Growing the Heartland
FOOTBALL FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
2014 - 2020
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</table>
The quality and number of football facilities has been identified as a critical element in supporting and growing the game by our affiliates and stakeholders. As participation in the game continues to grow, so does the need for facilities to support not only the growth, but the changing profile of participation. This document outlines AFL Victoria's role in facility provision and identifies the key strategies for enhancing this provision.

From NAB AFL Auskick to school football, from AFL 9s through to all levels of club football, facilities are the environment in which players, volunteers, supporters and administrators operate. We know that the number and standard of facilities can have a lasting influence on a participant's experience in the game and as such it is important to clearly and simply lay out our strategy for working with our partners in developing facilities.

From 2007 to 2013, the AFL and AFL Victoria have collectively invested more than $10 million in community facility developments in Victoria, in partnership with all levels of Government and other football stakeholders. We hope that through this document, we can continue to work collaboratively with our partners to deliver new and improved facilities across football's heartland - Victoria.

Grant Williams
General Manager
AFL Victoria
Growing the Heartland
INTRODUCTION

Victoria is football’s heartland with over 1,100 football clubs, nearly 5,500 teams, more than 267,000 participants and over 78,000 volunteers, and is amongst the largest individual business sectors within the sport and recreation industry. In Victoria, football uses over 1,050 grounds every year to facilitate its programs and competitions. The number and standard of football facilities within Victoria is a competitive advantage for the sport and is critical to the growth of the game. Facilities are the physical environment our people operate within and we must continue to plan and invest to support growth and to maintain our existing base.

“Great Infrastructure” is one of three Development Pillars of AFL Victoria.

Infrastructure in this sense refers to both our facilities and our people. This Strategy focuses predominately on facilities and how we can best advocate and collaborate on facility development for the network of community football leagues, their clubs and schools across Victoria.

This Football Facilities Development Strategy provides a planned approach to the provision of infrastructure across the state, with a focus on establishing state-wide planning systems and strategic directions between 2014 and 2020. Consideration is also given to the significant population growth occurring within Victoria and the opportunity this provides our game, as well as its impacts on existing facilities, new potential participation markets and the future demand for new facilities.

This Strategy will be used to guide AFL Victoria’s investment, influence regional/league planning and assist in providing a single strategic voice to local, state and federal government to inform their investment in the future health and growth of our game.

**Development Pillars**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Pillars</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Foundation</strong></td>
<td>1. Participation</td>
<td>Develop &amp; support appropriate pathways for all segments from NAB AFL Auskick to Open age football that maximise participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Community</td>
<td>Support leagues, their clubs &amp; schools to provide quality management &amp; environments to motivate volunteers, umpires, coaches, teachers and sports trainers for all levels of Australian Football.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Engagement</td>
<td>Develop community engagement initiatives that add social value &amp; support program accessibility, equality and inclusive environments, particularly in the indigenous and multicultural communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Fans</td>
<td>Build relationships with the community to develop fans for all levels of the game including AFL clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best Talent</strong></td>
<td>5. Talent &amp; Second Tier</td>
<td>Establish &amp; maintain a best practice talent pathway &amp; enhance the State League competitions to identify attract &amp; develop the best athletes as well as provide a career path for talented administrators, umpires &amp; coaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Great Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>6. Facilities</td>
<td>Advocate for and collaborate on facility development for the network of community football leagues, their clubs and schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. People &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Attract, develop &amp; retain quality people and develop a high performance culture in line with our values.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AFL Victoria is regularly asked to provide strategic advice and support to inform clubs, leagues and government in planning for the provision of football facilities. Similarly, requests regarding how particular facility development proposals link with AFL Victoria’s planning are also common. Given this, AFL Victoria decided to establish in more detail its strategic direction and role in facility provision across Victoria. It is envisaged that the information provided within this document will assist various stakeholders in understanding our directions for facility provision and how that may align with their own planning and resource provision.

It has been purposely developed as a simple and direct document that identifies key priorities based on detailed consultation. With more than 1,050 football facilities in Victoria, the intent of this Strategy is not to provide recommendations for each existing venue, rather provide the overarching strategy and themes for more detailed and specific work to be undertaken at a regional/league level. It will also guide our own investment and resources in the planning and development of facilities across the State.

This Strategy relates to facilities from State League (VFL/TAC Cup level) down to community level. It is not intended to cover facilities that are used for the AFL Competition or training and administration venues of AFL clubs.

RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

Through the development of this Strategy, a number of football, government and community stakeholders were consulted for their views and opinions regarding the critical issues that the sport is facing when planning, developing, delivering and managing football facilities. Key stakeholders consulted included:

- AFL Victoria personnel and internal departmental staff
- AFL Victoria Local Government Reference Group
- AFL Facilities and Project Manager
- Victorian Government - Sport and Recreation Victoria
- Victorian Local Government Authorities
- Community Football Leagues
- A peer review by a leading sports industry consultant

As part of the research and development phase of the Facilities Development Strategy, all 79 Local Government Authorities (LGAs) and community leagues within Victoria were contacted and surveyed regarding key infrastructure issues. All 31 metropolitan Melbourne LGAs responded, with 36 of 48 country LGAs responding and more than 55% of our affiliated country and metropolitan football leagues also responding to a targeted community football league survey.

The strong response from our key government and community football partners provides AFL Victoria with significant confidence that as a sport we understand the issues and clear basis on which to build our future strategies. Key insights into metropolitan and country facility issues are highlighted within this Strategy and associated background report to highlight the implications for future facility provision and planning.

In particular, the following recurring issues have been identified and have formed the basis for the development of this Strategy.

- The need for a consistent and coordinated approach to facility provision and development;
- To demonstrate the connection between football participation and facility provision and need;
- The increased demand for facilities and their capacity to meet needs and address trends;
- To highlight the connection between football facilities, their local community and associated economic benefits, and
- Technological advances in facility provision and the need to leverage their benefits state-wide.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Strategy is ultimately guided by three key principles that underpin the delivery of successful facility projects.

**PLANNING** – project planning (whether it be at state, regional or local level) provides the evidence required to guide and support informed investment decisions and to best determine needs versus wants.

**PARTICIPATION** – determining how we can best utilise and develop facilities to support, encourage and enhance participation opportunities at all levels and formats of our game.

**PARTNERSHIPS** – partnering with all levels of government, along with other sports and community groups is crucial to enabling infrastructure investment and maximising its use.
Over 400 new club teams have been established since 2007, with significant annual growth being achieved in 2012 and 2013, reaching over 267,000 participants in 2013.

Women/girls club teams and AFL 9s are the fastest growing forms of the game. Female club teams have increased by 135% since 2008 with the key increase being in youth and junior girls football.

AFL 9s has increased from just over 100 participants in 2011, to more than 13,000 participants in 2013.

With the continued development of AFL 9s and the ongoing growth of female football, combined with the establishment of 13 AFL Victoria Country Region Commissions, it is expected that overall participation levels will continue to trend upwards with a key target of 300,000 participants by the end of 2016.
Unlike some other measures, participation in football is only counted when a person participates in a football program of 6 weeks or more. This provides a rigorous assessment of a participant that is engaged in our game. Football has measured participation this way for more than 20 years which allows the sport to monitor and track consistent data.
AFL Victoria categorises the state into 19 Development Regions which include 7 metropolitan regions and 12 country regions. AFL Victoria employs Development Managers in each Region to coordinate various development programs including Auskick, Coaching Accreditation, AFL 9s, school, multicultural, indigenous and female football development. In addition, the Regions are used from a talent perspective to allocate players to TAC programs.

In 2013, in pure numbers, the highest participation region is South East. In country Victoria the highest participation region is Geelong. The table on the following page provides further breakdown in relation to all recorded forms of participation in 2013 within football and it is clear that football has strong participation in all reaches of the state.

Participation statistics, along with information about existing facility provision in each area, provide strong evidence for the demand for facility development. They also highlight our significant state-wide coverage with strong participation across all areas.

Regional and Local Government Area participation statistics are available through AFL Victoria to support regional and local area planning.
### 2013 Metropolitan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club Participants</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Auskick</th>
<th>AFL 9s</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Melbourne</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3200</td>
<td>3275</td>
<td>2944</td>
<td>9419</td>
<td>3775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4900</td>
<td>2850</td>
<td>3699</td>
<td>11449</td>
<td>4450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South East</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5725</td>
<td>5350</td>
<td>3119</td>
<td>14194</td>
<td>4875</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>North West</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4275</td>
<td>3975</td>
<td>3575</td>
<td>11825</td>
<td>6150</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5075</td>
<td>4200</td>
<td>4116</td>
<td>13391</td>
<td>2375</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Northern</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4225</td>
<td>3325</td>
<td>3220</td>
<td>10770</td>
<td>5250</td>
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<td><strong>Inner Southern</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>5225</td>
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<td>4273</td>
<td>12573</td>
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<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32625</td>
<td>26050</td>
<td>24946</td>
<td>83621</td>
<td>28875</td>
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### 2013 Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club Participants</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Auskick</th>
<th>AFL 9s</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bendigo</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Primary</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>5261</td>
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<td><strong>Sunraysia</strong></td>
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<td>725</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>2625</td>
<td>275</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Central Murray/ North Central</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>425</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>3900</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td><strong>Ballarat</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1300</td>
<td>2225</td>
<td>2221</td>
<td>5746</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South West</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>2375</td>
<td>350</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wimmera</strong></td>
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<td>1175</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hampden</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>275</td>
<td>1825</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>3700</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geelong</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3575</td>
<td>3175</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8742</td>
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<td><strong>Latrobe Valley</strong></td>
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<td>1700</td>
<td>3200</td>
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<td><strong>East Gippsland</strong></td>
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<td>2175</td>
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<td>4739</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>North East Border</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>675</td>
<td>2225</td>
<td>2125</td>
<td>5025</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goulburn Murray</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1425</td>
<td>2850</td>
<td>2676</td>
<td>6951</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13300</td>
<td>24550</td>
<td>20589</td>
<td>58439</td>
<td>3450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45925</td>
<td>50600</td>
<td>45535</td>
<td>142060</td>
<td>32325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These statistics are presented as AFL Victoria Development Regions, but can be developed to suit a range of region boundaries including leagues and Region Commissions.
## Population Influences on Football Participation

Projecting the future Victorian population is essential for planning. Projections tell us about the changes in our society and how these are reflected in the pattern of where people live. The analysis of existing and projected population growth and its make up helps make informed decisions about where new investment into the game may be needed.

Of the projected 3,112,100 growth in population over the next 40 years, 1,944,00 (almost two thirds) will be from overseas migration. This population segment will not be familiar with football and our ongoing engagement of the multi-cultural community will be critical in maintaining football’s growth.

Whilst the average age of the population is expected to increase, there is still significant growth in the key football demographic of 5-39 year olds. This age cohort will grow by 974,900 over the next 20 years, providing great opportunity in key football programs and the club participation segment. Growth in older age cohorts support the continued engagement of this segment through AFL 9s and veterans football.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Statistics That Influence Our Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For the year ended 30th June 2012, Victoria grew by 89,000 people, with 75,400 of that growth within Melbourne’s metropolitan area. This represents the largest growth in numbers of any state and capital city in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Victorian LGAs are amongst the 10 largest growing municipalities in Australia - Wyndham, Whittlesea and Casey, with Wyndham recording the fastest growth rate in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whilst the key growth areas are on Melbourne’s fringe, the City of Melbourne was the fourth fastest growth LGA in the State. This inner city growth highlights the need to ensure the carrying capacity of existing facilities (in land-locked inner city locations) is maximised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fastest growing LGAs in regional Victoria are Mitchell (now part of Melbourne’s Urban Growth Boundary), Surf Coast, Golden Plains, Moorabool and Baw Baw, with Greater Geelong recording the largest absolute growth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Metropolitan Planning Authority has identified a number of significant growth areas in Victoria that, over the next 20 years, will contribute 52% of Victoria’s total population growth. AFL Victoria’s analysis of this growth area population within our core playing age groups (ages 5 to 39) over the next 20 years has projected the potential demand for additional football ovals in these areas using AFL Victoria’s current penetration rates. The table beside provides a brief overview of the requirements for new grounds to 2031 in each of the identified growth areas.

Note: These projections assume that there is no current deficit in provision of ovals in each of these LGAs. It is also assessing demand based on male participation. Further work is required to analyse the demand factoring in the significant growth occurring in female participation. However it does provide a baseline and projections are only likely to increase over time as AFL Victoria delivers on its sustained campaign of participation, competition, regional administration and club development initiatives. In areas of population decline, AFL Victoria will work with those clubs to sustain participation levels.

In addition to detailed analysis of Melbourne’s growth areas, research and analysis of every Local Government Area in Victoria has been undertaken by AFL Victoria. Details of penetration rates, participation projections and estimates of likely future ground provision are available to each local LGA by contacting AFL Victoria.
THE IMPORTANCE OF FACILITIES TO PARTICIPATION

The provision and access to facilities are fundamental to participation in football. Research indicates a correlation between the provision of football facilities and associated infrastructure and the participation rates historically achieved across the state.

A comparison of football penetration (using the percentage of males aged 5-39 participating in the game compared to population) across each Victorian region and the ratio of the number of ovals per head of population, highlights the impact of facilities on participation. **While not entirely consistent in every region, there is a general trend between a higher provision of ovals per head of population and higher penetration rates.**

**The Eastern Metro Region has 13% penetration rate and has 1 oval for every 5,425 head of population. Contrast this to the Western Metro Region which has the lowest penetration rates in the state of 7% and has 1 oval for every 13,924 head of population.**

**A similar correlation between oval provision and participation is evident in country Victoria.**
Facility Usage

In addition to the links between participation and facility provision, investment in quality, functional and ‘fit for purpose’ football facilities generates high usage and participation outcomes. Information from the Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey highlights that people who participate in football do so at a high frequency relative to other sports. This is as a result of 2-3 training nights per week along with game day on a weekend. An average senior player in a strong community football league is likely to participate in football related physical activity for approximately 300 hours per annum.

This intensity of use highlights three important findings for football.

1. Our sport strongly promotes and supports increased physical activity and fitness within our participant base;
2. Creates high use and demand for competition and training facilities, and
3. Maximisation of facility use provides a solid rationale for investment in improving existing infrastructure and creating new places to play.

Traditionally, and in almost all instances at a community level, football and cricket have complementary usage and sharing arrangements of the same facility.

Promoting shared outcomes and investment in a football facility provides even further benefits in terms of supporting sport and physical activity participation and reach in maximising facility utilisation.

Additionally, football and netball are complementary sports, particularly in regional Victoria where football/netball clubs are the norm. Whilst playing surfaces differ, in these areas football and netball regularly share infrastructure including clubrooms, canteens, toilets and change rooms, as well as providing social connectivity between the sports, individuals and their communities.

Facilities and Clubs as an Economic Generator

Another compelling argument for investment into football infrastructure is the economic impact of construction. It is estimated that for each $1 million spent in construction, 6.7 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs are supported.

The ability to create/support jobs through investing in infrastructure, particularly ‘shovel ready’ projects, is increasingly becoming a more important factor in investment decisions.

The AFL independently assesses the economic impact of football which in 2012 was estimated at $4.5 billion. In Victoria in 2012, football’s total economic impact was estimated at $2.4 billion, with Community Football estimated to have a projected benefit of $851 million per annum.

In regional Victoria, an analysis undertaken into the creation of the AFL Goulburn Murray Region Commission identified its direct impact on the region of almost $1 million annually. Similarly the economic impact of a medium size club in the Bendigo Football League estimated that clubs of this type have an annual impact of just over $1 million on the local economy.

1 Employment supported by final demand for construction services Qld Government, 2011.
EXISTING FOOTBALL FACILITY PROVISION

Our survey of every LGA and community football league in Victoria, combined with our facilities audit data, provides key information regarding existing football facility provision and informs future needs and requirements for football. A summary of the key facilities information is outlined below.

In 2013 more than 1,050 football grounds were used for competition.

- 87% of football facilities are on LGA owned land, with LGAs being responsible for maintenance on 82% of facilities.
- 93% of grounds are shared with cricket.
- 41% of grounds now have warm season grass, with a further 31% having a mixture of both warm and cool season grass.
- 23% of home change rooms and 27% of away change rooms are not currently considered fit for purpose.

78% of venues do not have female player change facilities.

79% of venues do not have female umpire change facilities.

21% of venues have current plans in place for upgrades/improvements.

58% of lit grounds in country areas and 48% in metro areas do not meet minimum training standards (50 lux).

49% of country LGAs and 60% of metropolitan LGAs indicated accessing school grounds would help deal with the demand for football grounds.

27% of country LGAs and 43% of metropolitan LGAs would consider installing a synthetic football/cricket ground. Only 10% of metro and 30% of country LGAs ruled it out.

An estimated 165 new football grounds are planned to be developed in Victoria from 2012 - 2022.
A number of facility planning, design and development trends in recent years have been influencing the delivery and use of football facilities across Victoria. The following trends have been identified as having the greatest impact on our game and addressing them in a positive way will be important for AFL Victoria and our partners to ensure we can continue to provide a network of facilities that are fit for purpose and flexible to meet the changing needs of the sport and its participants.

Key influences that will require consideration by our partners, as well as potential changes in policy and thinking include the following.

### AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines

The AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines provides recommendations for the level of facilities required at local, regional and state level venues. Guidelines provide preferred spatial requirements for various pavilion areas ranging from change rooms, showers, first aid and social rooms.

The document should be used to guide all new football facility developments, with the aim that over time all football facilities aspire to reach the minimum level of facility development as outlined within the guide.

### TWO OVAL (OR MULTI-oval) SITES

Natural turf can sustain a finite number of hours of use before starting to deteriorate. Turf experts advise that this is around 20-25 hours per week. The majority of average sized football clubs are exceeding these hours of use. In addition, expectations of the quality of the playing surface are increasing from players, spectators and officials. In-line with these expectations, there is often heightened protectiveness by asset managers to maintain the quality of the playing surface.

In order to address ground capacity and use issues, two oval (or multi oval) sites are being developed to support more viable and sustainable clubs. Two oval sites provide the ability for a club to grow and spread the usage across two grounds. It also provides economies of scale in terms of supporting infrastructure, with a single pavilion able to be developed to support two ovals.
GROUND SURFACES

Ground surfaces in Victoria, particularly those in the southern half of the state, have traditionally consisted of cool season grass (mostly rye grass). This is primarily due to the traditional cold wet winters that suited this grass type in that it remained actively growing during the winter period and that there was an abundant supply of inexpensive water for irrigation.

The drought and associated water restrictions that impacted most of Victoria from 2006 to 2009 had a major impact on the state’s cool season grass grounds, rendering many of them unplayable. This has significantly changed the thinking around grass types in Victoria and has changed the makeup of oval surfaces to now predominantly be warm season couch grass.

The conversion of the majority of the state’s football grounds to warm season grasses is supported as it protects the grounds from future droughts and water restrictions, and as water costs continue to rise, significantly reduces the costs of irrigating grounds for clubs and LGAs. However, consideration of oversowing with cool season grass during the winter season, will assist in managing the surface during its dormant period.

In 2008, the AFL and Cricket Australia endorsed criteria for the playing of football and cricket on a synthetic grass surface. Since that time, two ovals have been installed in Victoria, one at Melbourne Grammar School and one at Point Cook in the City of Wyndham. Several more fields are currently in planning phases.

AFL Victoria is promoting the use of approved synthetic grass surfaces (in appropriate locations and settings) to assist in managing use and ground capacity, and in reducing the reliance on water and irrigation to maintain surfaces to optimum playing condition.

GROUND LIGHTING

Training lights are a core element of any football club facility. Given our game is played outside of daylight savings, lights allow training sessions to be held outside of daylight hours. Ground lighting also provides the flexibility to extend the use and scheduling of a facility.

In recent years there has been an increasing popularity for playing community level football at night. This is partly as an additional attraction for crowds and associated revenue it brings, but also additional scheduling opportunity and maximisation of venue usage (Friday night junior football as an example).

The Community Sporting Facility Lighting Guide for Australian Rules Football, Football (Soccer) and Netball provides details of minimum and preferred standards for ground lighting, for training and match conditions.

AFL Victoria will continue to advocate for a minimum of 50 lux lighting for all clubs for training and ideally, 150+ lux for match conditions at strategically located community football venues across the state.
CLUBROOM AND PAVILION DESIGN

Pavilions are an essential element to support a football club. The most critical elements to facilitate use for football are the change room and associated showers and player and umpire amenities. However, the importance of an appropriately sized social/community room to support a vibrant and sustainable club cannot be underestimated. The benefits of social connection that are evident in a football club can only be maximised if there is a place to congregate, not only between participants, but also with supporters, family and other community members. These social rooms can be designed to maximise flexibility for use by other community groups during non-football club use times. The use of operable walls and lockable storage spaces enhance the flexibility of a facility to cater for multi-use, while maximising the value for money of facility investment.

Most existing football pavilions were built at a time when football was a male only domain. With female football amongst the fastest growing segments of our game, the development of unisex facilities is critical in ensuring our football environments are welcoming and accommodate the needs of both males and females.

AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines highlights the preferred and recommended requirements for clubroom and pavilion elements (based on the facility hierarchy) and should be used to guide all new and redeveloped amenity buildings. The incorporation of Universal Design and Environmentally Sustainable Design principles will also assist facilities in meeting community requirements and expectations, catering for diversity of use and in creating operational efficiencies for building managers.

FOOTBALL HUBS AND ADMINISTRATION CENTRES

Football within Victoria is fortunate to have professional staff working across the state in the management and development of the game. These include talent and development staff working for AFL Victoria along with staff working in many of the community football leagues. In a number of instances these staff are operating out of poor working environments that are not conducive to staff retention and recruitment or displaying a professional ‘shop-front’ to potential partners.

Through the creation of Regional Administration Centres and Hubs that can deliver on a broad range of football related services (including competition management, growing participation, talent development, coaching and official education and volunteer support), we can achieve significant networking benefits, efficiencies and collaborative outcomes, and reduce duplication in effort.

Region management structures and on-site Region Commission/league staff may also provide regional venues with additional value adding through the assistance of site and ground management and program delivery and scheduling. This may offer LGAs an independent alternative to traditional club tenancy models where increased and shared usage are desired outcomes.
FACILITY PLANNING HIERARCHY

AFL Victoria has identified a facility planning hierarchy that covers facilities from State League level (VFL and TAC Cup) through to community league/club facilities. The facility planning hierarchy provides overarching themes and focus areas for investment that will support consistent facility provision and development across the state.

The facility hierarchy provides two key elements:
(1) Planning hierarchy, and
(2) Facility hierarchy.

**PLANNING HIERARCHY**

AFL Victoria’s facility planning hierarchy is best represented by the diagram on the following page. The hierarchy uses the state-wide Victorian Football Facilities Development Strategy as the overarching framework for facility provision and development and supports Region Commissions and Metropolitan Leagues in the establishment of Regional/League Plans (in consultation with LGAs in their region).

Regional/League Plans will be used to provide strategic guidance for the preparation of club/Venue Plans, which are generally to be led and developed by LGAs and/or tenant clubs and may typically include individual facility developments and master planning projects.

**FACILITY HIERARCHY**

It is acknowledged that not all football facilities can be, or need to be, developed to the same standard. The AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines outlines a facility hierarchy for State, Regional and Local facilities, including many that are shared with other sports.

To ensure ease of understanding of how the AFL Victoria facility hierarchy ties in with levels of football competition and programs, the table on page 24 highlights facility hierarchy levels with associated ‘likely uses’, catchment areas and key infrastructure that differentiates each level from the next.

In addition, the AFL has developed a Centre of Excellence (CoE) category for facilities. High level facilities are now considered essential for talent development and therefore have a defined place in our facilities framework and will be strategically located to service the game.

Two CoE facility categories have been defined:
(1) Talent CoE, and
(2) State League club CoE.
Individual plan for club/Venue.
- Usually include a range of venue users and often led by LGAs.
- May include a Master Plan for the venue, concept pavilions developments etc.
- May not be needed for all venues and the level of planning will differ based on the complexity of the site / project and level of use.

One for each Region Commission area in the country and each league in metro areas.
- Consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders i.e. LGAs.
- Provide specific and prioritised guidance regarding facility requirements in the area (finals venues, night competition venues, club venues).

State-wide scope.
- High level strategic overview.
- Provide a basis for the development of Region / League Plans.

- Football Facilities Development Strategy
- Region / League Plan
- Club / Venue Plan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility hierarchy level</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>REGIONAL</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal purpose of provision</strong></td>
<td>Primarily to service VFL Clubs</td>
<td>Each League (Metropolitan and Country) requires access to at least one Region venue per Division.</td>
<td>Local club level programs and competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Applies to the second highest level of competition below the AFL Competition. In Victoria this is the VFL and the TAC Cup. Generally these facilities service entire municipal catchments and potentially beyond. These facilities are usually nominated venues for competition finals given the higher standard of facility, perimeter fencing and capacity to cater for larger crowds. Facilities should be provided and maintained to a high (showcase) standard. <strong>State League Club Centre of Excellence</strong> – Meet the standards as established for VFL facilities but also has amenities to AFL Category 4 standard which is the standard expected of venues seeking to host AFL pre-season games.</td>
<td>Regional level venues service a collection of suburbs or geographic area within a municipality (or across municipal borders) and usually cater for more than one code or activity. Regional venues should have perimeter fencing, capacity to host competition finals and surface quality maintained to a high standard. <strong>Talent Centre of Excellence</strong> – A high quality location from which an AFL accredited talent program can be delivered and other aspects of community football in the region are supported. These may be TAC Cup program bases and Umpire Training Headquarters.</td>
<td>Designed to cater for local level competition, including junior competitions within individual suburbs, townships and municipalities. Venues are usually the ‘home’ of one seasonal club. Facilities and playing surfaces are provided to home and away competition standard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# FOOTBALL FACILITY PROVISION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

AFL Victoria has developed the following strategic priorities to guide the development of football facilities across the state. These link more broadly to the AFL seven development objectives, as outlined in the introduction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The provision of a sufficient number of well located, accessible and welcoming football facilities that support the growth of the game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 1</strong></td>
<td>Increase the quality / functionality and maximise the carrying capacity of existing facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 2</strong></td>
<td>Plan and develop new facilities in key growth areas across the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 3</strong></td>
<td>Capitalise on opportunities to create Administration Centres in key locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 4</strong></td>
<td>Ensure facilities are catering for the diversity of participants that are attracted to our game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 5</strong></td>
<td>Continue to enhance our relationship with Government (particularly Local Government) in the planning and provision of facilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

In 2013 there were 1,055 grounds used for competition to support football across Victoria. Our research suggests that existing facilities are not keeping pace with contemporary facility expectations and AFL requirements (particularly player, umpire and spectator amenities). In addition, an insufficient number of grounds (particularly in metropolitan areas) to provide for the sports continued and sustained growth across of football’s participation markets, is evident.

Of significant note is the limited number of existing lit facilities (58% of grounds in country areas and 48% of metropolitan areas) that can adequately meet minimum standards for training lights (50 lux or greater) for senior and junior players and umpires, compounded by restrictions on ground use due to existing conditions and/or maintenance requirements.

With population growth occurring in inner city (land-locked) locations, through increasing densities and urban regeneration projects, maximising the use of existing facilities will increasingly become more important in ensuring access to our game.

Improving access to appropriately developed school oval facilities was rated a key issue by both LGAs and leagues. In addition, half of the metropolitan leagues also indicated they had difficulty in accessing venues that are able to adequately cater for football finals.

OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

AFL Victoria will work collaboratively with our partners to:

- Progressively upgrade existing facilities to meet standards outlined in the AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines.
- Develop a detailed database and inventory of facilities used for football that can be regularly updated and used to monitor facility provision (and geographic location), quality and compliance with guidelines.
- Ensure lighting to training standards is considered a key priority for funding and a core component at any club facility.
- Plan for a spread of well-located competition standard lit grounds (preferably 150+ lux) with the aim of each community league having access to at least one lit venue.
- Continue to support the adoption of warm season grass surfaces as protection against future drought and water restrictions and rising water costs whilst reviewing the requirement to oversow and/or improve fertilisation rates to increase carrying capacity.
- Continue to research and promote synthetic surfaces as part of the facility mix to address ground carrying capacity issues as well as advocate for appropriate facilities to be developed at these venues.
- Identify joint partner strategies to increase access to school grounds for community football.
- Advocate to and partner with LGAs on the importance of maintaining a selection of fenced venues to support the hosting of finals matches and other football events.

INCREASE THE QUALITY AND FUNCTIONALITY, AND MAXIMISE THE CARRYING CAPACITY OF EXISTING FACILITIES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

26 // GROWING THE HEARTLAND
A RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Of Melbourne’s growth between 2011 and 2031, 69% will be in the seven growth area LGAs of the Cities of Casey, Whittlesea, Hume, Melton and Wyndham and the Shires of Mitchell and Cardinia. These areas will accommodate 52% of all of Victoria’s growth to 2031.

Outside metropolitan Melbourne, significant growth is occurring through green field developments in the regional municipalities of Geelong, Ballarat, Wodonga, Latrobe and Baw Baw. Opportunities to develop new facilities to service these growing populations are best achieved through securing appropriate land for new playing fields and amenities in green field developments.

Our research indicates that around 160+ new football grounds are planned in Victoria to 2022. This is close to our projected 188 grounds that would be required over this time (more if participation was able to be increased). However, whilst these grounds are planned, analysis of precinct structure plans in growth areas indicate that they will not necessarily be developed into football ovals and that the potential for them to be developed for rectangular or other sports is still subject to further needs analysis. In addition, planned facilities require funding in order to become a reality.

OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

AFL Victoria will work collaboratively with our partners to:

• Develop a specific plan for Melbourne’s growth areas (based on AFL Victoria’s facility planning hierarchy) to ensure that football is well placed to advocate for new facilities within precinct structure plans and subsequent master planning.

• Support the provision of two oval (minimum) facilities in green field sites to support the establishment of strong and viable clubs.

• Develop a series of standardised facility layouts of how football facilities and associated amenities should be positioned to guide development in green field sites and work with LGAs and the Metropolitan Planning Authority on the design of new facilities.

• Continue to promote the use of synthetic surfaces in key growth area locations to support carrying capacity of grounds in growth areas.

• Work closely with Cricket Victoria as a key partner in the use of ovals to plan for and advocate the need for new facilities.

• Work closely with Netball Victoria as a key partner to plan for and advocate the need for new / upgraded facilities (particularly in country areas).

• Continue to work with Local Government and relevant community football leagues in growth areas to establish new clubs at facilities to activate the space once available.

• Develop a Club Establishment Fund to provide seed funding for the establishment of new football clubs.
A RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Football within Victoria is fortunate to have professional staff working across the state in the management and development of the game. These include talent and development staff working for AFL Victoria along with staff working in many of the community football leagues. In a number of instances these staff are operating out of poor working environments that are not conducive to staff retention and recruitment or displaying a professional ‘shop-front’ to potential partners.

40% of country leagues and more than 66% of metropolitan leagues rate their accommodation as average or poor. In metropolitan areas, 83% of leagues had plans to improve their office accommodation to create more functional working environments.

The 2011 Review of Football in Country Victoria identified a lack of collaboration amongst football stakeholders. Existing administration environments exacerbate this issue, with many staff working in separate office locations, in environments that are not conducive to collaboration and sharing of costs and resources. In part to address this, the Review recommended the roll-out of Region Commissions, and the development of Region Administration Centres (RACs) to jointly house league and development staff.

OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

AFL Victoria will work collaboratively with our partners to:

- Develop first class administration centres at key locations that can co-locate football stakeholders including community leagues and Region Development staff that invoke a culture of professionalism, collaboration and better address participation levels for that region.
- Continue to document the success of Region Administration Centres, including how they are positively impacting on participation and better supporting volunteers.
- Work with other sports (particularly cricket and netball) to explore opportunities to co-locate regional personnel at these centres.
- Provide AFL / AFL Victoria funding, in addition to external resources to assist in the development of Region / Football Administration Centres.

WorkSafe AFL Victoria Country Region Commission Structure

- Sunraysia
- Wimmera/Mallee
- Western District
- Central Murray
- Central Victoria
- Goldfields
- Barwon
- Goulburn Murray
- Yarra Ranges
- South East
- North East Border
- East Gippsland
- Gippsland

Region Administration Centre locations
A RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

The make-up of our game is changing. Facilities that were historically developed with predominantly males as the primary user now require adaptation to provide for greater diversity in football. Female football is our fastest growing participation segment and our multicultural programs are attracting additional participants from diverse backgrounds.

In simple terms, a large number of our facilities are not functional to cater for growth in the game, as well as the changing needs of our diverse participants, including players and officials. One in five new umpires to the game are female and our statistics report that 79% of existing venues do not provide female umpire change facilities.

In addition to playing facilities and amenities, the social fabric of football clubs and their viability are often built around developing an inclusive and social culture. Social/community rooms at facilities are in some instances not considered a core component of new facilities. If we want clubs to provide for players, volunteers, supporters and spectators and be vibrant, sustainable, accessible and welcoming then multi-use social/community rooms are essential to deliver these outcomes. These facilities are also important venues for club meetings, education sessions and forums.

OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

AFL Victoria will work collaboratively with our partners to:

- Ensure new and refurbished facilities include unisex change rooms for both players and umpires.
- Encourage the use of Universal Design principles in the design and development of football facilities.
- Continue to advocate for the inclusion of appropriately sized social/community rooms as core components of football facility developments.
- Develop and promote successful case studies where social/community rooms have enhanced community and football outcomes.

IF WE WANT CLUBS TO PROVIDE FOR PLAYERS, VOLUNTEERS, SUPPORTERS AND SPECTATORS AND BE VIBRANT, SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING THEN MULTI-USE SOCIAL/COMMUNITY ROOMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO DELIVER THESE OUTCOMES.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC FACILITY PLANS TO GUIDE AND ASSIST IN PRIORITISING INVESTMENT IN FOOTBALL FACILITIES HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS CRITICAL TO ENSURE THAT RESOURCES ARE TARGETED TO QUALITY PROJECTS AND WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED MOST.

A RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Eighty seven (87%) of football facilities are provided on land owned and/or managed by Local Government. Every year the 79 LGAs across the state collectively invest significantly in the development and maintenance of facilities. In addition, the Victorian and Federal Governments are ongoing supporters of a variety of facility developments that benefit football.

93% of grounds used for football are shared with cricket during the summer season. This highlights the importance of our ongoing partnership with peak cricket bodies and clubs and how investment in football facilities generates additional benefit for cricket and 12-month a year usage outcomes.

The AFL and AFL Victoria has collectively invested more than $10 million in football facility development (outside of AFL club facilities) in Victoria since 2007. This investment has been in partnership with governments at all levels, our leagues and their clubs, supporting more than 450 projects across the state.

An example of the value of partnerships, is the Country Football Netball Program. Since 2005 this program, jointly funded by the State Government, the AFL and other partners has supported over 360 projects, delivering more than $16 million in grants and $47 million in project value. Approximately 1/3 of the project value delivered in this program has been through club/community contributions, demonstrating the commitment (and importance) of clubs in contributing to the development of their facilities.

The development of strategic facility plans to guide and prioritise investment in football facilities has been identified as critical to ensure that resources are targeted to quality projects and where they are needed most.

OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

AFL Victoria will work collaboratively with our partners to:

- Ensure AFL Victoria participation statistics and other planning documents such as the AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines, are communicated regularly to facility owners and asset managers to assist in their planning.
- Develop a framework for metropolitan leagues and Region Commissions to prepare facility plans for their regions, in consultation with Local Government partners.
- Continue to provide funding in partnership with Government at all levels to strategically important football facility projects.
- Continue to advocate to clubs the importance of putting aside funds to assist in investing in facility developments.
- Initiate and maintain a Local Government Reference Group to advise on key issues affecting football that relate to Local Government functions and services.
- Conduct an AFL Victoria Local Government Forum bi-annually to improve information flow to Local Government on various football related issues, to recognise their role in supporting our game and to provide networking opportunities between Local Government staff and the broader football network.
- Develop an AFL Victoria Government Relations Framework to facilitate the development of mutually beneficial relationships for staff and leagues across the state.
Delivering on our Priorities

This document has been developed to set out AFL Victoria’s role in football facility provision across the state and provide rationale and strategic guidance for future support and investment.

In order to deliver on our priorities AFL Victoria will be guided by three key principles when working with our partners:

1. Planning
   Project planning (whether it be at state, regional or local level) provides the evidence required to guide and support informed investment decisions and to best determine needs versus wants.

2. Participation
   Determining how we can best utilise and develop facilities to support, encourage and enhance participation opportunities at all levels and formats of football.

3. Partnerships
   Partnering with all levels of Government, with football and other sports and with local communities is crucial to enabling infrastructure investment and maximising its use.

Whilst this document provides a strategic view through analytical expertise to 2020, a major review and evaluation of the document will be completed in 2016, representing the final year of the AFL’s current funding cycle.

AFL Victoria’s operations will continue to ensure staff at the state and regional levels are supported to deliver actions from this Strategy and our funding models and programs are tailored to meet strategic priorities.

As an organisation we are committed to developing and maintaining facility information, case studies, analytical expertise and resources to assist LGAs and the football community to deliver a greater range of projects across the state that are consistent with our strategy.

Through the development of this document a conscious effort has been made to recognise the differences between metropolitan and country governance, competition structures and partnership models. Moving forward the sport will continue to appreciate differences in markets for our sport and levels of support required, in addition to balancing football’s needs across rural, regional, metropolitan and growth area communities.

Our commitment is to direct our investment and resources to the delivery of this Strategy and work closely with football and government stakeholders at all levels to ensure football facilities support the ongoing access to our game as we head towards 300,000 participants in football’s heartland of Victoria.
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