per Race

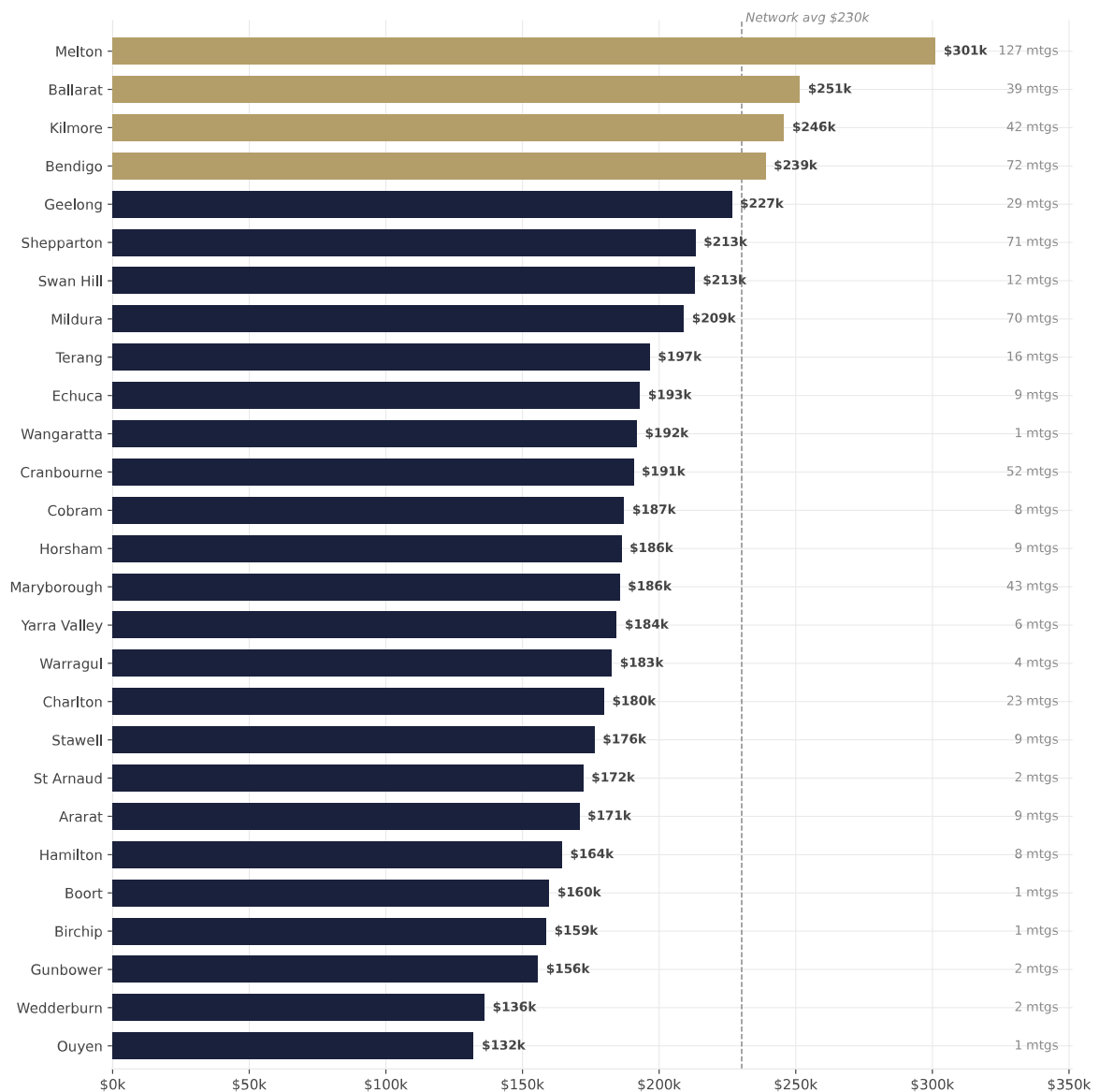
Night meetings average 33% more than Day meetings



Source: HRV wagering data, FY24/25 to FY25/26 YTD (1 Jul 2024 to 31 Jan 2026). Twilight meetings excluded (4 meetings only). Avg Turnover per Race = total venue turnover / total races.

## By Venue: Average Turnover per Race

Only four venues rank above the network average



Source: HRV wagering data, FY24/25 to FY25/26 YTD (1 Jul 2024 to 31 Jan 2026). Avge Turnover per Race = total venue turnover / total races.

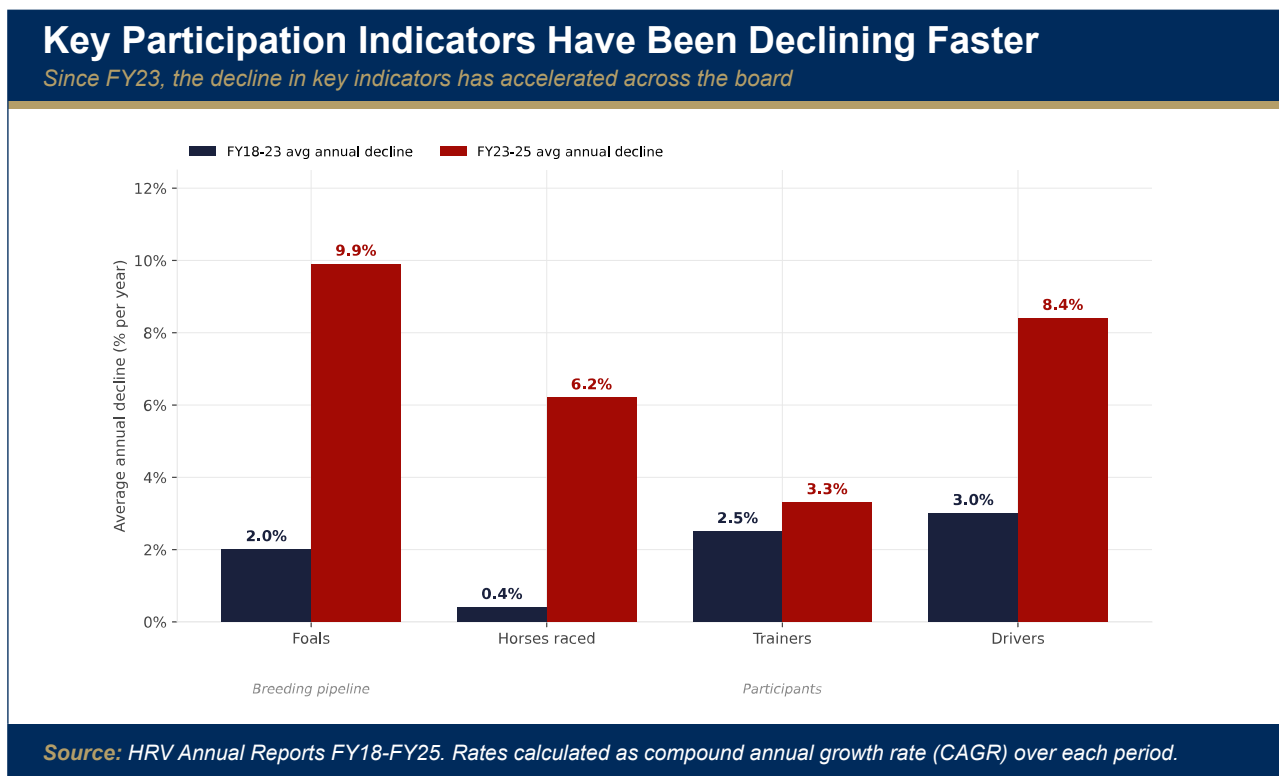
## 2.1.2 Horse Numbers and Participation Are Trending Down

Harness racing relies on having enough horses and enough people to support a strong, regular racing programme. When horse numbers fall, fields become tighter and races become more vulnerable to scratchings and can become less competitive. That usually reduces betting interest, and it also makes some meetings fragile, because they depend on the same small group of horses turning up again and again.

At the same time, participation matters because owners, trainers, drivers and stable staff are the people who make the sport function. When that base shrinks or becomes more concentrated in fewer areas, it becomes harder to support a wide spread of meetings and venues without increasing travel burden and pressure on those participants who remain.

Whilst a downward trend in participation is not new, what has changed is the pace of the contraction. Over the 30 years to around 2022, Victoria's foal nominations fell by roughly 4 per cent (with the exception of a peak during COVID). In the three years since, it has contracted by an estimated 21 to 27 per cent. Foal numbers tell the same story: approximately 1,387 three years ago, to around 1,012 last year, and tracking toward 800 this financial year as the breeding season draws to a close. This is no longer a slow, manageable slide. The rate of decline has accelerated sharply, and the implications for what the network can reliably support is changing faster than many within the industry anticipated.

The figure below shows how the rate of decline across each of these measures has accelerated since FY23.



## 02 | WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

For the venue network, these trends set the real limits of what the sport can run reliably. A large network of venues and meetings is harder to sustain when the horse pool is smaller and when participation is concentrated. It becomes harder to fill races consistently across the calendar, and more meetings rely on travel from outside the local area to stand up.

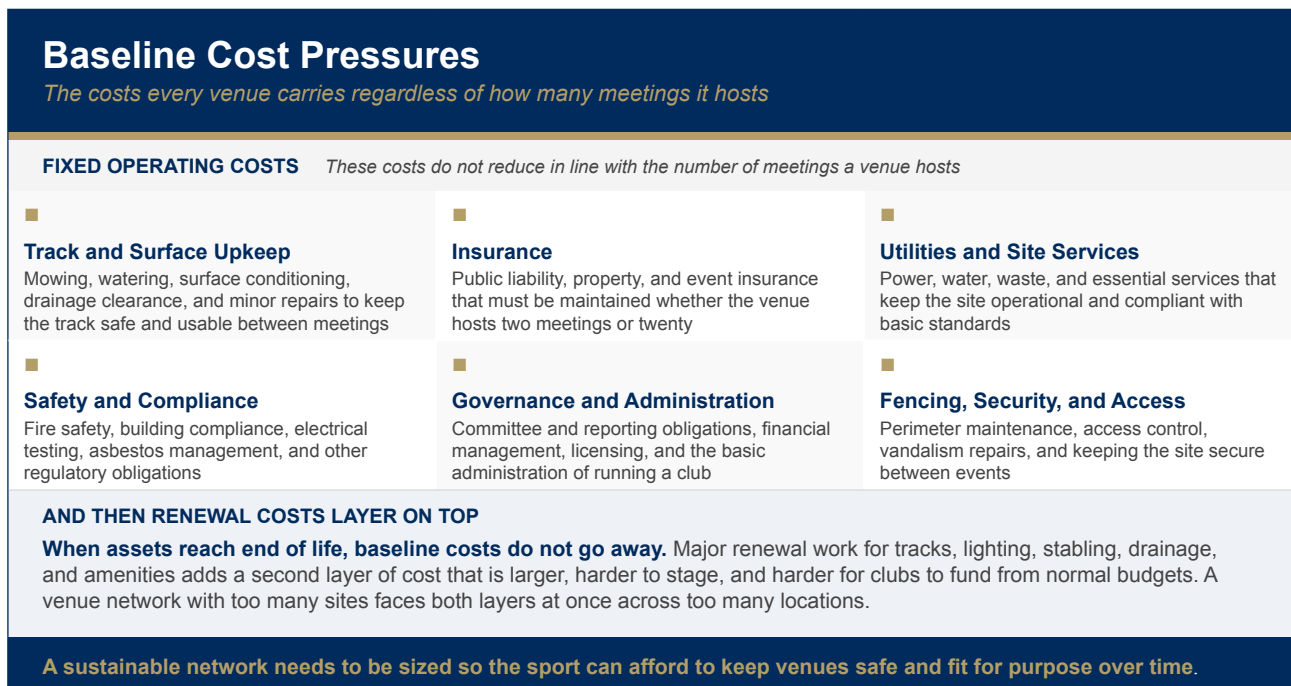
That increases cost and fatigue for participants and can lead to uneven meeting quality. It also makes it harder to keep lightly used venues viable, because low local participation often means low local use. A venue network plan needs to match where horses and participants actually are, so meetings are better supported and the programme is more reliable week to week.

### 2.1.3 Costs Are Rising Faster Than Income

The cost of keeping venues operating properly has been rising for some time. Even when a venue hosts only a small number of meetings, there are baseline costs and obligations that do not go away. Maintenance and repairs still need to happen, utilities still need to be paid, insurance still needs to be carried, and basic safety, compliance and governance tasks still need to be done. These are the costs of keeping a venue open, safe and usable.

What is changing is that many venues are moving beyond routine upkeep and into a period where major renewals are required. When assets reach end of life, small fixes stop being enough. Grandstands, amenities, stabling, lighting, drainage, track surfaces and other core infrastructure start to require substantial work. That is a different type of cost problem, because renewal work is larger, harder to stage, and harder for clubs to fund from normal year-to-year budgets.

The figure below summarises the baseline cost pressures that sit behind venue operations, regardless of meeting frequency.



For the venue network, this puts a practical limit on how many sites the sport can sustain well. As renewal needs grow, more money is diverted to patch repairs simply to keep venues operating, leaving less room for planned investment at the venues carrying most of the racing and training load. A sustainable network requires the right footprint to ensure venues can be properly maintained, remain safe, and continue to meet the needs of the sport over time.

HRV does not have the funding capacity to address the infrastructure backlog across the full network. This is not a position that will change materially in the near term. The purpose of the venue assessment and categorisation framework is to create a fair, evidence-based method for determining where limited capital should be directed and, equally, where investment cannot be justified. Even with clear prioritisation, the reality is that the funding required to maintain the full existing network to an acceptable standard will not be available via HRV.

### 2.1.4 External Forces Are Adding to the Pressure

The venue network is not only shaped by what happens inside harness racing. Competition for wagering spend is stronger than it used to be, and customers can switch quickly. Land use and population change are reshaping where the sport can be strongly supported. Travel costs and weather add fragility when racing is spread widely. And expectations around welfare, integrity and governance keep rising, putting greater weight on venues being safe and well run.

The figure below summarises these external pressures. These pressures keep shifting, and together they reduce what the sport can realistically support over time.

## External Pressures on the Venue Network

Four forces outside the sport that are reshaping what the network can realistically sustain

<p><b>01</b></p> <p><b>Competition for Wagering Spend</b></p> <p>Customers have more choice and can switch quickly. Weaker meetings struggle to hold attention, and the sport has less room for a programme that is inconsistent or spread thinly across too many low-impact slots.</p>	<p><b>02</b></p> <p><b>Land Use and Population Change</b></p> <p>Growth is uneven, and participation is not spread evenly across the state. Tenure and land constraints shape what upgrades are practical at some sites and what long-term investment makes sense.</p>
<p><b>03</b></p> <p><b>Travel and Weather Realities</b></p> <p>When racing is spread widely, travel burden rises and meetings become more dependent on horses and people travelling in. Weather and track reliability matter more when facilities are ageing and maintenance capacity is stretched.</p>	<p><b>04</b></p> <p><b>Rising Welfare and Governance Expectations</b></p> <p>The community and government expect modern standards and consistent delivery. That puts greater weight on venues being safe and well run, and on club capability to meet baseline obligations. A stretched network makes this harder.</p>

**WHERE THESE PRESSURES CONVERGE**

None of these pressures are static, and they do not affect every venue equally. But together, **they narrow what is realistic for the sport to sustain over time.** A venue plan needs to reflect where the sport can be strongly supported, where the practical constraints are highest, and where the gap between expectation and capacity is growing.

**The operating environment is tougher than it used to be.** The venue network needs a clearer plan, clearer roles, and a more realistic approach to what the sport can maintain well over time.

## 02 | WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

A club's ability to deliver on its venue role is directly tied to its financial position. Clubs with diversified revenue (from gaming, function hire, community events, or local sponsorship) are often able to invest in their facilities, put on a genuine race-day experience, and connect actively with their community. Clubs that rely heavily on direct HRV funding for their base operating costs are often, by definition, constrained in what they can offer.

This matters because the framework will place real expectations on clubs, not just to run safe meetings, but to drive local horse ownership, host community events, and build the kind of local presence that makes harness racing relevant to the towns it operates in. Financial capacity is a meaningful part of what makes those expectations achievable. It is one of the reasons the venue assessment explicitly scores revenue diversity: not as a penalty, but as a signal of a club's structural ability to sustain its role.

HRV's direct funding model for clubs will also need to evolve. Clubs that have maintained alternative revenue streams are better positioned to absorb that transition than those that have not.

### 2.2 The Venue Network Is Spread Too Thin

How the venue network is structured matters. A larger footprint can make sense when demand is strong and there is enough money to keep every site safe, well maintained, and fit for purpose. Under today's conditions, a large footprint makes that much harder. Under current conditions, the industry is unlikely to be able to sustain the existing number of regularly active racing venues at the required standard over the long term.

Venues are also used very differently across the network. A small number of tracks host regular meetings and support steady activity. Others are used only occasionally. Where use is low, major upgrades are harder to justify, particularly if another nearby venue is hosting more racing, supporting more activity, and delivering stronger value for the sport. Over time, this can lead to a pattern where too many sites are kept operating at a basic level, but too few are lifted to the standard the sport needs.

In some parts of Victoria, nearby venues also draw from the same pool of horses, trainers and drivers, volunteers, sponsors, and race day patrons. When that happens, the sport ends up duplicating fixed costs and splitting support across multiple sites. It can also tighten field sizes if meetings are effectively competing for the same horses across the calendar. That makes it harder to run consistently strong meetings and build a reliable programme.

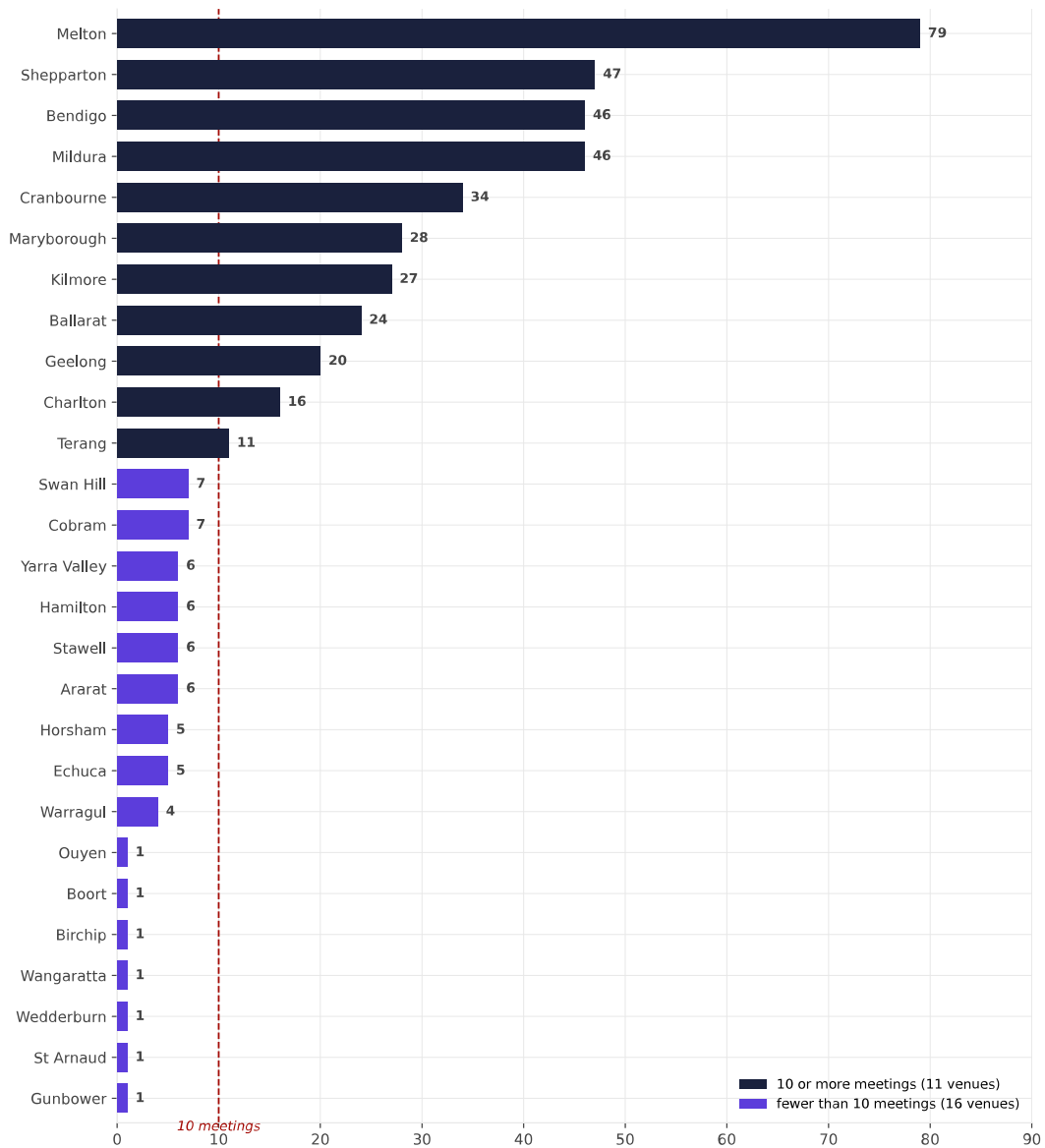


## 02 | WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The data shows how concentrated racing activity already is. A small number of venues carry the majority of the programme and generate most of the wagering turnover, while a long tail of venues host only a handful of meetings each year. The figures below set out the detail.

### Average Venue Utilisation Is Low

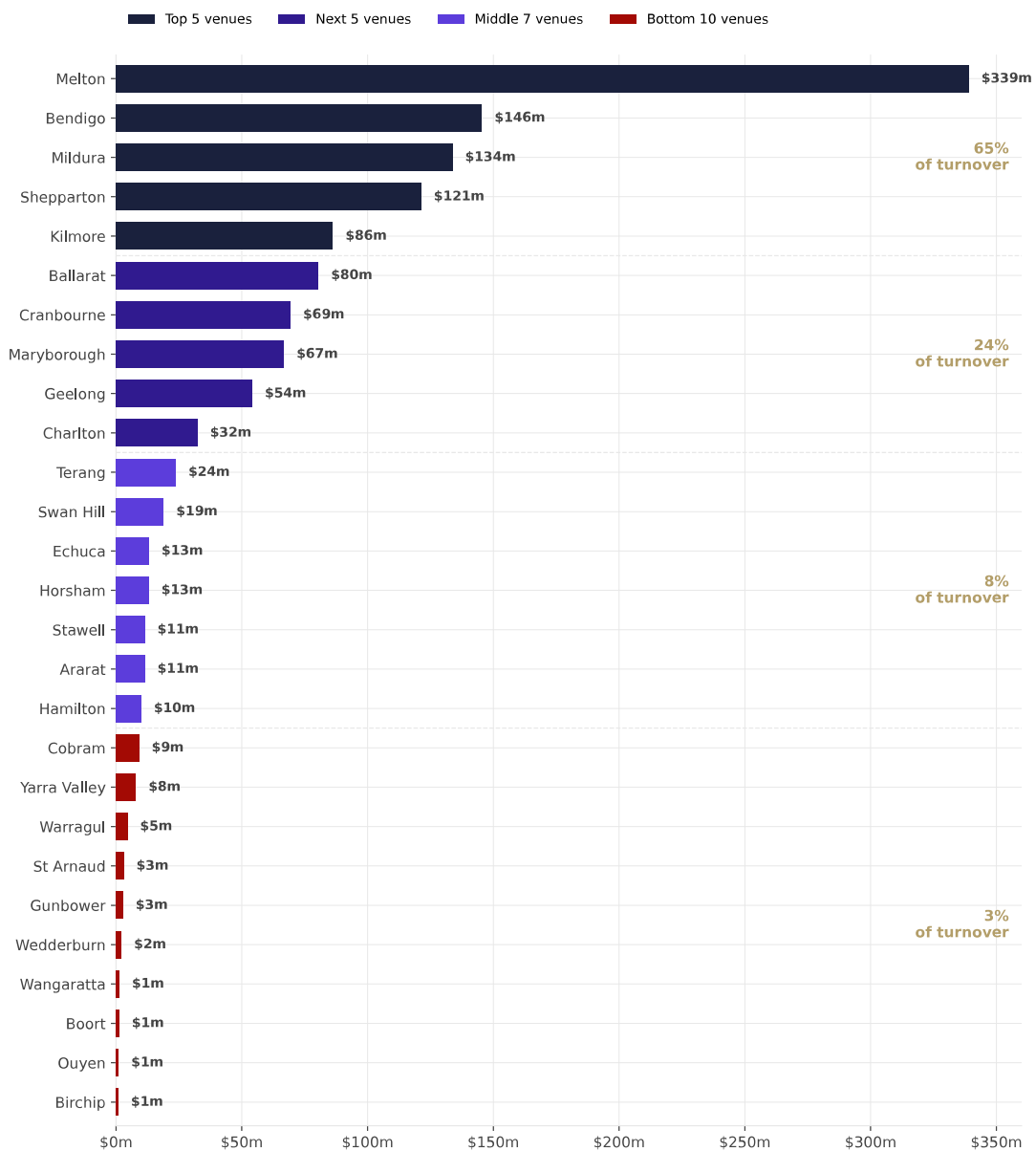
16 of 27 venues hosted fewer than 10 meetings in FY24/25



Source: HRV wagering data, FY24/25 (1 Jul 2024 to 30 Jun 2025). Meeting count = total race meetings held at each venue. All 27 venues shown.

## Turnover Is Highly Concentrated

The top 5 venues account for 65% of total turnover and 57% of meetings. The bottom 10 venues account for 4% of meetings



Source: HRV wagering data, FY24/25 to FY25/26 YTD (1 Jul 2024 to 31 Jan 2026). 668 meetings across 27 venues. Turnover = total wagering handle.

## 02 | WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Without clearer roles and more focus, investment gets spread thinly, standards become harder to lift consistently, and the network becomes harder to sustain. Where nearby venues also draw from the same pool of horses, trainers, and volunteers, the sport can end up duplicating fixed costs and splitting support across multiple sites.

Victoria is not alone in facing this question. Other states have shown that a viable harness racing programme can be delivered with a smaller number of core venues carrying most meetings. Other racing codes have also found that where venue roles and expectations are clearer, it is easier to prioritise investment, maintain consistent standards, and explain why some venues carry more of the calendar than others. The figure below sets out what clearer venue roles typically make possible.

<b>What Clearer Venue Roles Make Possible</b> <i>Lessons from other codes and jurisdictions where venue roles and expectations are defined</i>		
	WITHOUT CLEAR ROLES	WITH CLEAR ROLES
<b>Investment</b>	Spread across all venues regardless of use or contribution. Hard to prioritise. Repeated small fixes without a clear plan.	Focused on venues that carry most racing. Investment matched to role and use. Bigger impact from the same spend.
<b>Standards</b>	Same expectation applied everywhere, or no clear expectation at all. Standards often slip because they are unaffordable across the whole network.	Realistic standards matched to each venue's role. Easier to maintain, audit, and explain. Busier venues held to higher standards.
<b>Calendar</b>	Meetings spread across many venues to keep all venues active. Fragile fields, inconsistent quality, weaker wagering windows.	Programme anchored in capable venues with a clear weekly rhythm. Meetings at supporting venues are scheduled to work with the main programme, not split fields or compete for the same horses.
<b>Decisions</b>	Hard to explain why some venues get more support. Each decision feels political. No agreed framework for saying yes or no.	Roles provide a rationale. Decisions are easier to make and easier to explain because they follow a defined logic.
<b>Community</b>	Uncertainty about the future creates anxiety. Clubs and communities assume the worst. Expectations and reality drift apart.	Each venue has a clear purpose. Communities know what to expect. Easier to protect what matters locally without overpromising.
<b>Risk</b>	Compliance and safety effort stretched thinly. Hard to lift standards when every venue needs attention at once.	Oversight concentrated where risk is highest. Proportionate expectations for lower-use venues. Consistent improvement becomes achievable.

The objective is not to maintain the largest footprint. It is a network that can be maintained properly, supports a strong racing product and directs investment where it adds the most value.

## 2.3 Ageing Infrastructure: A Growing Risk and a Bigger Cost

Across the state, the infrastructure reviews point to the same conclusion: much of the network is ageing and a growing share of venues needs major work.

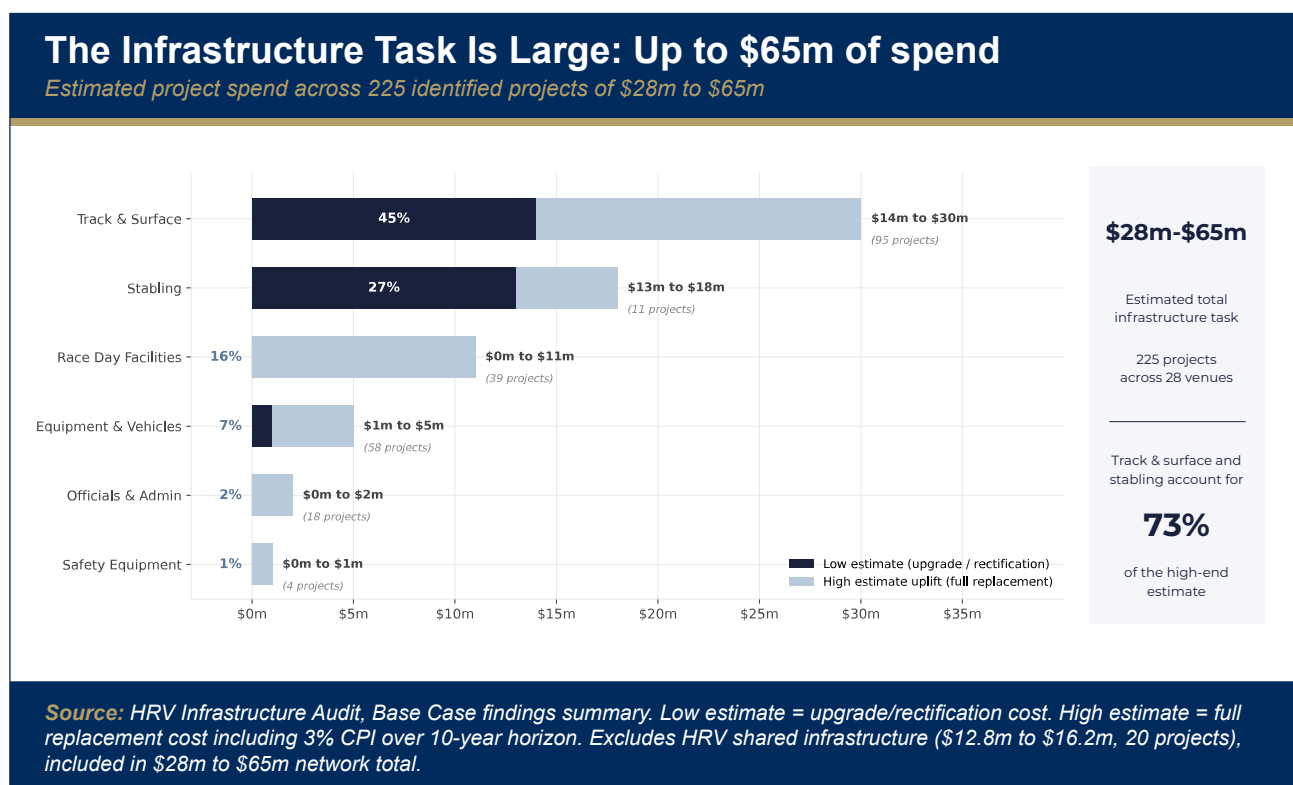
Many assets are reaching end of life. Track surfaces, drainage, lighting, rails and fencing, stables, amenities, and basic site services wear out over time, and small fixes stop being enough.

The upgrade task is large and spread across the network. The reviews identify a large number of projects across many venues over a multi-year period. Even at an upgrade level, the cost is in the tens of millions. Where full replacement is required for older assets, the cost is higher.

## 02 | WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The statewide picture makes one point clear: the network cannot be kept safe and fit for purpose through small repairs alone. Renewal work needs to be prioritised in a way the sport can afford. Section 2.5 sets out what happens if that prioritisation does not occur.

The figure below provides the statewide summary of the number of projects and the estimated cost range.



## 2.4 Clubs Are Under Strain, and Expectations Are Increasing

Most harness racing clubs are small organisations, many volunteer-led, that are responsible for running and maintaining sizeable venues. That model has worked for a long time, but it is under more pressure now because the workload has grown and the costs of keeping venues operating have increased.

In practice, financial strain often looks like delayed maintenance, staged repairs, and limited ability to build reserves for bigger renewals. When a venue needs major work, it is often impossible for a club to fund it from normal year-to-year income. Even when clubs generate income through sponsorship, trading, and venue hire, many do not have enough surplus to keep pace with the cost of maintaining ageing facilities to a good standard.

At the same time, expectations have increased. Clubs are responsible for people, money, and facilities, and there are baseline responsibilities that apply regardless of how many meetings a club runs. This includes basic governance, financial management, and safety obligations. These expectations are not new in principle, but they are now more visible, more scrutinised, and more demanding in practice.

**02 | WHY THIS MATTERS NOW**

Volunteer and capability pressure adds another layer. Many clubs rely on a small number of committed people, and in some communities that volunteer base is ageing. It can be hard to recruit successors for key roles. The workload is also heavier than it used to be, with more compliance tasks, contractor management, and administration needed just to keep a venue operating properly.

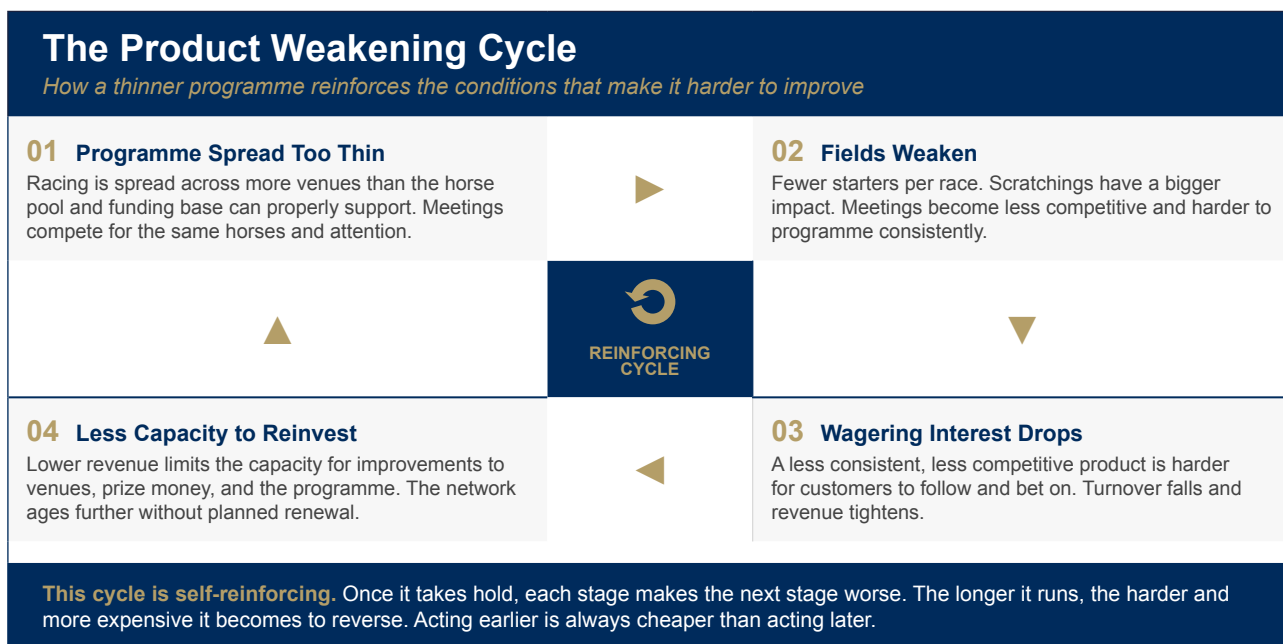
A larger network multiplies these pressures. The more venues the sport is trying to keep operating, the more clubs are being asked to carry growing responsibilities, often with limited capacity. Clearer venue roles and a more realistic footprint make it easier to lift standards consistently, reduce avoidable strain on clubs, and focus support where it will have the biggest impact.

## 2.5 If Nothing Changes, the Risks Build Each Year

If the venue network remains unchanged, the likely result is gradual decline rather than stability. The pressures already described will keep building, and the system will become harder to manage and more expensive to support.

### 2.5.1 The Racing Product Weakens Over Time

A key risk is that the racing product weakens. When the programme is spread too thinly and the horse pool is tight, fields become more fragile. Meetings can rely on the same small group of horses and stables, and scratchings have a bigger impact. Over time, meeting quality can become less consistent and less competitive. The figure below illustrates the reinforcing cycle that can follow, where a thinner product reduces wagering interest and reduces the capacity to reinvest in improvements.



## 2.5.2 More Money Allocated to Keep Things Running, Less Goes to Improvements

Another risk is that more money and effort is pulled into keeping venues operating at a basic level. As facilities age and renewal needs grow, the system can drift towards urgent fixes and patch repairs rather than planned upkeep. That tends to be more disruptive and less efficient, and it leaves less room for improvements that lift the sport over time. The figure below captures this shift in simple terms.



The pattern is familiar. When planned work is deferred, it does not disappear. It returns later as a bigger, more urgent, and more expensive problem. Costs escalate, options narrow, and disruption increases. The figure below shows how this escalation typically unfolds, from planned maintenance through to forced closure.

## How Deferral Drives Escalation

*Delaying renewal does not hold costs steady. It increases both risk and eventual cost.*

### 01 PLANNED MAINTENANCE

Work done on schedule before problems appear. Costs are predictable, disruption is low, and asset life is extended. This is where the system should operate.

Cost ■■■■ **Lowest**      Risk ■■■■ **Lowest**

### 02 DEFERRED AND DELAYED

Work is recognised as needed but pushed back due to budget constraints or competing priorities. The asset still functions but is deteriorating faster than it should. Small problems begin to compound.

Cost ■■■■ **Moderate**      Risk ■■■■ **Rising**

### 03 REACTIVE AND URGENT

The asset fails or becomes unsafe, and work must be done urgently. Costs are higher because of emergency procurement, downtime, and disruption to racing and training. Options narrow.

Cost ■■■■ **High**      Risk ■■■■ **High**

### 04 FAILURE OR FORCED CLOSURE

The asset reaches a point where it cannot be used safely. Racing or training is suspended. Full replacement is needed, often at significantly higher cost than earlier intervention would have required.

Cost ■■■■ **Highest**      Risk ■■■■ **Critical**

#### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VENUE NETWORK

The longer renewal is deferred, the more the system shifts from planned spending to reactive spending. That means the same money buys less, disruption increases, and the choices available to the sport narrow. Acting earlier keeps more options open and costs lower.

**Planned works are cheaper and less disruptive than urgent repairs.** When problems reach a failure point, fixes cost more, disrupt racing and training, and deliver a worse long-term result.

### 2.5.3 Safety, Welfare and Compliance Risks Rise Over Time

Finally, safety, welfare and compliance risks increase. Deferred upgrades and stretched capability raise the likelihood of incidents and failures. A serious incident at one venue can quickly affect confidence in the wider sport. The figure below summarises these risks.

## Safety, Welfare and Compliance Risks

*How deferred renewal and stretched capability increase exposure*

- 1. Track and infrastructure safety**  
Ageing tracks, drainage, lighting, and rail systems increase the risk of incidents during racing and training. Deferred renewal means assets operate beyond their intended life, and workarounds become the norm rather than the exception.
- 2. Horse welfare**  
Facilities that are not properly maintained can compromise horse welfare. Poor track surfaces, inadequate drainage, and substandard stabling or wash-down areas create conditions where avoidable injuries and welfare issues become more likely.
- 3. People safety**  
Participants, officials, volunteers, and the public rely on venues being safe. Structural issues, electrical systems, fire safety, and crowd management all depend on assets being maintained to standard. As facilities age, the margin for error narrows.
- 4. Regulatory and compliance exposure**  
Racing venues must meet obligations across workplace health and safety, building codes, environmental standards, and racing-specific regulations. Deferred maintenance increases the risk of non-compliance, which can lead to restrictions on use, remediation costs, or forced closure.

**WHY THIS MATTERS BEYOND A SINGLE VENUE**

A serious safety, welfare, or compliance failure does not stay local. **It affects confidence in the whole sport.** It increases regulatory scrutiny across the network, adds unplanned cost, and can disrupt racing well beyond the venue where the incident occurred. The reputational damage is harder to measure but no less real.

These risks increase over time, which is why further deferral only makes them harder to manage. A clear venue network plan is the most effective way to identify, prioritise, and address the areas of greatest exposure before they become crises.

Taken together, these risks point to the same conclusion. Delay is not a neutral decision. It reduces options and increases the chance that future choices are made under pressure. Acting early allows the sport to set a clear direction, retain control of its future, and avoid decisions being forced under financial or safety pressure.

Some venues will eventually move out of regular racing regardless of what the industry does. The question is whether that transition is planned, with support, consultation, and realistic alternatives in place, or whether it arrives as a crisis, driven by safety failures, financial collapse, or forced closure with no framework to manage the consequences.

## 2.6 What This White Paper Is Meant to Do

This section has set out the case for change. Wagering is under pressure, the horse and participant base is shrinking, infrastructure renewal is falling behind, and clubs are carrying more strain. Those pressures interact with each other, and all of them affect what the venue network can realistically support if the sport is to remain strong over time.

The next section sets out what HRV intends to do about it. This paper also asks something of every club in the network: to look at the scorecard criteria and standards set out in Section 3, form an honest view of their own position, and have the conversations that view makes necessary: with neighbouring clubs, with HRV, and within their own committees. The clubs best placed to shape what the network looks like in five years are the ones that engage early.

**THE FUTURE WE ARE  
WORKING TOWARDS**

**03**

**Section 2 set out the evidence: wagering is sharply concentrated, the horse pool has contracted, infrastructure is ageing faster than it is being renewed, clubs are under growing pressure, and the risks compound if nothing changes. These are not separate problems. They reinforce each other, and they all come back to the venue network.**

Before setting out what HRV intends to do, it is worth being clear about what is at stake. This goes well beyond classifying venues or debating which site should be funded first. If the network continues to treat all venues much the same, with resources spread thinly and expectations left unclear, the racing product will keep weakening and costs will continue to outstrip what the industry can carry.

HRV's strategy rests on five pillars: industry sustainability, commercial performance, community trust, integrity and welfare, and organisational effectiveness. The venue network is where those strategic pillars become practical realities. A network that cannot support a competitive racing product undermines commercial performance. Venues that cannot be maintained safely undermine integrity and welfare. A network with no clear structure and no differentiated expectations makes organisational effectiveness impossible. And a sport that cannot explain why it invests where it does will struggle to hold the trust of clubs, participants, government, and communities.

This section sets out what the network needs to deliver, the principles that will guide decisions, and a structured approach to defining venue roles so that expectations and investment follow evidence rather than assumption. The figure below summarises the outcomes the venue network is meant to deliver.

## Venue Network Outcomes

*What the future venue network is meant to deliver*

*These outcomes describe what the network needs to deliver for the sport, not how individual venues are classified. Every decision about venue roles, investment, and standards should be tested against whether it helps or hinders these outcomes.*

### 01 Safe and Reliable

The network must be safe for horses, participants, and the public. Venues that host racing should have facilities that are fit for purpose and maintained to a standard that avoids preventable risk. Safety and welfare are not optional and cannot depend on the goodwill of volunteers alone.

### 02 A Strong Racing Product

The network must support a racing programme that customers want to follow and bet on. That means putting on the right meetings, in the right places, at the right times, with competitive fields. Wagering is the financial engine of the sport, and the venue network is where the product is delivered.

### 03 Workable for Participants

The network must work for the people who breed, own, train, and drive the horses. That means safe places to train and race, a programme people can plan around, and a set of venues that reduces unnecessary travel where practical. If participation becomes too hard, the sport shrinks.

### 04 Clear Roles and Realistic Expectations

Not every venue needs to do everything. Clear roles make investment choices more realistic, standards more consistent, and expectations easier to explain. A venue that is well supported in a defined role is more sustainable than one stretched across obligations it cannot meet.

### 05 Connected to Regional Victoria

The network should remain present in regional communities in a way that matches local demand and what the sport can sustain. Harness racing matters in many towns, and the network should keep that connection alive through racing, events, and local use that reflects each venue's realistic role.

These outcomes provide a practical check on future decisions about venue roles, investment and standards. If it works against them, it should be reconsidered.

## 3.1 Principles That Guide Choices

To make decisions consistent and easier to understand, HRV will use the following principles when setting the future direction for the venue network.

### Guiding Principles

*How HRV will make decisions about the venue network*

**1. Safety and welfare first**

Venues must be safe for horses and people. This is the baseline, not an aspiration.

**2. Focus on what makes the sport stronger**

Put effort into the venues and meetings that support stronger fields, stronger wagering, and a better participant experience.

**3. Keep a strong regional presence**

Harness racing should remain visible and meaningful across regional Victoria, in a way the sport can sustain.

**4. Be clear about what each venue is for**

Not every venue needs to do everything. Roles should be explicit so expectations are realistic.

**5. Spend money where it has the biggest impact**

Prioritise planned investment that improves safety, reliability, and the racing product over repeated patch-up work.

**6. Be transparent and fair**

Use clear criteria and consistent information. Explain decisions in plain language.

**7. Work with clubs and stakeholders**

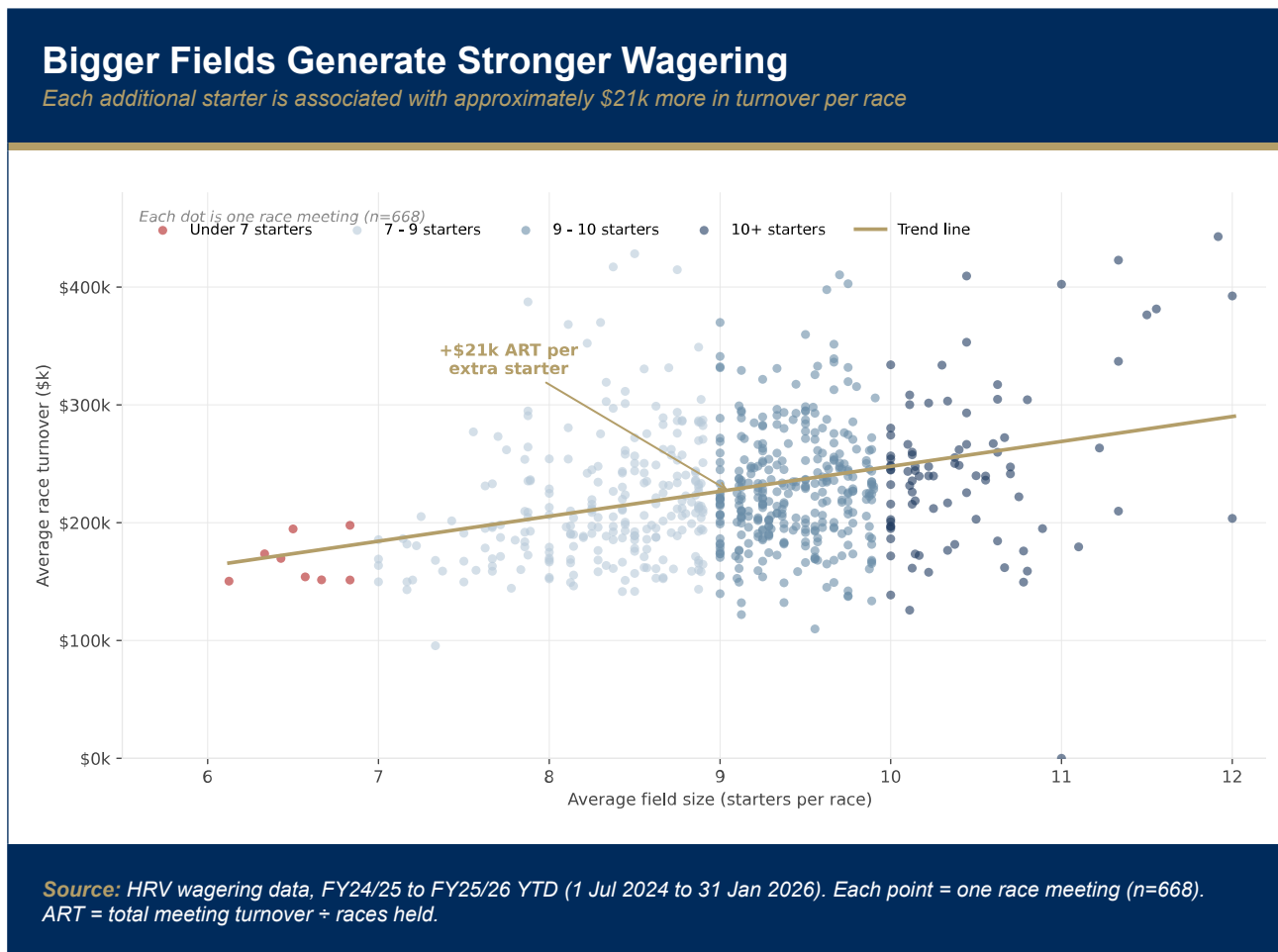
Change will last longer if it is understood, practical, and workable on the ground.

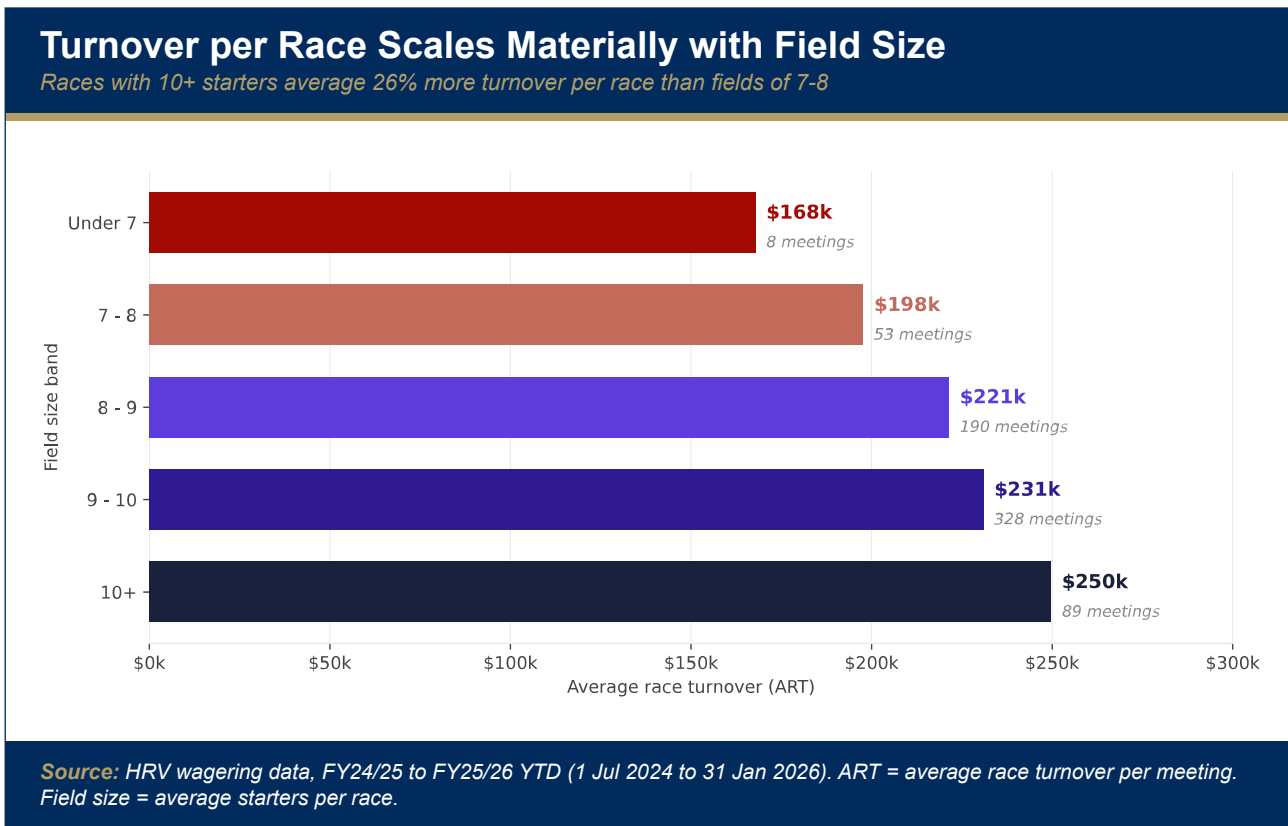
**These principles apply to every venue decision** - from which meetings sit where in the calendar, to how investment is prioritised, to how changes are explained to clubs and communities.

## 3.2 What the Venue Network Needs to Deliver

### 3.2.1 A Racing Programme That Works for Punters and Fans

A sustainable venue network needs to support a racing programme that people want to follow and bet on. The issue is not simply the number of meetings, but whether the programme is placed in the right venues and time windows, and delivered consistently enough to hold attention. The figures below show the relationship directly: bigger fields generally deliver more efficient and stronger wagering results.





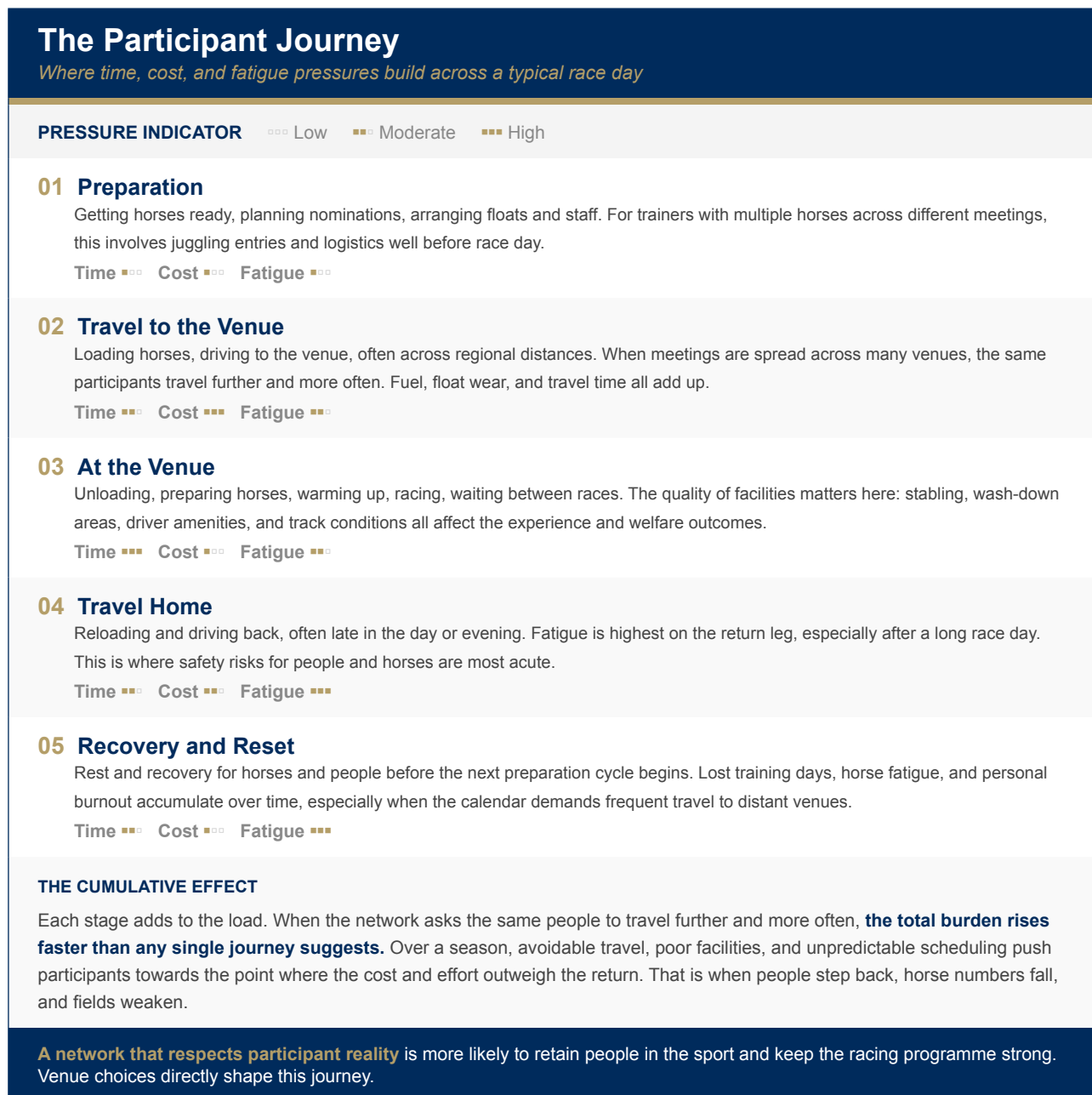
### 3.2.2 A Network That Works for Participants

The venue network only works if it works for the people who breed, own, train and drive the horses. If participation becomes too hard, too expensive, or too unpredictable, people step back. That reduces the number of horses in work, weakens field sizes, and makes meetings more fragile.

Every venue in the network needs to meet a minimum standard for safety and responsible operation, regardless of how many meetings it runs. Venues that host frequent racing or support significant training activity need a higher standard, because the risk, wear and operational demand is greater. Put plainly, the venues carrying the most activity also need to be the most dependable.

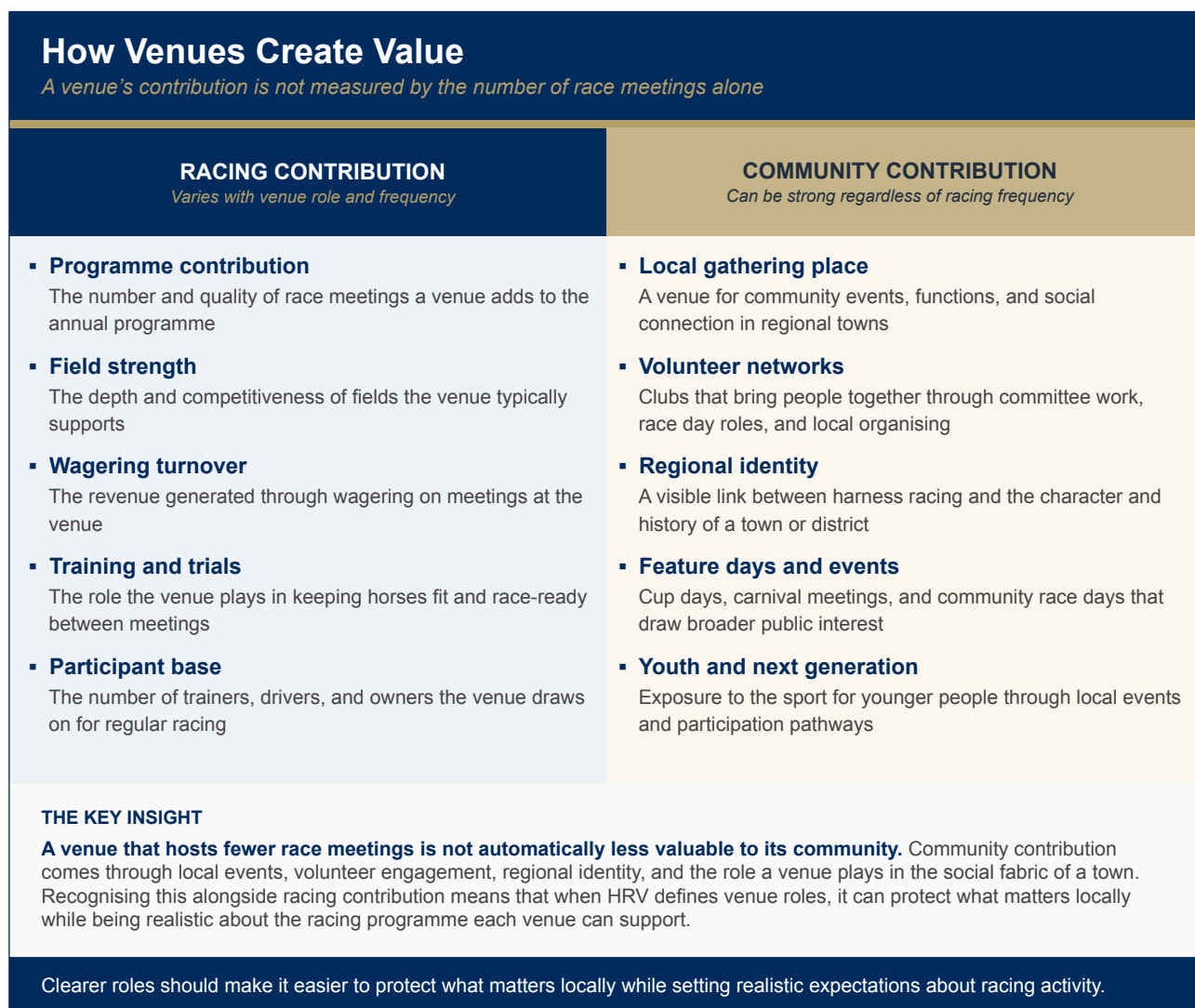
A sustainable venue network also needs to make better use of limited funds. The aim is to direct spending where it will improve safety, strengthen the racing product and support venues that the sport can maintain properly over time. The simple investment logic is that venue role drives expected use, required standard, and the type of investment that makes sense.

The figure below shows the participant journey and where time and cost pressures tend to build.



### 3.2.3 A Clear Role in Regional Communities

Harness racing is a regional sport, and many venues are more than places where races are run. They are local institutions run by volunteers, they host community events, and they provide a gathering place in towns where there are not always many venues of that scale. The figure below illustrates that a venue can contribute in different ways, including through community value that is not directly tied to the number of race meetings it hosts.



### 3.3 Three Clear Types of Venues

Until now, the venue network has operated without a formal framework that distinguishes what each venue is there to do, what standard it should meet, or what level of investment is realistic. Every site has carried similar expectations regardless of its role. That makes it harder to plan, harder to set expectations, and harder to explain why some venues need more support than others.

This White Paper introduces a clearer structure. HRV will group venues into three types based on the role they play in the network: premier venues, core venues, and community venues. These are not historical labels or judgements about local importance. They describe what each venue is expected to do going forward, and what standard comes with that role.

Venue roles will be informed by an evidence-based assessment covering factors such as wagering contribution, horse and participant population, infrastructure condition, governance capability, community value, and strategic location. That assessment framework is set out later in this paper. This is a framework for structured discussion with the industry, not a set of concluded decisions. The figure below summarises what each venue type is there to do.

Three Venue Types <i>Summary of Role and Function</i>			
	PREMIER	CORE	COMMUNITY
<b>Role in the Network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backbone of the regular racing programme</li> <li>• Host a larger share of racing</li> <li>• Support a wider participant base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular role at a smaller scale than premier venues</li> <li>• Provide regional coverage and depth</li> <li>• Genuine local base of participants and horses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily local role</li> <li>• Community connection, history, local presence</li> <li>• May host larger local gatherings and events</li> </ul>
<b>Racing Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent meetings across the year</li> <li>• Most dependable racing opportunities</li> <li>• Consistent race day product for customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular meetings, across the year</li> <li>• Complement premier programme, not compete</li> <li>• Reduce travel burden for local participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller number of meetings per year</li> <li>• Linked to feature days or community occasions</li> <li>• Well planned and supported when run</li> </ul>
<b>Training and Trials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongest training and trials activity</li> <li>• Depth of horses and people for regular use</li> <li>• Reliable surfaces and practical facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some core venues carry day-to-day training</li> <li>• Where local participant base is strong enough</li> <li>• Reliable surfaces for regular use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May support training where genuine local use</li> <li>• Not expected to carry training role without demand</li> </ul>
<b>Community Contribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active venue at a higher standard</li> <li>• Community use alongside regular racing</li> <li>• Supports participants across the full programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local community use alongside racing</li> <li>• Dependable racing closer to where people are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venue hire, local events, charity partnerships</li> <li>• Keeps harness racing visible locally</li> <li>• Meaningful with fewer, better-supported race days</li> </ul>

These categories describe future function rather than local worth or history. **Every venue contributes.** The framework makes expectations clearer so the sport can plan, invest, and support clubs more effectively.

### 3.3.1 Premier Venues

The figure below summarises the premier venue role.

## Premier Venues

*Key venues in the network - Role and expectations*

ROLE IN THE NETWORK
Premier venues are the key venues in the network. They host a large share of racing and support a wider participant base. They are the backbone of the regular racing programme, and in many cases they are also where training and trials activity is strongest because of the depth of horses and people around them.
WHAT PREMIER VENUES DO IN PRACTICE
Premier venues carry frequent meetings across the year and provide the most dependable racing opportunities for participants and owners. Because they are central to the programme, they also need to be able to deliver a consistent race day product for customers, with facilities and operations that work reliably week after week.
EXPECTED STANDARD
A good premier venue is safe, reliable, and fit for frequent use. Track conditions, safety infrastructure, lighting where needed, participant facilities, and race day operations should be strong enough that meetings can be delivered consistently without constant workarounds. It should also have the operational capability to handle regular racing and the flow of people, horses, and activity that comes with that role.
INVESTMENT PRIORITY
Because premier venues carry most of the load, they are where planned upkeep and planned investment matter most. The priority is to keep these venues safe and dependable, and to renew key assets on time so the core racing programme is not exposed to increasing disruption and risk.

**Key point:** Keeping premier venues strong protects the whole system because so much of the programme relies on them.

A good premier venue is safe, reliable, and fit for frequent use. Track conditions, safety infrastructure, lighting where needed, participant facilities, and race day operations should be strong enough that meetings can be delivered consistently. Because premier venues carry most of the load, they are where planned upkeep and planned investment matter most. Keeping premier venues strong protects the whole system because so much of the programme relies on them.

### 3.3.2 Core Venues

The figure below summarises the core venue role.

<b>Core Venues</b> <i>Important supporting venues - Role and expectations</i>	
<b>ROLE IN THE NETWORK</b>	Core venues are important supporting venues. They play a regular role in the racing calendar. They help provide regional coverage and give depth to the network, particularly in areas where there is a genuine local base of participants and horses.
<b>WHAT CORE VENUES DO IN PRACTICE</b>	Core venues host regular meetings. They support local owners and participants, and they help balance travel burden by providing dependable racing opportunities closer to where people and horses are based.
<b>EXPECTED STANDARD</b>	A good core venue is safe, compliant, and dependable for the role it plays. Facilities should meet a solid core standard, and race days should run smoothly, with practical participant amenities and operations that suit local crowds. Core venues do not need to deliver the same scale of programme or facilities as premier venues, but they do need to deliver their meetings reliably and to a standard that supports confidence and participation.
<b>INVESTMENT PRIORITY</b>	The priority for core venues is to maintain the core assets that keep the venue safe and functional, and to make practical improvements that support the level of racing and activity they host. Investment should match realistic use, so upgrades are targeted and sustainable rather than trying to build core venues into something the local base and long-term funding cannot support.
<b>Key point:</b> Core venues complement premier venues by providing regional depth and reducing travel burden. Investment should match realistic use so upgrades are sustainable.	

A good core venue is safe, compliant, and dependable for the role it plays. Facilities should meet a solid core standard, and race days should run smoothly. Core venues do not need to deliver the same scale of programme or facilities as premier venues, but they do need to deliver their meetings reliably. Investment should match realistic use, so upgrades are targeted and sustainable. This means prioritising venues that carry the majority of racing and participant activity, and being more selective about investment in lower-use venues.

### 3.3.3 Community Venues

The figure below summarises the community venue role.

Community Venues	
<i>Infrequent racing venues in the network - Role and expectations</i>	
<b>ROLE IN THE NETWORK</b>	Community venues are venues with a primarily local role. These venues remain important to the identity and regional presence of harness racing, even where racing frequency is limited. They may host limited racing, but they often matter because of their community connection, history, and local presence. In some towns, the venue is one of the few places that can host larger gatherings and community events.
<b>WHAT COMMUNITY VENUES DO IN PRACTICE</b>	Community venues host a smaller number of race meetings, often linked to local feature days or community occasions. They can also contribute through venue hire and local activities beyond racing, helping keep harness racing visible and connected in more parts of Victoria.
<b>EXPECTED STANDARD</b>	A good community venue is safe and compliant, with facilities that work for the role it is expected to play. It is clear about what it can realistically deliver, and it focuses on doing a smaller number of things well rather than trying to operate like a high-frequency racing venue. Where a community venue hosts race meetings, they should be well planned and supported so they feel worthwhile for participants and the local community.
<b>INVESTMENT PRIORITY</b>	The priority for community venues is to keep the basics safe and functional and to invest in improvements that genuinely support their realistic role. Spending should be targeted and proportionate, recognising that limited racing use cannot justify any financial investment in the same way as venues that carry most of the regular racing programme.
<b>Key point:</b> Community venues can still play an important role, even with fewer meetings, if those meetings are well supported and the venue remains active in local use.	

A good community venue is safe and compliant, with facilities that work for the role it is expected to play. It focuses on doing a smaller number of things well rather than trying to operate like a high-frequency racing venue. Spending should be targeted and proportionate, recognising that limited racing use cannot justify major upgrades in the same way as venues that carry most of the regular programme.

### 3.3.4 Commercial and Community Expectations

Alongside the standards that apply to each venue type, HRV expects clubs to meet a set of commercial and community obligations commensurate with their role. These obligations reflect the practical demands placed on Premier, Core and Community venues respectively, covering ownership activation and community engagement through to media presence and on-course wagering. The figure below summarises what is expected of each type.

## Obligations by Venue Type

*What each venue type is expected to deliver*

	PREMIER	CORE	COMMUNITY
<b>1. Core Compliance</b>	Meets all statutory, governance, financial and OHS obligations in full.	Meets all statutory, governance, financial and OHS obligations in full.	Meets all statutory, governance, financial and OHS obligations in full.
<b>2. Racing-Themed Community Engagement</b>	Delivers full racing-themed engagement programme: open days, ownership opportunities, and school programs.	Runs modified engagement activities proportionate to capacity and racing schedule.	Provides basic racing education and community touchpoints without race-day dependency.
<b>3. Community Race Days &amp; Charity Partnerships</b>	Hosts major community and charity race-day events with strong local partnerships, once a quarter.	Runs regional charity partnerships and themed race days aligned to the local calendar, once a half.	Offers non-racing charity events or community days in support of local organisations.
<b>4. Club as a Community Hub</b>	Venue used year-round for community events, local sporting clubs, emergency support and large gatherings.	Venue available regularly for community groups and moderate event hosting.	Primarily acts as a local hub for small-scale, low-cost community activities.
<b>5. Local Business Sponsorship</b>	Strong commercial sponsorship programme with structured local business partnerships.	Regional sponsorship programme with event-based opportunities.	Basic local business involvement (markets, stalls, community sponsors).
<b>6. Grassroots Participation &amp; Youth</b>	Runs full pony trots, promote junior driver programs and youth pathways in partnership with HRV, once a quarter.	Supports pathways in collaboration with HRV and nearby clubs, once a half.	Promotes grassroots awareness and provides venue access for youth outreach.
<b>7. Volunteer &amp; Member Engagement</b>	Structured volunteer programme with recognition events and regular member acquisition programs and communication.	Volunteer engagement aligned with racing activities and operational needs, with regular membership communication.	High reliance on volunteer involvement, focused on community events. Membership communications as appropriate.
<b>8. Wellbeing, Inclusiveness &amp; Senior Engagement</b>	Full wellbeing programme: accessibility initiatives, quiet zones, and Aged Living race days, twice a year.	Implements accessible race meetings and periodic wellbeing activities, once a year.	Focus on senior outreach, inclusive community events, and local wellbeing partnerships.
<b>9. Ownership Hosting [mandatory for Premier]</b>	Dedicated owners' space, hospitality and premium race-day experience. Ownership activation events and syndication programs are a core requirement, not optional.	Owners' area or reserved space with modest incentives. Syndication promotion encouraged.	Basic owner recognition; hospitality offered during special events only.
<b>10. Participant Engagement &amp; Support</b>	Provides trials, training centre services, track access and prizemoney support. Actively promotes local trainers and ownership.	Provides trials or track access and promotes local trainers.	Limited racing support; may host training access or promotional activities where local demand exists.
<b>11. Media Partnerships &amp; On-Course Wagering</b>	Dedicated local media partnerships, active social presence and on-course wagering facilities.	Regional media relationships, regular social content, and on-course wagering where viable.	Community-level presence; wagering only when hosting race meetings.

### 3.3.5 Baseline Requirements and Investment Logic

Once venue roles are defined, the next step is to match standards to those roles. The figure below sets out what fit for purpose looks like across key dimensions for premier venues, core venues, and community venues, built on a baseline that applies everywhere.

Fit for Purpose by Venue Type			
<i>From minimum standards that apply everywhere to higher expectations for busier venues</i>			
<b>BASELINE</b> The minimum standard that applies to every venue in the network			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Track and Drainage</b> Safe surface with adequate drainage for the level of use</li> <li>■ <b>Rails and Barriers</b> Compliant rail and barrier systems meeting current safety requirements</li> <li>■ <b>Stabling and Horse Welfare</b> Basic stabling, wash-down, and horse handling areas that support welfare</li> <li>■ <b>Buildings and Electrical</b> Buildings and electrical systems that meet safety and compliance standards</li> <li>■ <b>Lighting</b> Adequate lighting for the type of racing and activity conducted</li> <li>■ <b>Emergency Access</b> Emergency access and basic first aid provisions for people and horses</li> </ul>			
ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS BY VENUE TYPE			
	PREMIER	CORE	COMMUNITY
<b>Track and Surface</b>	High-quality surface maintained for frequent, intensive use. Regular professional assessment and renewal programme.	Sound surface maintained to a solid standard for regular use. Scheduled maintenance aligned to racing frequency.	Safe and functional surface for the level of use. Maintained to baseline standard with periodic checks.
<b>Facilities and Amenities</b>	Full stabling, covered wash-down, driver and official amenities, stewards and broadcast infrastructure to support the core programme.	Adequate stabling, basic wash-down, functional amenities for participants and officials. Practical and workable.	Basic facilities that meet safety and welfare requirements for the number of meetings conducted.
<b>Lighting and Infrastructure</b>	Full race-standard lighting for twilight and night racing. Reliable power, drainage, and services for year-round operation.	Lighting and services matched to the type of racing scheduled. Reliable for its intended role.	Adequate for scheduled activity. Lighting where needed for the events conducted.
<b>Reliability and Upkeep</b>	Planned renewal programme. Proactive maintenance to avoid disruption. Assets managed for long-term reliability.	Targeted maintenance programme. Practical upkeep that keeps the venue dependable for its scheduled role.	Responsive maintenance focused on safety and compliance. Proportionate to the level of use.
<b>Governance and Compliance</b>	Full compliance with racing, safety, environmental, and building standards. Regular audit and reporting.	Compliance with all applicable standards. Regular checks proportionate to activity level.	Compliance with baseline safety and racing standards. Periodic review aligned to use.
<p><b>Standards matched to role make expectations realistic.</b> Higher use and higher responsibility requires higher standards. Community venues meet the basics without being pushed into upgrades their level of use cannot justify.</p>			

Second, investment needs to follow role. The figure below sets out the logic: venue role drives expected use, required standard, and the type of investment that makes sense.

## Investment Logic

*How venue role drives spending decisions across the network*

### STEP 1: START WITH THE VENUE'S ROLE

Every venue has a defined role in the network. Some are premier venues that carry the bulk of the racing programme. Some are core venues that provide regional depth. Some are community venues valued for local connection. The role is the starting point for every investment decision.

▼ *which determines...*

### STEP 2: UNDERSTAND EXPECTED USE

The venue's role determines how often and how intensively it is used. Premier venues are used frequently for racing, training, and trials. Core venues are used regularly but less intensively. Community venues are used for fewer meetings and lighter activity. Use drives wear and asset life.

▼ *which sets...*

### STEP 3: SET THE REQUIRED STANDARD

Expected use determines the standard the venue needs to meet. A premier venue used every week needs to be safe, reliable, and fit for frequent use. A community venue hosting a handful of meetings needs to be safe and compliant but does not need the same level of infrastructure.

▼ *which drives...*

### STEP 4: MATCH THE INVESTMENT

The required standard drives the type of investment that makes sense. Premier venues need planned renewal and proactive improvement. Core venues need targeted maintenance that matches realistic use. Community venues need proportionate spending that keeps the basics safe and functional.

### HOW THIS APPLIES ACROSS THE NETWORK

- **Premier Venues**

Highest use, highest standard, highest investment priority. Planned renewal and improvement to protect the core programme.

- **Core Venues**

Regular use, solid core standard, targeted investment. Practical upgrades matching realistic activity levels.

- **Community Venues**

Lower use, safe and compliant basics, proportionate spending. Investment focused on keeping the venue functional for its role.

The investment approach follows a clear sequence: role shapes expected use, use shapes the standard required, and that standard shapes the level of investment.

### 3.3.6 Training, Trials, and How the Types Work Together

Training and trials should be planned as part of the broader network. Premier venues and some core venues will carry most day-to-day training activity where the participant base is strongest. Community venues may still support training where there is genuine local use, but they should not be expected to carry a training role if demand and capability are not there.

Where venues overlap, coordination matters. If nearby venues draw from the same horses, people, and volunteers, the calendar needs to be planned so meetings do not clash unnecessarily, and the network needs clarity about which venue carries the heavier load. Shared facilities and dual-code arrangements can improve value for money, but only when responsibilities and costs are clear.

How the types work together also raises a question about club structure. The current network has 27 individual clubs, each operating independently. That is not necessarily a problem in itself, but where nearby clubs draw from the same horses, the same volunteers, and the same communities, operating as separate entities can duplicate effort, stretch capability, and make it harder to present a coherent local face for the sport.

Some consolidation is already happening informally. In at least one region, nearby clubs have moved to share management resources, reducing overhead and preserving racing at both venues without requiring formal merger. This kind of voluntary, practical consolidation is the model the sport should be actively encouraging, particularly for Core and Community venues in regions where the participant base is concentrated. HRV will work with clubs to identify where shared management, shared infrastructure, or formalised cooperation could improve capability and reduce strain without forcing outcomes that clubs and communities are not ready for.

#### CASE STUDY

### Southside Racing: What Voluntary Consolidation Can Look Like

In late 2023, members of the Cranbourne Turf Club and the Pakenham Racing Club voted overwhelmingly to merge, creating Southside Racing. Although a thoroughbred club, the merger is directly relevant to harness racing because the circumstances that prompted it, two nearby clubs drawing from the same participant base, duplicating costs, and competing for the same sponsors, mirror the pressures facing parts of HRV's venue network.

What prompted the change was a practical recognition: two clubs operating independently in the same fast-growing region were duplicating costs that a single operation could avoid. The merged club now hosts racing across multiple tracks, with fixed costs spread across a larger programme and back-office functions consolidated.

Critically, racing continued at both Cranbourne and Pakenham after the merger. The initiative came from the clubs themselves and was endorsed by members at both AGMs. It maintained racing and training at all existing venues and was supported by Racing Victoria through direct engagement on funding and programming.

The lesson is not that every club should merge. It is that where clubs share the same catchment and face the same cost pressures, voluntary consolidation can preserve racing at multiple venues while reducing the overhead that makes both harder to sustain independently.

Not every form of cooperation requires a formal merger. In at least one region of Victoria, a shared management arrangement already operates, with one experienced manager overseeing day-to-day operations across multiple nearby clubs. Each club retains its own committee and local identity, while the shared manager handles administration, compliance, and coordination.

This model reduces administrative burden, improves consistency, and makes better use of limited management capability, particularly where clubs rely on a small number of people to keep things running. It also provides a practical first step for clubs that recognise the benefits of working together but are not ready for, or do not need, a full merger. HRV will actively encourage shared management arrangements where nearby clubs draw from the same participant base and face similar operational pressures.

### 3.4 What We Are Asking of Clubs

---

The scorecard and the standards in this paper are not a passive assessment process. They are a prompt for clubs to take stock honestly and act. HRV is asking three things of every club in the network.

First, engage with your scorecard results honestly. The scorecard will give every club a clear picture of where it stands across the factors that matter to the network's future - wagering performance, horse and participant catchment, infrastructure condition, governance capability, and revenue reliance. Some of those results will raise uncomfortable questions.

Second, have the conversations your results make necessary. A club that is stretched across multiple dimensions at once - governance, revenue reliance, compliance, and physical condition - is not a club facing isolated challenges. It is a club whose operating structure may need to change. Where clubs share the same catchment, draw from the same horses and the same volunteers, and face the same pressures, the conversation about shared management, shared infrastructure, or formalised cooperation is not a distant possibility, it should be considered a near-term practical question.

Third, act early rather than wait. HRV will not impose outcomes without engagement, and it does not expect clubs to navigate these questions alone. But the clubs best placed to shape what the network looks like in five years are the ones that start the relevant conversations now - with neighbouring clubs, with HRV, and within their own committees. Voluntary change pursued on a club's own terms is more durable, and more likely to preserve what matters locally, than change that arrives as a consequence of inaction. HRV cannot protect clubs from the consequences inaction indefinitely.



### 3.5 What This Means in Practice

The venue types, standards, and assessment framework set out in this paper are designed to deliver against HRV's five strategic pillars. The figure below maps the specific commitments the venue network direction makes against each pillar.

From Strategy to Delivery	
<i>What the venue network must deliver against each of HRV's five strategic pillars</i>	
STRATEGIC PILLAR	WHAT THE VENUE NETWORK MUST DELIVER
<b>1</b> Industry Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differentiated venue roles so investment and upkeep match realistic use, not historical expectation</li> <li>Planned maintenance prioritised at venues that carry the heaviest programme load</li> <li>A network the industry can afford to maintain safely over time - not one that relies on deferred spending</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Commercial Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racing concentrated in venues and timeslots that generate the strongest wagering return</li> <li>Consistent, competitive fields supported by a network matched to the actual horse pool</li> <li>Meeting quality reliable enough that customers can follow the product week to week</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Community Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harness racing visible across regional Victoria, with clear explanation of each venue's role</li> <li>Transparent, evidence-based decisions that clubs and communities can scrutinise and understand</li> <li>Community venues valued for local contribution, not judged solely on racing volume</li> </ul>
<b>4</b> Integrity and Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum facility standards enforced consistently, scaled to venue role and racing frequency</li> <li>Venues hosting the most racing held to the highest standards for safety, welfare, and compliance</li> <li>Track surfaces, safety infrastructure, and operational capability matched to actual use</li> </ul>
<b>5</b> Organisational Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear accountability: clubs know what standard they must meet for their venue type</li> <li>Governance capability assessed as part of venue role, not assumed</li> <li>A framework that supports structured planning and engagement, not ad hoc decision-making</li> </ul>

**The venue network is where strategy gets delivered or fails.** Every commitment above is testable. If the framework does not produce these outcomes, it is not working.

The framework now needs to be applied in practice. Section 4 explains how venues will be assessed through a structured approach, and Section 5 sets out how HRV will work through that process with clubs.

# THE VENUE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

# 04

Section 3 set out what the venue network should look like and what is expected of each type. This section explains how individual venues will be assessed against that framework: what the scorecard measures, why those factors were chosen, and how HRV will engage with clubs and the industry through the process ahead.

### 4.1 Why the Framework Exists

---

Establishing venue types and minimum standards answers the question of what the network should look like. It does not, on its own, resolve a harder question: on what basis should each of the venues in the network be assessed? That question must be answered, and the way it is answered is important to explain in transparent detail.

Without a structured framework, venue assessment relies on judgement informed by experience and familiarity. This form of often informal judgement creates a specific problem. It is difficult to apply consistently across all venues. It is hard to articulate to a club that does not share the same view. And in a process that will directly affect clubs, communities, and participants, decisions that cannot be clearly explained are decisions that are difficult to stand behind.

The venue assessment framework attempts to address this directly. Every one of the venues is assessed against the same seven components, using the same data and the same scoring criteria. The process is identical regardless of geography, history, or the profile of the individual club. Each venue ends up with a Venue Performance Score that reflects its position across all factors HRV considers relevant, and that score can be explained, questioned, and tested against the evidence that produced it.

It is equally important to be clear about what the framework does not do. It does not classify venues automatically or determine outcomes without human judgement. The score is an input to a structured conversation with each club, not a substitute for one. It does not remove HRV's responsibility to engage genuinely with the clubs, communities, and participants involved as this process unfolds. And it does not pretend that every factor that matters can be reduced to a number. What it does is ensure that wherever judgement is applied, it is applied consistently, against the same evidence, for every venue. That is the standard this process needs to meet.

Importantly, the purpose of this framework is not simply to manage decline. It is to position the sport to stabilise, modernise and ultimately return to growth by concentrating investment, improving the racing product, strengthening participant confidence and ensuring infrastructure is capable of supporting future generations.

**Key point:** The scorecard informs judgement; it does not replace it. To ensure transparency and confidence, HRV will make available component-level results and provide clubs with the opportunity to respond to their assessment. Its purpose is to make those judgements more consistent and easier to explain.

## 4.2 How the Scorecard Is Structured

---

The scorecard draws on seven assessment components, but they are not treated equally, and the weighting structure is not arbitrary. It reflects a deliberate logic about what can be measured directly from data and what requires informed judgement from people who know the network. Understanding that logic is as important as understanding what each component measures.

Four components are built entirely from data, organised into two groups that together contribute 70% of each venue's overall Venue Performance Score. The methodology is designed to be transparent about which assessments rest on data and which require judgement, and Section 4.3 explains how each component is defined and scored.

At a high level, the first group, Commercial Performance, combines Wagering Performance (25%), Revenue Diversity (7.5%) and Infrastructure Condition (7.5%). Wagering Performance draws on multiple underlying factors including turnover per race, turnover per starter, field size, and prizemoney efficiency, each normalised by day-of-week and timing (day versus night) across 14 possible race-day timing combinations, ensuring that venues are benchmarked against the network average for the same timing slot. Revenue Diversity measures how reliant each club is on direct HRV funding as a share of total revenue, a data-driven measure drawn from financial records, which is why it sits alongside Wagering rather than within the qualitative group. And Infrastructure Condition is measured based on the estimated capital cost required to bring each venue up to an acceptable standard, drawing on the infrastructure assessments and upgrade cost estimates produced by Ernst & Young in the 2024 Future State of the Victorian Harness Racing Industry report.

The second data-driven group, Population and Proximity (30%), draws on 17 underlying metrics across four rings, with nine active metrics at 50km and 100km used in the recommended scoring approach. Both groups involve substantial quantitative analysis, and that depth of underlying work is what supports their combined weighting.

The remaining 30% is allocated across three components: Regulatory & Governance (10%), Community Value (10%), and Strategic Location (10%). Two of these are active in this first version of the scorecard. Regulatory & Governance and Strategic Location have been scored by relevant subject matter expertise using structured criteria. Community Value has been set to zero for this first iteration. The inputs currently available do not adequately capture what community contribution means for a harness racing club. A dedicated Community Value framework will be developed over the next 12 months, and the 10% allocation is reserved for when that framework is ready. In the meantime, the scorecard runs on the remaining six components, with the total active weighting at 90%. These qualitative components involve a greater degree of judgement about factors the sport recognises as important but cannot be captured with the same precision as wagering or population data.

This three-group structure does specific work. Anchoring 70% of the score in data-driven analysis means the overall result cannot be heavily shaped by any single subjective input. With Community Value set to zero for this first version, the active weighting is 90%, of which the data-driven components account for 70 percentage points. The qualitative components that are active (Regulatory & Governance and Strategic Location) add context that data alone cannot capture: how well a venue is governed and how it sits within the broader network. The framework draws on both, and it is explicit about which assessments rest on data and which require judgement.

## Scorecard Architecture

*How the seven assessment components are organised into three groups*

GROUP	WHAT IT COVERS AND WHY IT CARRIES ITS WEIGHT
<p><b>COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE</b> Wagering, Revenue &amp; Infrastructure</p>	<p>Combines three data-driven components. Wagering Performance (25%) draws on turnover per race, turnover per starter, field size, and prizemoney efficiency, each normalised by day-of-week and timing (day versus night). Revenue Diversity (7.5%) measures the proportion of each club's revenue derived from direct HRV funding. Infrastructure Condition (7.5%) measures the required investment to maintain the venue at the right standard. Together they contribute 40% of the overall Venue Performance Score and provide a picture of each venue's commercial strength and financial independence.</p>
<p><b>DATA-DRIVEN</b> Population &amp; Proximity</p>	<p>Data-driven composite drawing on nine active metrics covering starter activity, trainer counts, horse counts, and average races per meeting. Metrics are weighted across two distance rings (50km and 100km), with closer proximity carrying higher weight to reflect that a venue's ability to serve its immediate catchment is a stronger indicator of viability than its ability to draw from further afield</p>
<p><b>QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT</b> Qualitative Assessment</p>	<p>Three components at 10% each: Regulatory &amp; Governance, Community Value, and Strategic Location. Regulatory &amp; Governance and Strategic Location have been scored by the HRV staff with relevant subject matter expertise. Community Value has been set to zero for this first version; the 10% allocation is reserved for Year 2 once a dedicated framework is developed. Active qualitative weight is 20%. Section 4.3 sets out what each component measures and why it was included.</p>

### 4.3 Component by Component

The table overleaf sets out all seven components used in the Venue Performance Scorecard. For each component it identifies what is being measured and why that factor has been included. The order follows the three-group structure set out in Section 4.2: the four data-driven components first, followed by the three remaining qualitative components assessed by the HRV staff with relevant subject matter expertise.

## Assessment Components

*What each component measures and why it is included in the scorecard*

#	COMPONENT	WHAT IT MEASURES AND WHY IT MATTERS
1	<b>DATA-DRIVEN</b> <b>Wagering Performance (25%)</b>	Measures each venue's commercial contribution to the wagering pool using turnover, field size, and prizemoney efficiency data, normalised by day-of-week and timing (day versus night), included because wagering revenue is the sport's primary funding source and the most objective basis for comparing venue contribution across the network.
2	<b>DATA-DRIVEN</b> <b>Revenue Diversity (7.5%)</b>	Measures the proportion of a club's revenue that comes directly from HRV, included because clubs with broader revenue bases are more financially resilient and less dependent on HRV funding to sustain their day-to-day operations.
3	<b>DATA-DRIVEN</b> <b>Infrastructure Condition (7.5%)</b>	Measures the estimated capital required to bring each venue to an acceptable standard, included because infrastructure needs drive investment prioritisation and venues with the highest upgrade requirements carry the greatest near-term cost and safety risk for HRV. Cost estimates are based on the work completed by Ernst & Young and will be refreshed every 2 years.
4	<b>DATA-DRIVEN</b> <b>Population &amp; Proximity (30.0%)</b>	Measures the concentration of horses, trainers, and starters in the catchment area around each venue across four distance rings, included because a venue surrounded by active participants is better placed to support consistent fields and a workable racing programme.
5	<b>QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT</b> <b>Regulatory &amp; Governance (10.0%)</b>	Combined assessment of regulatory compliance and governance quality. Scored independently by relevant subject matter expertise using a structured evidence base including compliance attestations, financials, CAV lodgements, skills matrices, and audit findings
6	<b>SET TO ZERO (YEAR 1)</b> <b>Community Value (0.0% - reserved for Year 2)</b>	Measures the social and community contribution of each club and venue. This component has been set to zero for the first version of the scorecard. The inputs currently available (sponsorship income and owner proximity) do not adequately capture the full scope of community contribution that HRV expects from its clubs. HRV will develop draft Community Value scoring criteria in consultation with Trots Club Victoria and provide them to clubs before the end of the current financial year. The criteria are expected to cover areas such as year-round community use of the venue, grassroots programs, ownership education and syndicate programs, media partnerships, and dedicated owners' facilities on race days. HRV will check in with clubs on their progress against these criteria within nine months, with formal scoring commencing from Year 2. The 10% weighting will be included once the framework is confirmed. As noted above, the component is not scored in this version. Clubs will be shown what the draft community value scoring criteria, so they can start working towards them before formal scoring begins in Year 2.
7	<b>QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT</b> <b>Strategic Location (10.0%)</b>	Measures how well-positioned each venue is within the network, including dual-code capability, training facilities, land ownership, and transport access, included because a venue's strategic position shapes the long-term options available to HRV and the industry.

## 4.4 How Scores Come Together

Each of the venues receives a score between 0 and 100 on every component. Those component scores are then combined (weighted in the proportions described in Section 4.2) to produce a single Venue Performance Score, also expressed as a number between 0 and 100. A venue that performs strongly across the factors the framework measures will score higher. A venue that performs poorly across those factors will score lower. The calculation works the same way for every venue in the network.

The table below uses placeholder values for a hypothetical venue to show how the weighted sum comes together. This is not based on actual data.

Component	Weight	Score (0-100)	Weighted
Wagering Performance	25.0%	75.0	18.8
Revenue Diversity	7.5%	60.0	4.5
Infrastructure Condition	7.5%	80.0	6.0
Population and Proximity	30.0%	62.0	18.6
Regulatory and Governance	10.0%	80.0	8.0
Community Value	0.0%	n/a	0.0
Strategic Location	10.0%	80.0	8.0
<b>Venue Performance Score</b>	<b>90.0%</b>		<b>63.8</b>

Note: Because Community Value is set to zero, the worked example totals 63.8 out of a possible 90.0.

The Venue Performance Score is not a ranking. It does not necessarily place venues in finishing order, and it does not currently set a threshold score that automatically determines a venue's classification. Two venues with a similar overall score may have very different underlying profiles: one might perform strongly on wagering and population metrics but carry a significant infrastructure backlog; another might score lower on the data-driven components but show strong governance, good compliance history, and a more diversified revenue base. The overall score is a useful summary, but the individual component scores are equally important in understanding what that summary reflects, as well as the specific location of a venue within a close geographic radius.

When HRV engages with the industry through the process described in Section 4.5, clubs will be able to see their Venue Performance Score alongside the individual result for every component that contributed to it, and the data or assessment that each component score is based on. That transparency is deliberate.

**Key point:** Each club will see its overall Venue Performance Score and the component-level results that produced it. That level of detail matters because it lets clubs respond to the evidence behind the score, rather than just the headline number.

## 4.5 What Happens Next

The assessment framework is now in place and scores have been produced for all seven components across all venues in the network. Before individual club conversations begin, HRV is inviting clubs and the broader industry to review this paper and provide feedback on the framework and the methodology behind the scorecard. That consultation process is described in Section 5. Individual engagement (where each club sees its own results and works through its classification with HRV) follows once the methodology has been consulted on and settled.

The purpose of those conversations is twofold. The first is to give every club a clear and fair account of how its venue has been assessed: what the evidence shows, where performance is strong, and where it is not. The second is to confirm each club's venue type. The three venue types (Premier, Core, and Community) were described in Section 3. The Venue Performance Score informs which type is the right fit, but the determination is made by HRV after genuine engagement, not derived mechanically from the score alone. Clubs will have the opportunity to provide context that the scorecard does not capture, and HRV will take that context seriously. Where a club's circumstances warrant it, the conversation may also address what realistic improvement looks like over a defined timeframe.

Once venue types are confirmed, the standards and obligations framework set out in Section 3 applies. The obligations are calibrated to venue type: what is expected of a Premier venue is different from what is expected of a Community venue, and investment will follow accordingly. The framework is not designed to penalise clubs for circumstances outside their control. It is designed to give every club in the network a clear picture of what is expected and what the alternative looks like if the network does not change. Clubs that engage constructively with their venue role are better positioned within the framework.

**Key point:** This process gives every club a structured and transparent basis for understanding its position in the network. The process should be a genuine exchange, with HRV setting out the evidence and each club able to respond before classification is finalised. That is the standard this process is designed to meet.



**ENGAGING THE INDUSTRY**

**05**

## 5.1 Consultation and Engagement

---

This paper sets out the direction. What comes next is the work of translating that direction into specific, transparent outcomes for every club and community in the HRV network. That work will happen in stages, and each stage is designed to give clubs genuine input before outcomes are determined.

Publishing the paper is not simply a matter of informing clubs about what HRV intends, there is now an invitation to review the framework and the methodology behind the scorecard, and a chance to say whether the basis for assessment is fair. The criteria are on the page. The logic behind them is explained. Clubs, participants, and industry bodies are being asked to engage with that content and to tell HRV where they think it is right, where they think it falls short, and where the methodology needs further thought before it is applied.

Once the consultation period has closed and any methodology adjustments have been made, individual club engagement will begin. That process is described in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

## 5.2 Club Engagement

---

Once the consultation period has closed and the methodology has been settled, HRV will move to direct engagement with clubs on their results. Each club will have the opportunity to understand how it has been assessed, to discuss the evidence behind its scores, and to raise any context that it believes is relevant before a classification is confirmed.

HRV's approach to these conversations will be proportionate and genuine. Where a club believes its assessment does not reflect relevant circumstances, there will be a proper opportunity to say so. Classifications will not be finalised until HRV is satisfied that each club has been heard. Individual venue scores and proposed classifications will remain confidential until each club has been individually engaged. Results will not be shared between clubs or released publicly during the consultation process.

HRV should allow extra time where a club's circumstances are complex or where further evidence needs to be tested. The aim is a process each club can understand.

## 5.3 After Classification

---

Once a club's venue type is confirmed, the standards and obligations set out in Section 3 apply formally. HRV will work with each club to establish a baseline assessment of where it currently stands against those obligations and to identify any gaps that need to be addressed. For clubs that fall short of the standards applicable to their venue type, HRV will discuss what a realistic improvement pathway looks like and over what timeframe.

Clubs will be required to complete an annual compliance attestation confirming that they meet the core governance, financial, and safety obligations that apply to every venue in the network regardless of type. The attestation process is not a bureaucratic exercise: it is the mechanism by which HRV and clubs maintain a shared, documented record of where each club stands. Clubs that engage with it seriously will find it a useful tool for managing their own obligations. Clubs that do not will find it harder to make the case that they are meeting the expectations of their venue type.

Investment decisions, meeting allocation, club funding, and HRV support will all be informed by venue type classification and by each club's demonstrated commitment to meeting the standards that apply to it. This is how the framework takes effect in practice, through the way HRV aligns support, investment decisions and meeting allocation with each club's venue role.

## 5.4 Implementation Timeline

The direction set out in this White Paper will be implemented in stages over the period from mid-2026 through to 2030. Each stage is designed to give clubs and the broader industry genuine input before outcomes are determined.

Stage	Period	Focus
1. Framework consultation	May 2026	White Paper released. TCV Forum: HRV presents the framework. Clubs and industry invited to provide feedback on the methodology and scoring approach.
2. Methodology finalised	May - June 2026	Feedback reviewed and incorporated. Final scorecard methodology confirmed and communicated to clubs before individual engagement begins.
3. Club engagement	June 2026	Each club engaged individually on its Venue Performance Score, component-level results, and proposed venue type. Draft Community Value scoring criteria also provided. Clubs receive their results in advance and have the opportunity to provide context before classification is confirmed.
4. Classifications confirmed	By end of June 2026	Venue type classifications confirmed. Standards and obligations under Section 3 apply formally. HRV works with each club on baseline assessment and, where needed, a realistic improvement pathway.
5. Action and consequences	FY27 onwards (from July 2026)	Clubs expected to demonstrate progress against their obligations. The FY28 racing calendar (from July 2027) will reflect venue classifications and club performance.

## Looking Ahead

What the future venue network is designed to deliver by 2035

The direction set out in this White Paper is designed to position the venue network for the next decade and beyond. By 2035, the network should be:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>01</b> | <p><b>Safe and Fit for Purpose</b></p> <p>Venues maintained to a standard that matches their role. Safety and welfare obligations met consistently across the network, not dependent on the goodwill of volunteers alone.</p>   |
| <b>02</b> | <p><b>Financially Sustainable</b></p> <p>Investment focused where it strengthens the sport rather than spread thinly across sites the industry cannot properly maintain. Shared management and voluntary consolidation actively encouraged where nearby clubs draw from the same participant base, and an opportunity to review the club funding model to ensure it aligns with the outcomes of this process.</p> |
| <b>03</b> | <p><b>Strong Participation</b></p> <p>A network that works for the people who breed, own, train, and drive horses. A programme people can plan around, with venues that reduce unnecessary travel where practical.</p>  |
| <b>04</b> | <p><b>Competitive in Wagering Markets</b></p> <p>A racing programme anchored in capable venues that deliver a consistent product. Meetings placed in the right venues and time windows to give the sport the best chance of strong, reliable wagering outcomes.</p>   |
| <b>05</b> | <p><b>Connected to Regional Victoria</b></p> <p>Community venues valued for what they contribute locally and supported in a way that is honest about what the sport can sustain. Harness racing visible and meaningful across regional Victoria.</p>  |

This is not a short-term fix. It is about building a venue network the industry can back with confidence for the long haul. The choices ahead are significant, but it is better to make them now, guided by evidence, consultation and a clear framework, than to wait until the pressures set out in this paper leave the industry with fewer options and less control.



HARNESS  
RACING  
VICTORIA

400 Epsom Road, Flemington, 3031  
Postal: PO Box 184, Moonee Ponds, Victoria 3039  
P 03 8378 0200 / F 03 9214 0699  
[info@hrv.org.au](mailto:info@hrv.org.au) / [www.thetrots.com.au](http://www.thetrots.com.au)

ABN 22 764 910 853