

Growing the Heartland

FOOTBALL FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2017 – 2022



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FOREWORD



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. Increasing the capacity of grounds and pavilions and the development of unisex facilities that welcome participants and umpires from each gender has never been more important. 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.

In partnership with all levels of Government and other football stakeholders, the AFL and AFL Victoria have collectively invested more than \$13 million in community facility developments in Victoria to a combined value of approximately \$210 million, in the last 10 years. 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Steven Reaper'.

Steven Reaper
Chief Executive Officer
AFL Victoria



INTRODUCTION

Victoria is football's heartland with over 1,100 football clubs, 6,000 teams, more than 410,000 participants, over 78,000 volunteers, and is amongst the largest individual business sectors within the sport and recreation industry. In Victoria, football uses over 1,200 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.

“Facilities” is one of the five Strategic Pillars of AFL Victoria.

Based on this Strategic Pillar, the Football Facilities Development Strategy (known as the Heartland Strategy) was initially implemented in 2014.

The changing face of football across Australia led to a review of the Heartland Strategy in 2016, ensuring that strategic directions evolved to best assist all partners and meet the needs of communities where our game is played.

The Heartland 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.

The Strategy focuses predominantly 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.

Since its implementation in 2014, the Strategy has been 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.

STRATEGIC PLAN PILLARS



KEYS TO SUCCESS

Embedding Diversity

in everything we do across gender, culture and ability

Ultimate Collaboration

All football stakeholders working together in regions to grow the game

Easy Accessibility

and clear pathways to participate and progress through the game

PURPOSE AND DRIVERS

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 through the Heartland Strategy.

The initial Heartland Strategy was released to the Victorian community in 2014, with a key priority to review its strategic directions in-line with the AFL's funding cycle. The new funding cycle commenced in November 2016 and will continue to the end of October 2022. This document represents a review of the original Heartland Strategy and retains many of the strategic positions and initiatives previously identified. It also addresses recent trends and developments identified over the past three years and provides direction that aligns with the AFL's six year funding cycle to 2022.

The information within this Strategy aims to assist various stakeholders in understanding our directions for facility provision and how that may align with their own planning and resource provision.

It was purposely developed as a simple and direct document that identifies key priorities based on detailed consultation. With more than 1,200 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 also guides 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.

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2014

To ensure that the development of infrastructure is well planned and is strategically placed to service the continued growth of the game, AFL Victoria implemented the Heartland Strategy in 2014. The Heartland Strategy set a path, strategic objectives and commitments that led to many notable achievements.

Our sport has:

- Since 2007, invested \$13m into Victorian community football venues to support and grow our club environment and stimulated over 780 projects worth over \$210m;
- Partnered with over a third of Victorian LGA's to develop Regional Strategies that will guide infrastructure investment for ten years. The benefits of regional planning are being realised with the first, the G21 and AFL Barwon Regional Strategy, embarking upon over 30 projects consistent with Strategy recommendations since its completion;
- Progressively undertaken detailed infield audits of football facilities across Victoria;
- Implemented strategic planning processes with partner sports, including Cricket Victoria and Netball Victoria;
- Developed a best practice unisex facility provision guide to support key stakeholder investment, design and upgrading;
- Implemented the Club Establishment Fund to support the development of new clubs in key growth areas;
- Improved State of Play monitoring and reporting to better understand football participation trends;
- Increased AFL Victoria funding for infrastructure projects and in partnership with Netball Victoria, secured an extension of the Victorian Government funding for the Country Football Netball Program to 2020.
- Invested in Regional Administration Centres for AFL Victoria Commissions, supported by additional staff resources in regional and rural areas to better implement sports development initiatives and manage football needs locally; and
- Implemented the Community Club Sustainability Program that provides tools to educate administrators, and particular players, about the impact that match-payments and player demands have on the viability of grassroots clubs.

NEW TRENDS DRIVING CHANGE

The football environment is changing and the Heartland Strategy has a responsibility to reflect these changes, including the following examples:

- It took eight years to grow the first 100 female teams in Victoria, 2 years to grow the next 100 teams and 1 year to grow the next 100, this was in Season 2016. With the inaugural AFL Women's season kicking off in early 2017, this rapid growth is expected to continue.
- A new cycle of planning from 2017-2022 is in train for the football industry, including a new AFL Victoria Strategic Plan;
- Strategic directions from this Strategy need to align with strategic priorities from the AFL to ensure facility investment opportunities are clearly defined and supported at the highest level of the AFL;
- Government directions have altered, with an enhanced focus on areas such as female participation, unisex and universal design and access for all abilities;
- Local government is facing increased financial pressure with reduced funding availability combined with addressing the new challenge of rate capping;
- In some cases, inner metropolitan LGAs have limited or no ability to develop new grounds. Alternate facility options such as school venues and use of synthetic grounds need to be further explored to ensure participation growth opportunities are capitalised on; and
- Demographic change is occurring, quite rapidly in some areas of the state, which requires planning now for future communities.

AFL Victoria estimates that over 1,040 of the venues accessed by football have gaps in their facilities to provide a quality club environment, including lack of unisex change rooms for players and umpires, inadequate social rooms to support club viability, poor ground surfaces and lighting provision which limits oval use. In addition, some second tier venues do not adequately meet the current standards for both male and female competition football.

Based on these estimates the investment required to bring Victorian facilities to minimum standards outlined in the AFL Preferred Facility Guidelines exceeds \$327 million. Such investment is likely to be unachievable and highlights the critical need to strategically prioritise facility investment across the state to best assist all of our partners to meet community needs. Refreshing the Heartland Strategy in 2016 was key to ensuring facility planning continued to reflect new trends driving the progression of football.



Photo courtesy of Cameron Grimes

CONSULTATION

The review of the Heartland Strategy included engagement with a number of football, government and community stakeholders in order to gather a broad range of 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 and VicHealth
- Victorian Local Government Authorities
- Community Football Leagues.

As part of the review of the Heartland Strategy, all 79 Local Government Authorities (LGAs) and community football leagues within Victoria were contacted and surveyed regarding key infrastructure issues. Of the 31 metropolitan Melbourne LGAs, 21 responded, similarly 32 of the 48 country LGAs participated in the survey. 44% of our affiliated country and metropolitan football leagues also responded 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 have a clear basis on which to build our future strategies. Key insights into metropolitan and country facility issues are identified within this Strategy 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 refresh 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 the necessity to maximise their capacity to meet needs and address trends, particularly for female football;
- To highlight the connection between football facilities, their local community and associated economic and social 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, local or site 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 and football, along with other sports and community groups is crucial to enabling infrastructure investment and maximising its use.



FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION IN VICTORIA

Football is continuing to grow in Victoria.



Club football continues to grow with an 8% increase in Season 2016, reaching over 160,200 participants.



Women and girls participation is the fastest growing form of the game. **Female club participant numbers increased by 41% in Season 2016** with 40% growth in dedicated female team numbers alone. Over 9,000 female participants played club based football in 2016.



Alternative forms of the game such as school based programs and social football continue to grow. AFL 9's attracted 4,380 participants in 2016, an increase of 11% from 2015, followed closely by school programs with **more than 84,000 participants in 2016 – representing growth of 9% on 2015.**



With the significant expansion of female football across the State and the continued **development of school based and social football** it is expected that overall participation levels will continue to grow, capitalising on the televised national AFL Women's competition from Season 2017.

100 FEMALE TEAMS

8 YEARS
2006 - 2013

NEXT 100 FEMALE TEAMS

2 YEARS
2014 - 2015

NEXT 100 FEMALE TEAMS

1 YEAR
2016

OVER 100 NEW FEMALE TEAMS PROJECTED

2017

OVER
1,200
GROUNDS

160,200
CLUB
PARTICIPANTS

6,033
TEAMS

15,326
ACCREDITED
COACHES

7,148
UMPIRES

1,107
CLUBS
ACROSS
74
LEAGUES

7%
OVERALL
GROWTH
IN SEASON
2016



PARTICIPATION BY REGION

AFL Victoria categorises the state into 19 Development Regions which include 7 metropolitan regions and 12 country regions. AFL Victoria employs Football 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.

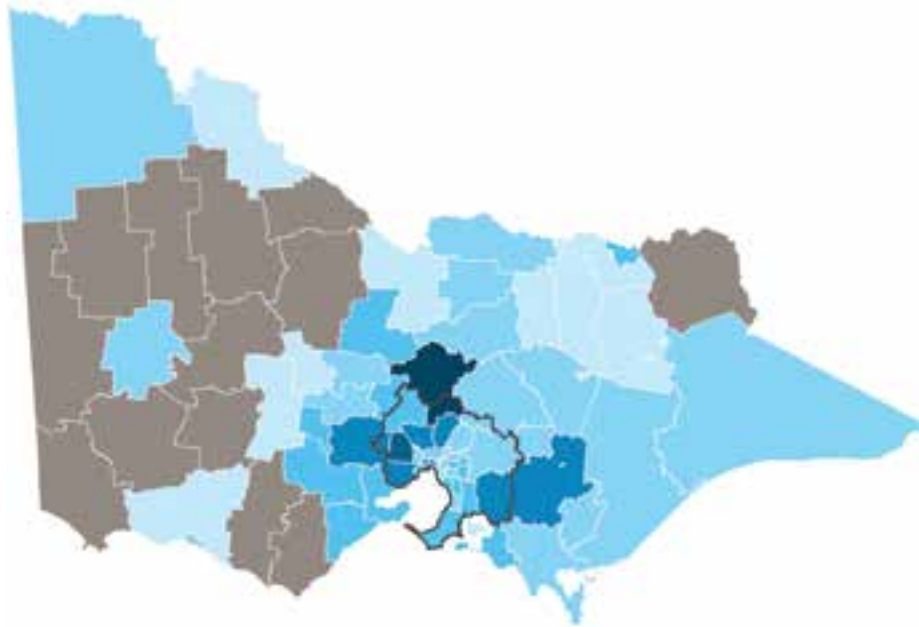
In 2016, in pure numbers, the highest participation region is South East. In country Victoria the highest participation region is Geelong. AFL Victoria participation statistics, along with information about existing facility provision in each area, provide strong evidence for the demand for facility 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.

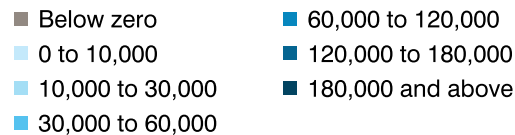


PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH IN VICTORIA

Population growth in Victoria over the next 30 years is not projected to be evenly distributed across the state.

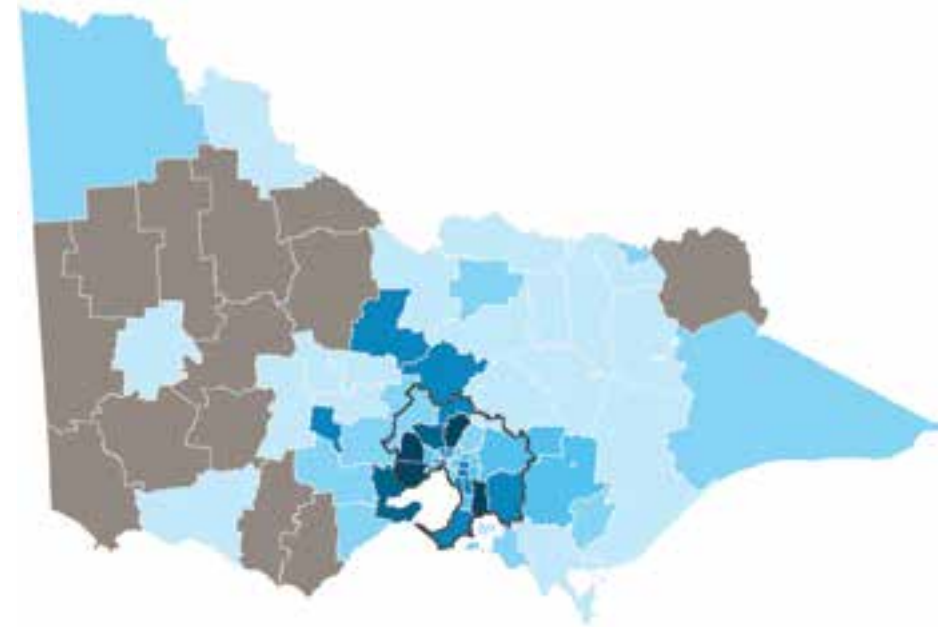


PROJECTED POPULATION CHANGE BY LGA, 2016-46

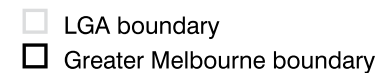
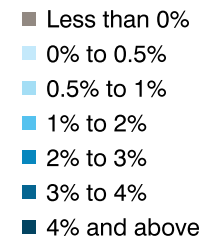


The impact of population growth on football

Based on population growth and current participation, AFL Victoria projects an additional 90+ ovals will be required in Victoria by 2022. LGA's have acknowledged a similar need with 98 grounds planned across 34 municipalities.



PROJECTED ANNUAL AVERAGE RATE OF POPULATION CHANGE BY LGA, 2016-46



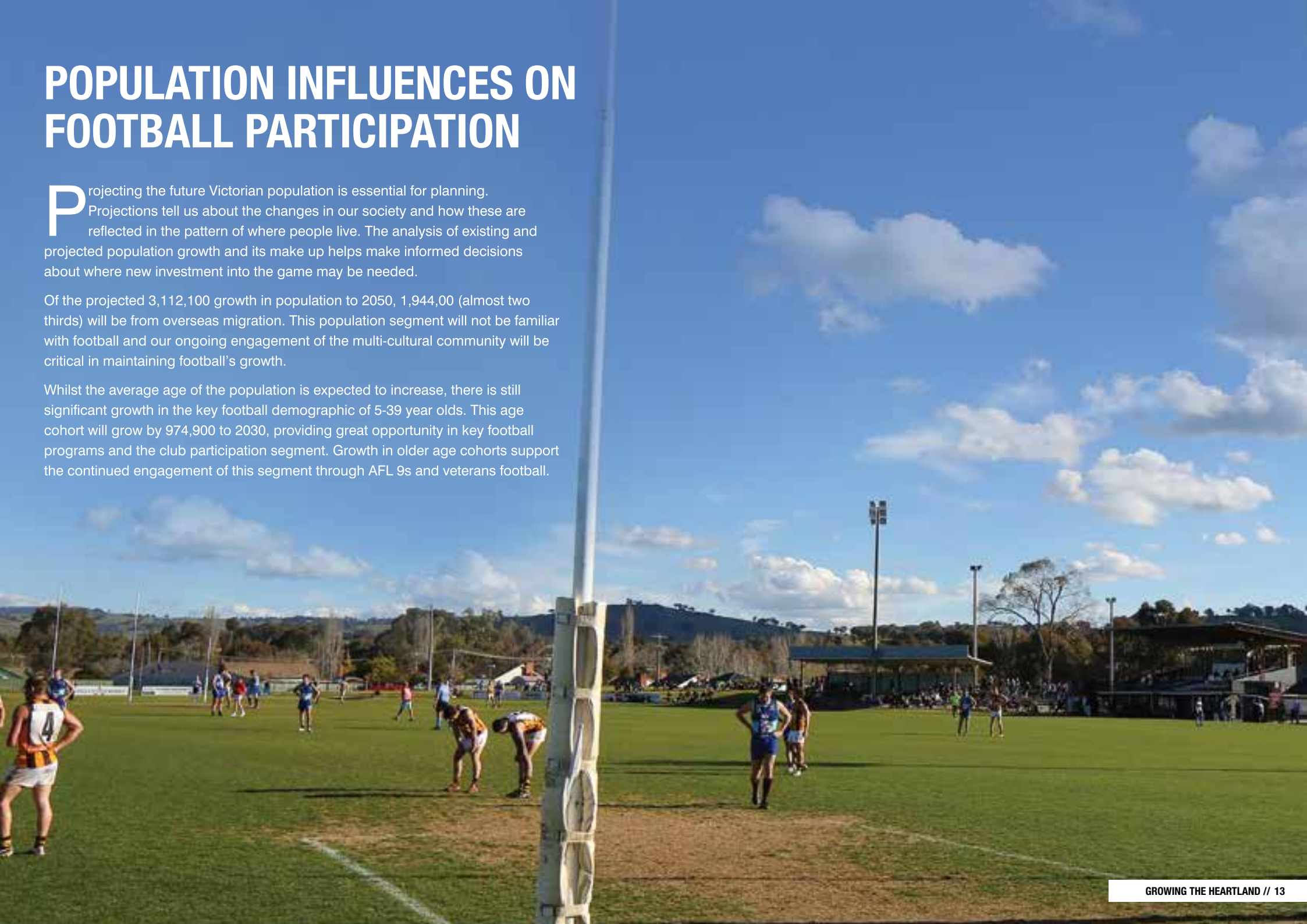
Maps sourced from Victoria's 30 year Infrastructure Strategy, Infrastructure Victoria December 2016.

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 to 2050, 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 to 2030, 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.





KEY STATISTICS THAT INFLUENCE OUR PLANNING



For the year ending 30 June 2015, Victoria grew by 99,000 people (1.7% growth on previous year), with 91,600 of that growth within Melbourne's metropolitan area. This represents the largest growth in numbers of any state and capital city in Australia.



Five Victorian LGAs are amongst the 10 largest growing municipalities in Australia - Wyndham, Casey, Whittlesea, Melbourne and Hume, with Melbourne and Wyndham recording the third and fourth fastest growth rates respectively in Australia.



Whilst there are a number of key growth areas on Melbourne's fringe, the City of Melbourne is the fastest growing municipality 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.



The fastest growing LGAs by overall percentage growth in regional Victoria are Greater Geelong, Mitchell (now part of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary), Moorabool, Surf Coast, Baw Baw and Macedon Ranges, with Greater Geelong recording the largest numbers in population growth.

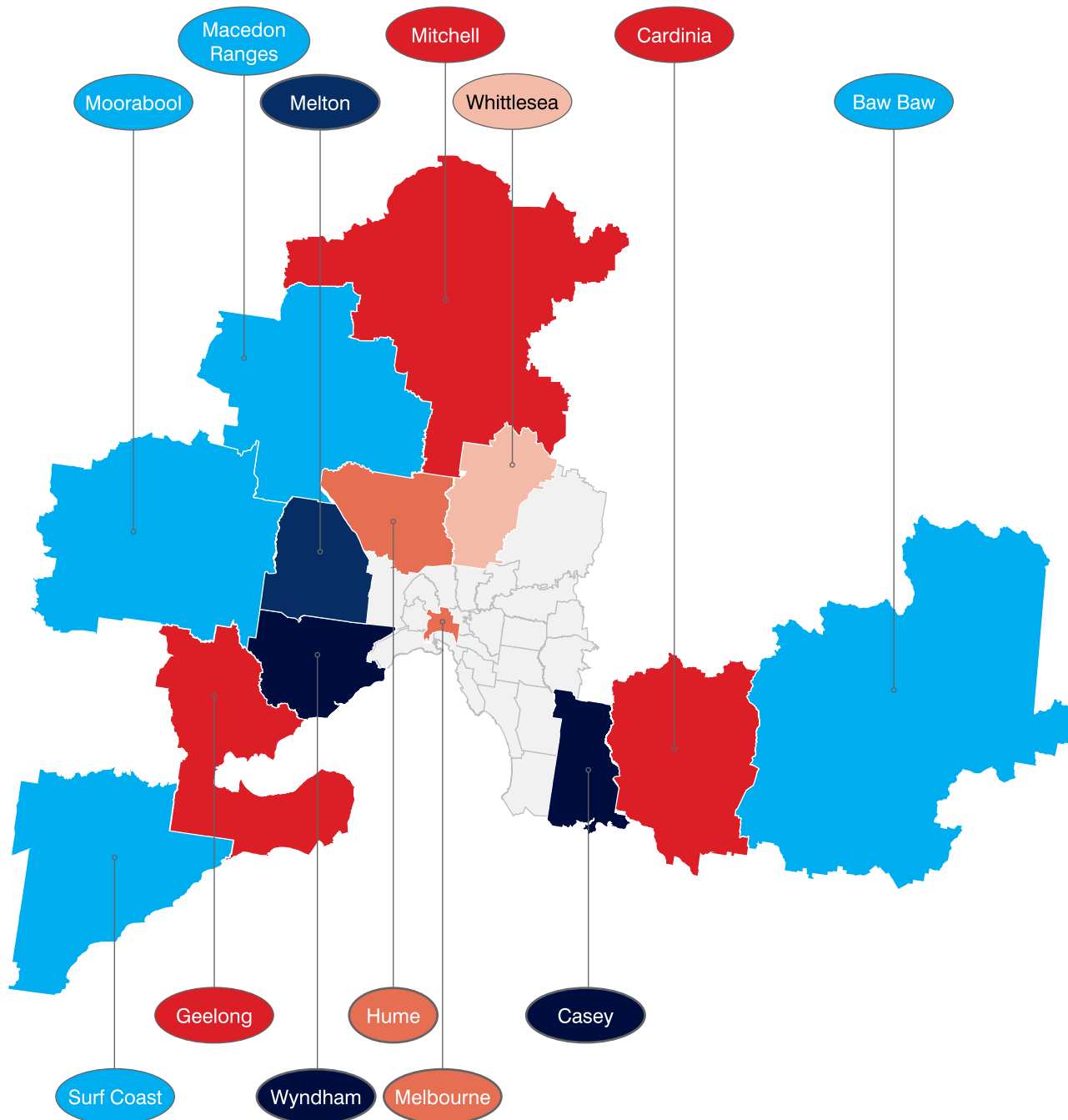
IMPACT OF PROJECTED POPULATION IN VICTORIA'S KEY GROWTH AREAS

The Victorian Planning Authority has identified a number of significant growth areas in Victoria that, over the next 20 years, will contribute 46% 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 maps beside outline the projected population growth to 2031 for 5 to 39 age groups, then projected growth in football participation and future oval requirements to meet this growth. These projections are based on male and female participation rates for Season 2016 and do not account for any growth in the sport, such as through increased female participation. It is also acknowledged that there are a number of fast growing regional cities and outer metropolitan areas not detailed in these maps.

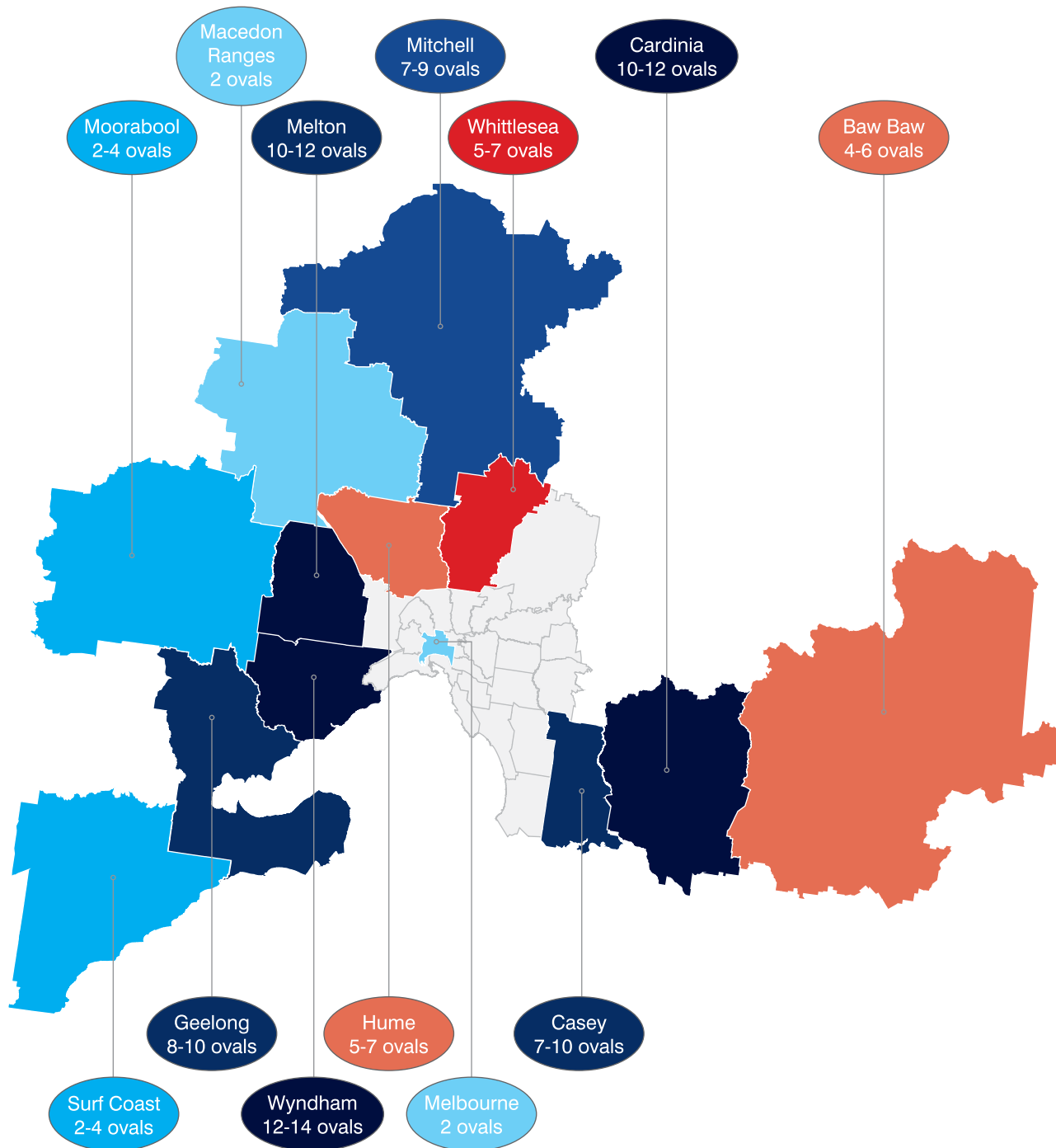
PROJECTED GROWTH IN 5-39 YEAR OLD POPULATION 2016-2031

- 1,000 to 10,000
- 10,000 to 20,000
- 20,000 to 30,000
- 30,000 to 40,000
- 40,000 to 50,000
- 50,000 to 60,000
- 60,000 to 70,000
- 70,000 to 80,000
- 80,000 to 90,000
- 90,000 to 100,000
- 100,000 to 110,000



GROWTH AREA AND PARTICIPATION MAPS

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.



PROJECTED GROWTH IN PARTICIPATION 2016 -2031

- 1 to 200
- 200 to 400
- 400 to 600
- 600 to 800
- 800 to 1,000
- 1,000 to 1,200
- 1,200 to 1,400
- 1,400 to 1,600
- 1,600 to 2,000

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.¹

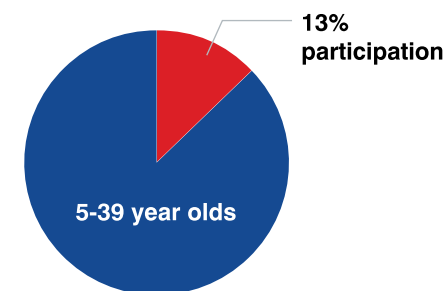
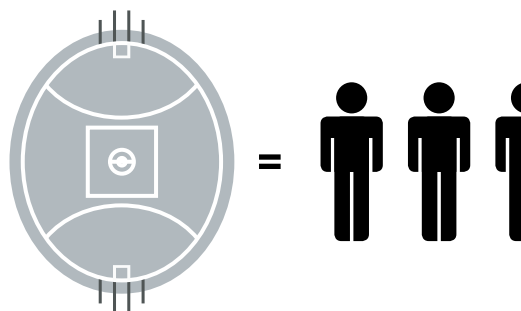
A comparison of football participation (using the percentage of males aged 5-39 participating in the game compared to population) across each Victorian region and the ratio of the number of ovals per head of population, highlights the impact of facilities on participation.

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.

COMPARISON BETWEEN OVAL PROVISION AND PARTICIPATION BASED ON TWO AFL VICTORIA REGIONS – ONE WITH HIGH OVAL PROVISION AND HIGH PARTICIPATION AND AND THE SECOND WITH LOW OVAL PROVISION AND SUBSEQUENT LOW PARTICIPATION

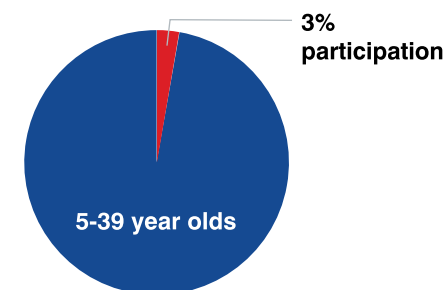
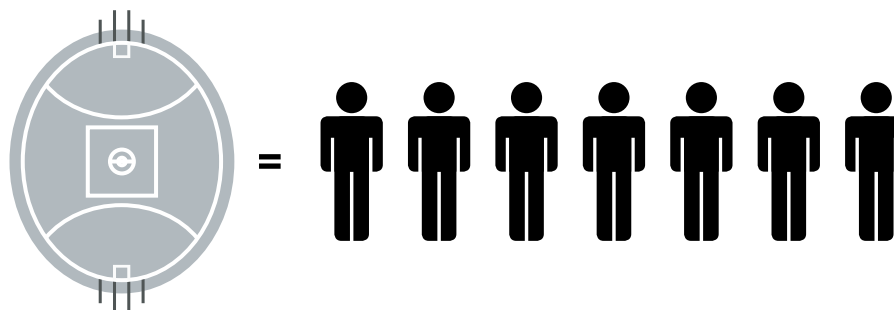
REGION A - 1 OVAL FOR EVERY 2,500 PERSONS

HIGH participation rate with 13% of 5-39 year olds are registered participants



REGION B - 1 OVAL FOR EVERY 7,000 PERSONS

LOW participation rate with 3.7% of 5-39 year olds are registered participants



¹ Sport and Recreation Spatial, Sport Facility Provision – AFL Research Report February 2015

NOTES:  1,000 people

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 a study conducted through the Australian Sports Commission 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.¹

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 2015 was estimated at \$5.7 billion. In Victoria in 2015, football's total economic impact was estimated at \$3.1 billion, with Community Football estimated to make up about 45% of the total.²

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.

Add to this economic benefits provided through football carnivals and events to local economies where they are staged. It is estimated that the 2016 V/Line Cup generated \$2.6million in economic benefit to the Latrobe City region with more than 3,300 attending the event. The event has generated a combined \$4.9million to the Latrobe City region in the two seasons it has been held there.

¹ *Employment supported by final demand for construction services Qld Government, 2011*

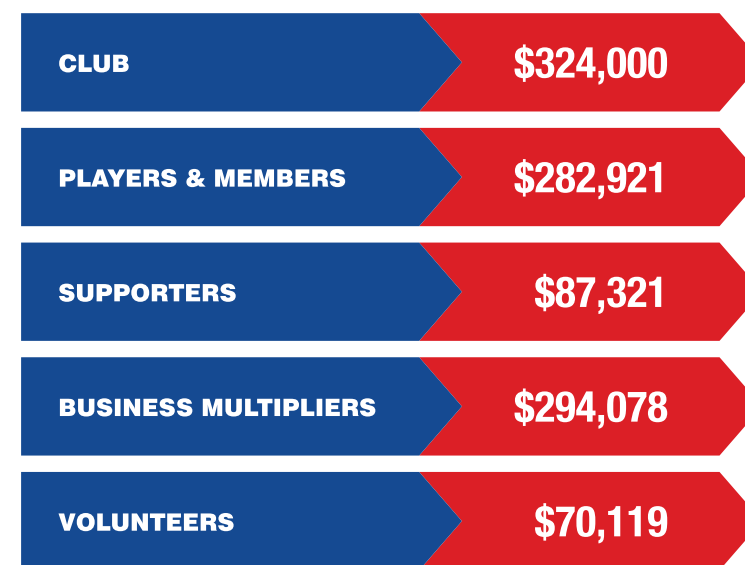
² *AFL Economic Impact Study 2015 - Street Ryan and Associates 2015*

³ *Gisborne Football Club Economic Impact Study - Street Ryan and Associates 201*

SNAPSHOT OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF A TYPICAL COMMUNITY FOOTBALL & NETBALL CLUB³

GISBORNE FOOTBALL CLUB (INCORPORATING GISBORNE ROOKIES FC) 14 JUNIOR TEAMS, 3 SENIOR TEAMS AND 5 NETBALL TEAMS

\$1.06 MILLION PER ANNUM





IT DOES NOT MATTER WHERE A PERSON LIVES, HOW LONG OR HOW OFTEN THEY ARE INVOLVED IN A FOOTBALL CLUB, OR WHAT ROLE THEY HAVE (PLAYER, COACH, SUPPORTER, VOLUNTEER) IN THE CLUB, A PERSON ASSOCIATED WITH A FOOTBALL CLUB EXPERIENCES GREATER SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS, WELLBEING AND SELF-REPORTED PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.

THE VALUE OF FOOTBALL BEYOND SPORT

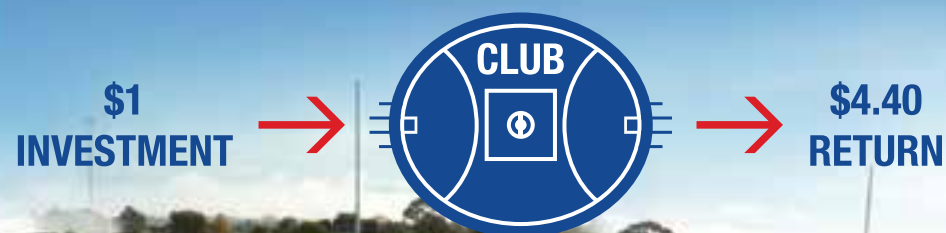
The benefits of investing in football extend beyond sports participation to providing social outcomes that positively impact the communities that clubs support. This is through inclusiveness, diversity programs, female participation and commitment to participant welfare and wellbeing.

The Value of a Community Football Club study undertaken by La Trobe University in 2015 found that for every \$1 spent to run a community football club, there is at least a \$4.40 return in social value.

This “social value” is measured in terms of increased social connectedness, wellbeing, and mental health status; employment outcomes; personal development; physical health; civic pride and support of other community groups.

The study identified that the reach of a football club is significant and extends beyond club players and volunteers within the club; **“for every 1 player, football clubs reach 10 people in their community”**.

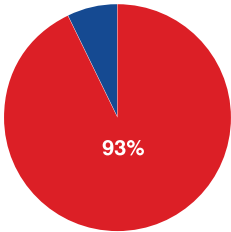
Football clubs provide an environment where people are more socially connected at every age group, they are the social hub of a community, particularly in rural and regional areas, and are a focal point for community efforts in times of crisis and celebration.



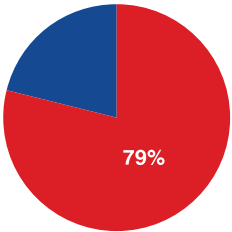
EXISTING FOOTBALL FACILITY PROVISION

Our survey of every LGA and community football league in Victoria, combined with our facilities audit data and key findings from regional planning processes, 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 over the following pages.

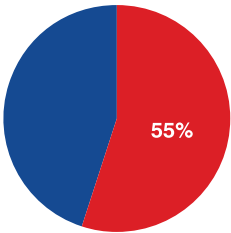
IN 2016 MORE THAN 1,200 FOOTBALL GROUNDS WERE USED FOR COMPETITION



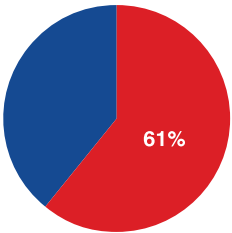
93% OF GROUNDS ARE SHARED WITH CRICKET



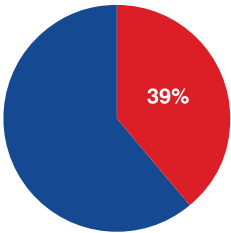
79% OF VENUES DO NOT HAVE FEMALE FRIENDLY PLAYER CHANGE FACILITIES



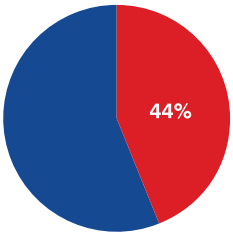
55% OF VENUES DO NOT HAVE FEMALE FRIENDLY UMPIRE CHANGE FACILITIES



61% OF LGAS RATED PLAYER CHANGE ROOMS PARTICULARLY CATERING FOR WOMEN AS THE KEY FOOTBALL FACILITY ISSUE IN THEIR MUNICIPALITY FOLLOWED BY OVAL SURFACE ISSUES AND TRAINING LIGHTS



COUNTRY

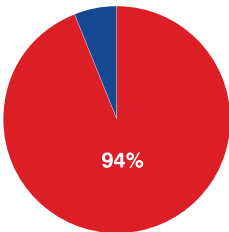


METRO

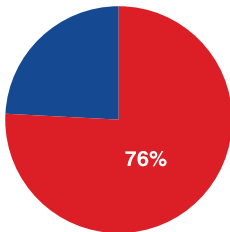
39% OF LIT GROUNDS IN COUNTRY AREAS AND 44% IN METRO AREAS DO NOT MEET MINIMUM TRAINING STANDARDS (50 LUX)

LGA IDENTIFIED FACILITY CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

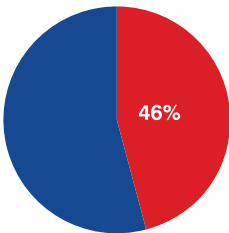
Through our survey of LGAs and regional planning processes, LGAs have identified the following infrastructure challenges regarding existing football facility provision and opportunities to support participation growth through alternate amenity provision and access.



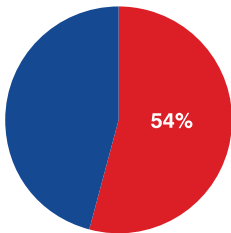
94% OF LGAS THAT HAVEN'T COMPLETED A FACILITIES PLANNING STRATEGY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AFL VICTORIA AND OTHER LGAS WITHIN THEIR REGION ARE INTERESTED IN DOING SO



76% OF LGAS RATED LACK OF EXTERNAL FUNDING AS THE KEY BARRIER TO INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT FOLLOWED BY LACK OF INTERNAL LGA FUNDS AND RATE CAPPING

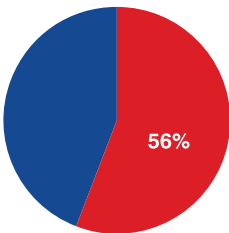


COUNTRY

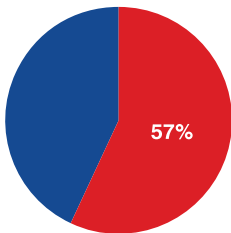


METRO

46% OF COUNTRY LGAS AND 54% OF METROPOLITAN LGAS WOULD CONSIDER SYNTHETIC FOOTBALL/ CRICKET GROUNDS.



COUNTRY



METRO

56% OF LGAS AND 57% OF LEAGUES INDICATED THAT ACCESSING SCHOOL GROUNDS WOULD HELP DEAL WITH THE DEMAND FOR FOOTBALL GROUNDS

THROUGH BOTH REGIONAL PLANNING AND SURVEYS, LGAS HAVE INDICATED THAT AN ESTIMATED 98 NEW FOOTBALL GROUNDS ARE PLANNED TO BE DEVELOPED IN VICTORIA FROM 2017 – 2022 ACROSS 34 MUNICIPALITIES.

KEY INFLUENCES OF FUTURE FOOTBALL FACILITY PROVISION

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 enough 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 areas.

AFL PREFERRED FACILITIES GUIDELINES AND THE PREFERRED FACILITY GUIDELINES AMENITIES UPGRADES FOR UNISEX USE 2015

The AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines 2012 and the Preferred Facility Guidelines Amenities Upgrades for Unisex Use 2015 provide recommendations for the level of facilities required at local, regional and state level venues. These guidelines provide preferred spatial requirements for various pavilion areas ranging from change rooms, showers, first aid and social rooms with supporting design options for conversion of existing change rooms to unisex provision.

These documents 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 and better cater for the diversity of participants football provides for.

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.

Consideration of lighting all grounds to minimum training standard at multi oval sites provides further opportunity to spread training loads and increase capacity of use.

GROUND SURFACES AND SYNTHETIC SURFACE USE

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, ten ovals have been installed across Australia with six in Victoria located in the cities of Melbourne, Wyndham, Casey, Whittlesea, and at Melbourne Grammar School. 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. Increasing oval usage options whilst reducing ongoing maintenance costs, provides facility access benefits that balance out against an initial spend that is above the standard facility investment. AFL Victoria aspires to the installation of at least one synthetic multi-purpose AFL field in each of its Regions to provide capacity to better cater for growth and existing demand.

Pre-season training requirements and participation extending beyond traditional catchment areas with players travelling further distances to attend training, provides opportunity to identify central grounds in each region for synthetic installation that all clubs could access.

Synthetic ground access and capacity could be further enhanced through these facilities remaining 'club neutral' and managed by AFL Victoria Commissions / Regions Administration Centres (RACs). RAC management of synthetic sites could promote effective ground management, improve game scheduling and access for all football clubs within a region, provide opportunity for flexible fixturing and use of grounds for junior midweek competitions and promote sustainable pricing, management and maintenance practices.

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). Regional facility planning has highlighted the need to meet minimum lighting standards to maximise ground use opportunities and better cater for participation growth and support more flexible game scheduling and competition structures. 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.





REGIONAL PLANNING

Addressing the issues and gaps in football provision on a regional scale provides many benefits to football and project partner LGAs. Participation or competition / league structures are not constrained to municipal boundaries. Similarly, every municipality may not be required to cater for all levels of football and regional level facilities (those that service a broad catchment area) do not need to be duplicated in every municipality.

Regional planning provides opportunity to coordinate and align future facility provision that optimises planning policies and resource allocation, facility usage levels and improves financial viability and sustainability of facilities. At the same time, regional planning ensures greater access to higher quality facilities is achieved for current and future residential populations. AFL Victoria has already partnered with over a third of Victorian LGAs and Netball Victoria to develop Regional Strategies since the *Heartland Strategy* was introduced in 2014 and is committed to delivering regional plans across all AFL Victoria regions and commissions into the future.



CHANGE ROOM DESIGN

Catering for the diversity of participants attracted to our game is key if participation opportunities are to be realised. Female football is now the fastest growing segment of our game. There were over 9,000 female participants across Victoria in 2016, representing 5% of the total club football participation. In 2016 Victoria experienced 41% overall growth in female participation with 48% growth in youth participation and 30% growth in senior female participation, resulting in 355 dedicated female teams.

With the launch of the national women's competition in 2017 and as more and more leagues, competitions and clubs establish dedicated girls and women's teams and competitions, this trend is expected to continue. In addition to players, umpiring ranks are also seeing growing female involvement, along with more female administrators and support personnel such as physio's and trainers.

From a national survey of clubs, participants and volunteers in 2015, one of the key barriers to female participation is a lack of female friendly change rooms and amenities. The Victorian Government's 2016 Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines highlighted that "women and girls participation in sport is influenced by the extent, variety and accessibility of facilities" amongst other factors such as accessibility, safety and inclusiveness.

Most of the facilities that are used for Football were primarily built to cater for male use. AFL Victoria regional planning has identified that on average 79% of player change rooms and nearly 55% of umpire change rooms across Victoria do not currently contain female friendly amenities.

If we are to continue to attract more girls and women, we need to provide welcoming physical environments. This includes ensuring that players and umpires of both genders have access to appropriate change, shower and toilet facilities such as lockable cubicle showers, pan toilets and separate change and shower areas for female participants.

REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION CENTRES AND HUBS

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, program delivery and scheduling. This may offer LGAs an independent alternative to traditional club tenancy models where increased and shared usage are desired outcomes.

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 should be designed to maximise flexibility and accessibility for use by other users and 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.

AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines highlights the preferred and recommended requirements for clubroom and pavilion elements (based on the facility hierarchy) and should be considered for all new and redeveloped amenity buildings, in combination with other facility development guiding documents like the *Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines*.

The application of Universal Design and Environmentally Sustainable Design principles early on in the design phase will also assist facilities in meeting community requirements and expectations, catering for diversity of use and in creating operational efficiencies for building managers.



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 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 27 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.



AFL

- Set national priorities / needs for local, regional and state venues
- Partner / align with Federal Government and other national codes
- Allocate FDR funding
- Establish industry standards and provide resources / support to industry

**Football
Facilities
Development
Strategy**

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

**Region / League
Plan**

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

Club / Venue Plan

- 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.

	STATE	REGIONAL	LOCAL
Facility hierarchy level			
Principal purpose of provision	Primarily to service VFL Clubs	Each League (Metropolitan and Country) requires access to at least one Region venue per Division.	Local club level programs and competition.
Core football uses	VFL and TAC Cup. Community league finals. Football events and carnivals.	Talent Squad Training. Home and Away matches and club training. Community league finals.	Home and Away matches. Club training.
Description	<p>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.</p> <p>State League Club Centre of Excellence – 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.</p>	<p>Regional level venues service a collection of suburbs or geographic areas 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.</p> <p>Talent Centre of Excellence – 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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

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.

GOAL

The provision of a sufficient number of well located, accessible and welcoming football facilities that support the growth of the game

PRIORITY

1

Increase the quality / functionality and maximise the carrying capacity of existing facilities.

PRIORITY

2

Plan and develop new facilities in key growth areas across the state.

PRIORITY

3

Capitalise on opportunities to create Administration Centres/regional hubs, provide venues for talent pathway programs and competitions and protect landmark sites in key locations.

PRIORITY

4

Ensure facilities are catering for the diversity of participants, particularly female participants, attracted to our game.

PRIORITY

5

Continue to enhance our relationship with Government (particularly Local Government) in the planning and provision of facilities.



A RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

In 2016 there were 1,200 grounds used for competition to support football across Victoria. Our research backed by regional planning, suggests that existing facilities are not keeping pace with contemporary facility expectations. In addition, this research identified an insufficient number of grounds (particularly in metropolitan areas) to provide for the sports continued and sustained growth. Consultation with local government highlighted that the two key facility issues facing many municipalities were player change rooms that cater for female participation followed by provision of lighting to meet minimum training standards. It is also recognised LGAs also face competing investment priorities, funding pressures and a broader focus to accommodate a range of sports in facility renewal and development.

Based on over 300 facility audit outcomes from completed regional plans, AFL Victoria estimates that up to 80% of change rooms across the State do not have suitable change rooms to accommodate the extensive growth in female participation. Regional planning has also identified that 39% of grounds in country areas and 44% of metropolitan areas do not adequately meet minimum standards for training lights (50 lux or greater).

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 identified as a key issue by both local government and community football leagues.

School venues provide opportunity to capitalize on participation growth, provide flexible competition structures

and address access issues in land locked municipalities or where ground shortages exist due to rapid participation growth. Partnerships with schools to improve access and identify mutually beneficial facility projects will be a key focus for the sport moving forward.

In addition, over a third of leagues across the State 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:

- Support the prioritisation, planning and funding processes of player and umpire change room upgrades, based on current provision and projected female participation to cater for unisex use.
- Progressively upgrade existing facilities to meet standards outlined in the AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines.
- Use the AFL National Sports Facility Auditor database and audit program to collect, update and monitor facility provision of every facility (and geographic location), and its 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. Playing level lighting will also be prioritised in key locations to increase usage opportunities and address participation issues and venue availability.
- 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, with a target to provide at least one synthetic ground surface within each AFL Victoria region / commission.
- Identify and support the implementation of innovative demonstration projects to show the value of synthetic surfaces to maximise ground capacity and usage outcomes.
- Work collaboratively with the Victorian Government to identify joint partner strategies to increase access to school grounds for community football, including pilot programs, demonstration projects and joint facility investment opportunities.
- Support school and sport partnerships at the local level to capitalise on school ground access opportunities, including promotion of best practice partnerships to local government, leagues and clubs.
- Work with other sports and facility managers to encourage access at non-traditional football venues to address ground shortages.
- 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.
- Support leagues and clubs to manage facility access to support participation growth, including female participation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

PLAN AND DEVELOP NEW FACILITIES IN KEY GROWTH AREAS ACROSS THE STATE

A RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Of Melbourne's growth between 2016 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 Victoria's growth to 2031.

Outside metropolitan Melbourne, significant growth is occurring through green field developments in the regional municipalities of Bendigo, Geelong, Ballarat, Macedon Ranges, 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 from current football participation analysis aligned with projected population growth, indicates that the equivalent of 90+ new football grounds are required in Victoria to 2022 (more if participation was able to be increased). It is pleasing that LGA's acknowledge a similar need with 98 grounds planned across 34 municipalities.

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:

- Through regional planning with LGAs, develop specific plans 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 local government and the Victorian Planning Authority on the design of new facilities.
- Promote case studies of successful facility provision models in growth areas through the football community and to government partners.
- Continue to promote the use of synthetic surfaces in key growth area locations to support carrying capacity of grounds.
- Advocate for appropriate levels of open space provision to be set aside in new residential developments.
- Continue to work closely with Netball Victoria and Cricket Victoria as key partners in the planning of venue use and upgrades given we share more grounds and facilities with these sports than any other.
- Continue to work closely with other sports and users to plan new and upgraded ovals and facilities as applicable on a site by site basis.
- 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.
- Continue to support the Club Establishment Fund to provide seed funding for the establishment of new football clubs.
- Use the AFL's geographic information and mapping system to identify key strategic sites in growth areas that best meet new catchment areas and avoid duplication with existing facility catchments.



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.

35% of leagues rate their accommodation as poor to very poor with a further 50% planning 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.

Talent is a key strategic priority for AFL Victoria to 2023, driven by Victoria consistently providing 50% of the talent pool for the national draft, exemplifying the value of talent programs in this State.

With this in mind and the expansion of each TAC Cup Program to incorporate a female program as well as the inaugural VFL Women's competition that commenced in 2016, there is a clear need to provide appropriate talent pathway venues.

Identifying key locations and developing partnerships with facility providers, such as universities, to support club academies and regional hubs provides opportunity to invest in venues that are built fit for purpose and include access to the full suite of player facility needs such as gymnasiums and recovery amenities. Such partnerships have potential to expand the player offering to include accommodation and education programs.

Finally, as the birthplace of Australian football our facilities represent over 100 years of participation. Committing to facility preservation at landmark sites acknowledges this extensive history and protects our heritage for the future.

OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

AFL Victoria will work collaboratively with our partners to:

- Identify suitable locations for TAC Cup venues/regional hubs with consideration of potential partnerships with existing facility providers, player catchment areas and travel, accommodation and education opportunities.
- Implement a venue improvement program for second tier (State League) venues to identify facility gaps, facility development and funding opportunities that supports player pathways and implementation of female football at the elite level.
- Explore opportunities for year round training access for State League Clubs or access to summer training venues.

- Continue 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.
- Support investment into recognised landmark sites to protect the sports' heritage.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

ENSURE FACILITIES ARE CATERING FOR THE DIVERSITY OF PARTICIPANTS, PARTICULARLY FEMALE PARTICIPANTS, ATTRACTED TO OUR GAME.

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, in particular female player and official participation. One in five new umpires to the game are female and our statistics report that over half of existing venues do not provide female umpire change facilities.

Catering for female participation is a key priority for our sport if participation opportunities are to be harnessed and we are committed to working with LGAs and leagues to support the sustainable growth of female football.

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 players and umpires.
- Incorporate the use of Universal Design principles and the Preferred Facility Guidelines Amenities Upgrades for Unisex Use in the design and development of football facilities.
- Develop innovative and responsive funding for best practice unisex projects.
- 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 shared community and football outcomes.
- Promote the findings from the Value of a Community Football Club and the AFL Female Football Club Guide to encourage inclusiveness and diversity at the club level.

IF WE WANT CLUBS TO PROVIDE FOR PLAYERS, VOLUNTEERS, OFFICIALS, SUPPORTERS AND SPECTATORS AND BE VIBRANT, SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING THEN PROVISION OF UNISEX CHANGE ROOMS AND MULTI-USE SOCIAL/COMMUNITY ROOMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO DELIVER THESE OUTCOMES.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

CONTINUE TO ENHANCE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT (PARTICULARLY LOCAL GOVERNMENT) IN THE PLANNING AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES

THE CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL 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 \$13 million in football facility development (outside of AFL club facilities) to a combined value of \$210 million in facility investment in Victoria in the last 10 years. This investment has been in partnership with governments at all levels, our leagues and their clubs, supporting more than 800 clubs to develop their facilities.

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 780 projects, delivering more than \$13 million in grants and \$210 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:

- Partner with local government to collaboratively deliver regional facility plans across all AFL Victoria regions commissions and leagues to ensure facility provision upgrade and renewal is strategically planned for and maximises funding and investment opportunities.
- 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.
- Collaborate with the AFL to review the *AFL Preferred Facilities Guidelines* to incorporate greater flexibility around amenity provision that better supports local government access to funding and investment.

- Continue to provide funding in partnership with Government at all levels to strategically important football facility projects.
- Work with the Victorian Government to maximize availability in funding and flexibility within funding programs and categories.
- Continue to advocate to clubs the importance of setting aside funds to assist with investing in facility developments.
- Maintain the AFL Victoria Local Government Reference Group to advise on key issues affecting football that relate to local government functions and services and support the development of LGA reference groups at the local level.
- 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.
- Continue to implement the 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:

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 football.

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.

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 local government and the football community to deliver a greater range of projects across the state that are consistent with our strategy.

In addition to using new tools and resources, AFL Victoria will continue to monitor progress of strategies and actions included within the Heartland Strategy, as well as introduce a monitoring program for regional planning that provides additional evidence of successes and achievements gained through collaborative planning approaches.

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 450,000 participants in football's heartland of Victoria.

FROM 2017, FACILITY AUDITING AND MAPPING TOOLS AND RESOURCES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO AFL VICTORIA STAFF, REGIONAL COMMISSIONS AND COMMUNITY FOOTBALL LEAGUES TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM WHICH TO EFFECTIVELY PLAN AND SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF FACILITY IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.





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