

Harness racing's vision to resurrect Showgrounds



Melton's Tabcorp Park is the workhorse of the harness racing industry. Picture: Stuart McCormick



By **Adam Hamilton**
03:43pm • 27 July 2021



Comments

Harness racing could still return to the Melbourne Showgrounds.

In releasing Harness Racing Victoria's three-year strategic plan, dubbed TROTS24, HRV chief executive Dayle Brown confirmed talks were ongoing with Victoria Racing Minister Martin Pakula and the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria, which owns the Showgrounds.

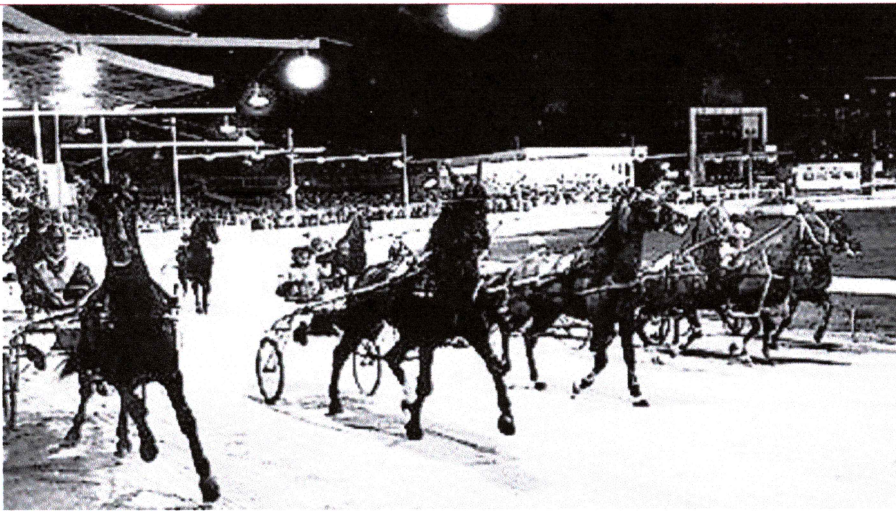
"The heartbeat (of returning the Showgrounds) is not gone," he said.

"The footprint of the Heritage buildings is the issue. As it stands, there is only room for about a 740m track and with today's horses and the speed they go, the industry would really need something around the 900m mark to be viable.

"We've had really productive talks with the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria, they've been very fruitful. There is certainly a willingness to come together, but the footprint is the issue."

HRV Chairman Dale Monteith added: "That footprint is an issue the Racing Minister (Martin Pakula) is keen to pursue to a logical conclusion.

"We would like to be at the Showgrounds ... Melton is the workhorse of the industry and will always have an important role, but do we need something closer to town?"



Harness racing at the Melbourne Showgrounds in 1970.

The Showgrounds were Melbourne's harness racing home and an iconic night-time venue from 1947 to 1976 when Moonee Valley's harness track took over.

Many believe the re-establishment of a harness track at the Showgrounds, possibly with an accompanying greyhound track inside it, would be a game-changer for Victoria's entire racing industry.

It would effectively create a racing precinct with Flemington next door.

Of the many announcements in the Strategic Plan, increases to stakemoney is a focus, but the amount and nature has not been finalised.

"We absolutely will increase stakemoney, just as we did by \$1.7m through direct stakes and bonuses last year, but it's important we remain fluid on how and where that will be and just as important we work with industry groups on that, which we have started doing," Brown said.

Asked where additional stakemoney would be focused, Monteith conceded the focus needed to be on grassroots participants.

"About 80 per cent of participants are at that lower level so we have to support them, but we also know we need those aspirational feature races for the big players at the top end and to attract new players into the industry," he said.

Monteith also emphasised the importance of growing Trots Vision, the industry's digital vision service, and an ongoing commitment to the future of the sport's marquee event, the Inter Dominion.

"Trots Vision is vital to showcase our sport and its stars, both horses and people," he said. "It's my personal vision that it could be a national channel, showcasing the best racing from all around the country, who knows? It also needs to play a key role in showcasing our racing to an international audience.

"As far as the Inter Dominion goes, we are committed to hosting it when it's our turn again in the rotation (next year). We'd love to increase stakemoney for it, but it's about juggling what's sustainable along with funding the rest of our industry."

* Adam Hamilton is a paid contributor on harness racing for News Corp Australia



Read all news by
[Adam Hamilton](#)

View by Tags

Harness

VIC

What do you think?

8 Responses