



GROWING THE HEARTLAND

Football Facilities Development Strategy **2022-2027**

The AFL acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge we play our great game on this land and respect the cultures of all First Peoples, their contribution to our nation and contribution to the game of Australian Rules Football.



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FOREWORD

Since the last iteration of AFL Victoria's '*Growing the Heartland*' Strategy (2017-2022), Australian football in Victoria has seen growth, change, challenge and triumph, from grassroots through to state levels.

Growing the Heartland (2017-2022) inspired sector wide collaboration to deliver outcomes through coordinated facility development and investment. Over this period, AFL Victoria estimates that approximately \$374 million was collectively invested across 460+ known football related infrastructure projects. The majority by our State and Local Government partners.

Much has happened over the past six years. The game has experienced continued growth (60% in female participation), greater diversity in programming, impacts from COVID-19 (particularly in seasons 2020 and 2021), severe weather events and natural disasters.

These trends, along with other societal and environmental changes all contribute to the need to refresh and realign our strategic priorities for the next five years via a new **Growing the Heartland Strategy (2022-2027)**.

The 2022-2027 Growing the Heartland Strategy aims to align AFL Victoria's facility objectives with the AFL's National Infrastructure Plan – Towards 2030, to create a clear framework to initiate, improve and deliver football infrastructure in the right locations to meet changing and growing community needs.

Our refreshed strategic direction focuses on three clear goals and is supported by 16 key priorities:

- **Goal 1: Build the capacity of community football.**
- **Goal 2: Enhance elite, state league and talent infrastructure.**
- **Goal 3: Drive innovation and growth.**

To support the delivery of Growing the Heartland (2022-2027), AFL Victoria, supported by the AFL, has assembled a facility development and investment advocacy team that will drive the collaborative partnerships required to deliver on our goals and objectives. The continued role and expertise of the AFL Victoria Local Government (LGA) Reference Group will also be instrumental in guiding our priorities and state-wide collaboration.

In addition, the AFL and AFL Victoria will continue to invest in programs that support opportunities for all participants and assist in activating facilities.

The AFL at a national level has recently committed \$5 million to phase one of its 2022 Women and Girls Action Plan, in addition to an \$8 million support package for community football nationally to support post COVID-19 recovery efforts.

On behalf of AFL Victoria, I would like to thank Government at all levels and the broader football community for their ongoing support to drive our great game forward.

We all look forward to seeing the game flourish over the coming years and maintain our position as Victoria's most popular sport.

Sincerely,

Ben Kavanagh
Head of AFL Victoria



AFL VICTORIA'S PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

AFL Victoria exists to support community football across the state. Getting back to football post COVID-19 is at the top of the 2022-2027 agenda. Capturing the next generation of footballers is also paramount to the game's long-term sustainability and success. We aim to achieve this through targeting more women and girls, attracting more Auskick participants and providing a greater focus on Active Schools.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS	AFL Victoria exists to support community football across the state.		
OUR FOCUS AREAS	Participation Attract, deliver, transition and retain football participants.	Community football Support and provide community football with capability, advocacy and financial investment.	Partnerships, facilities and government Strong partnerships that foster the success of football.
OUR OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > We attract and retain participants through the delivery of Auskick, schools and retention and transition programs. > We deliver bespoke programs specifically designed to engage multicultural, Indigenous, disability and LGBTQI+ participants. > We promote the game on behalf of the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > We create and govern the rules, regulations, policies and processes that maintain the integrity, safety and accessibility of our game. > We attract, educate and develop resources to help our coaches, umpires, volunteers and administrators. > We provide funding opportunities for community football. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > We work with stakeholders to provide well located, accessible and welcoming football facilities that grow and enhance the game. > We advocate and partner with all levels of government to support the needs of community football. > We create meaningful connection for our partners to strengthen community football and participation in Victoria.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Football's Victorian heart continues to beat strong - from the Mallee to Melbourne, Bairnsdale to Ballarat, Swan Hill to the Surf Coast, football venues are home to more than 232,000 participants who use 962 football venues state-wide.

Australian football is big in Victoria, that is why it is known as 'The Heartland'.

With over 160 years of history, it is no surprise that Victoria is host to 46% of all Australian football facilities and community club participants nationally. Along with our rich history and significant share of the game nationally, AFL Victoria also supports 1,242 community football clubs, 76 community football leagues and 77,000 volunteers.

All sports in Victoria have experienced considerable change over recent years. Following a successful decade of growth, and more recently a period of stabilisation through COVID-19, AFL Victoria is re-focused on continuing to grow The Heartland and build on its history of successful planning, partnerships and investment into community infrastructure. Our attention is also turned towards fostering participation and development, as well as supporting volunteers, households and schools to remain engaged in the game at all levels.

Facilities and amenities to support our focus and growth continue to be integral. The AFL's national vision for football facilities is to enable the provision of well positioned, welcoming, accessible, fit-for-purpose football facilities that support our game's strategic priorities. AFL Victoria supports this national direction through the goals, objectives and strategic priorities identified within this Strategy (pages 16 to 21).

In meeting the needs of Australian football in Victoria, and ensuring the sport supports communities in all metropolitan, regional and rural areas, Growing the Heartland 2022-2027 provides facility and infrastructure related responses to the following key challenges:

- **Accessing 119 new ovals for Australian football** to provide for projected growth in the next five years.
- **Catering for continued growth in female football**, on and off the field.
- **Supporting umpires and officials** with safe, welcoming and appropriate environments.
- **Creating 12-month access to targeted venues** to enable our talented and elite players to thrive.
- **Enhancing the capacity of existing facilities** and ensuring they are fit for their purpose and level of use.
- **Balancing football, community, climate and environmental considerations** when making investment decisions.
- **Continuing to attract partner investment**, including retention of the Country Football Netball Program*.

This Strategy aims to address these challenges through collaborative partnerships that will continue to support Australian football and healthy, active and vibrant communities.

*The Victorian Government's Country Football Netball Program (CFNP) has invested \$34.5 million in 550+ projects since 2005.

WHO CURRENTLY MAKES UP AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL IN VICTORIA



228,228 FOOTBALL PARTICIPANTS

+13,820 SINCE 2017

83% MALE
17% FEMALE



39,516

FEMALE FOOTBALL PARTICIPANTS

+11,737 SINCE 2017

5-9 YEARS

LARGEST PARTICIPATION AGE COHORT

102,000

SCHOOL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

+35,600 SINCE 2017

2,390

VFL, VFLW + NAB LEAGUE PARTICIPANTS

+1,270 SINCE 2017

44,092

AUSKICKERS

+481 SINCE 2017

800+

FOOTBALL INTEGRATION DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (FIDA) PARTICIPANTS

+191 SINCE 2017

11,809

COACHES

724 FEMALE COACHES

7,881

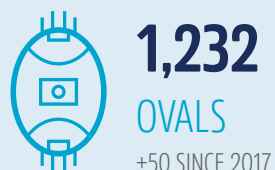
UMPIRES

864 FEMALE UMPIRES

*Note: Participation data used throughout this report is based on season 2019. Due to disruptions caused by COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, the 2019 dataset is the most complete and reflective data set of a typical season. At the time of writing this report, 2022 data had not yet been released.

WHAT CURRENTLY MAKES UP AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL FACILITIES IN VICTORIA

The AFL, via its state and territory bodies, conducts an annual audit of facilities, providing data on every community football venue in Australia. AFL Victoria's latest audit insights are summarised below and throughout this document. The Appendices section provides further analysis of the existing football facility landscape across Victoria.



28%

OVALS WITH
100+ LUX LIGHTS

+112 SINCE 2017



41%

FEMALE FRIENDLY
PLAYER CHANGE ROOMS

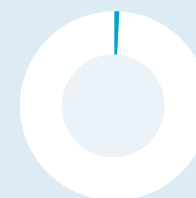
+334 SINCE 2017



52%

FEMALE FRIENDLY
UMPIRE CHANGE ROOMS

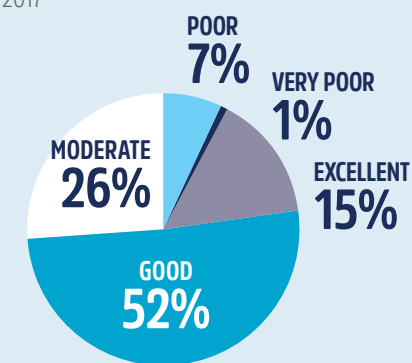
+107 SINCE 2017



1%

SITES WITH A
SYNTHETIC OVAL

+6 SINCE 2017



OVERALL OVAL
CONDITION RATING

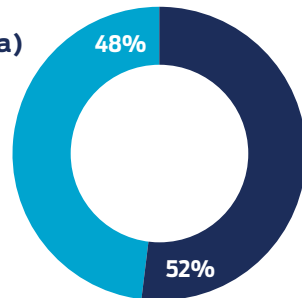
35% OVALS REQUIRE IMPROVEMENT

*Excludes AFL and AFLW match venues, professional club and high-performance training venues and potential future venues that are not currently used for Australian football.

WHERE IS AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL CURRENTLY PLAYED IN VICTORIA

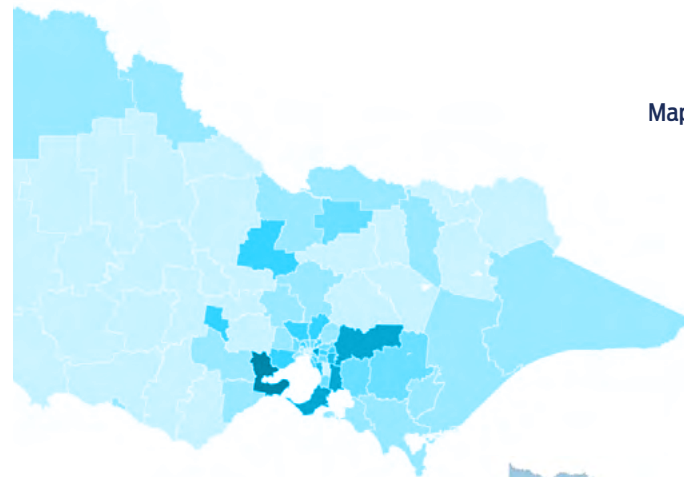
WHERE AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL IS PLAYED (by area)

Melbourne Metro **52%**
Vic Country **48%**



WHERE AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL IS PLAYED (Top 20 LGAs)

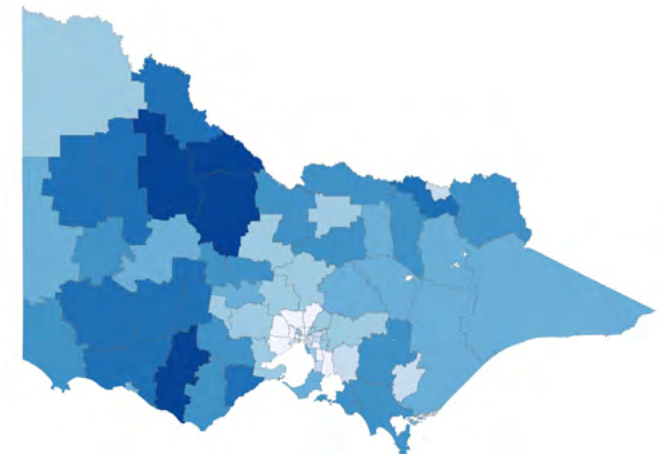
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Greater Geelong | 11. Hume |
| 2. Casey | 12. Wyndham |
| 3. Yarra Ranges | 13. Glen Eira |
| 4. Mornington Peninsula | 14. Moonee Valley |
| 5. Boroondara | 15. Bayside |
| 6. Knox | 16. Maroondah |
| 7. Kingston | 17. Ballarat |
| 8. Greater Bendigo | 18. Whittlesea |
| 9. Whitehorse | 19. Cardinia |
| 10. Banyule | 20. Frankston |



Map of overall AFL Victoria participation by LGA



Map of AFL Victoria participation rate for 5-39 year old's by LGA



STRATEGICALLY PLANNING FOR AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL FACILITIES

The AFL's facility planning hierarchy demonstrates the relationships between its plans and strategies. Each layer of the planning hierarchy plays an important role in contributing to consistent facility provision and development, from grassroots to elite levels (AFL/AFLW).



AFL National Infrastructure Plan – Towards 2030

- › Sets national priorities and investment needs for infrastructure
- › Provides the focus for elite level facilities and their requirements
- › Alignment with Federal Government and other national codes
- › Establishes industry standards, resources and tools



Growing the Heartland Strategy 2022-2027

- › National alignment with Victorian priorities and direction setting
- › Overarching state-wide goals and strategic objectives
- › Provides a basis for the development of Regional Plans



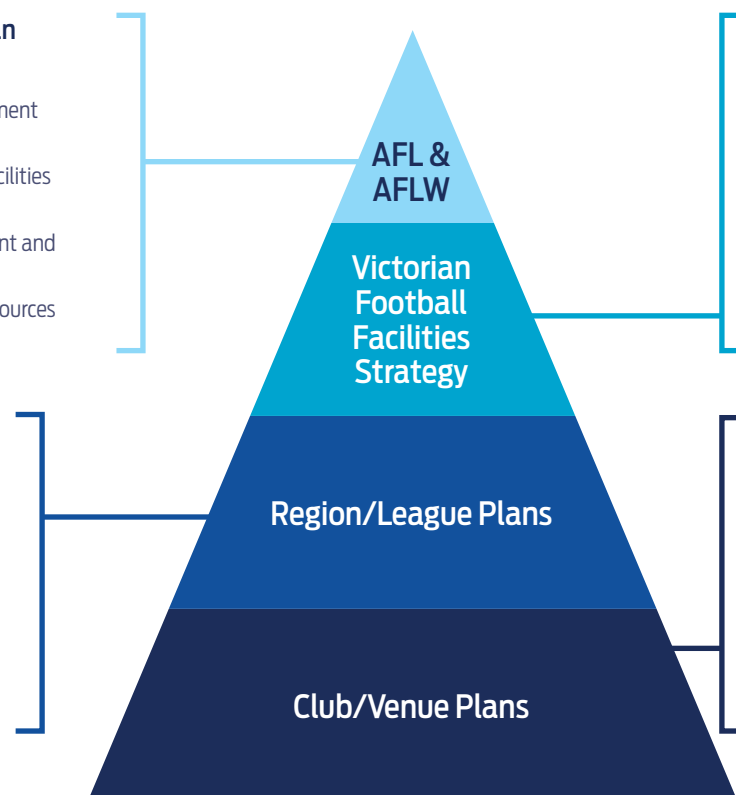
Regional Plans

- › A plan for each Country Football Region and each league in Metropolitan Melbourne
- › Consultation and collaboration with local government and football community stakeholders
- › Provides specific guidance regarding facility needs in the area



Club/Venue Plans

- › Individual plan for a club and/or venue
- › Includes collaboration with a range of user groups and led by LGAs
- › May include a Master Plan for the venue and concept design for infrastructure
- › The level of planning will differ based on site complexities and level of use



COLLECTIVE FOCUS OF FUTURE FACILITIES

Through ongoing partner consultation, AFL Victoria has identified a range of collective future focus areas that seek to deliver on joint objectives of facility users and asset managers.

- **Gender neutral amenities:** Ensuring facilities are welcoming, inclusive, accessible and encourage use by people of all-genders.
- **Multi-purpose facilities:** Providing facilities that offer access for multiple user groups to generate greater community benefit and maximise asset utilisation.
- **Growing venue capacity:** Increasing the quality and capacity of existing facilities through innovative approaches (e.g. LED lighting, synthetic surfaces, indoor venues) to create more programming opportunities.
- **Universal access:** Ensuring community facilities are accessible to people regardless of their age, ability or cultural background.
- **Joint use:** Working collaboratively with the education sector to access and enhance school and community facilities for joint use.
- **Talent and pathways:** Ensuring there are adequate facilities with 12-month access in key locations to support high-performance players, coaches and umpires in their training and development to reach their full potential.
- **Planning for growth and demand:** Investment in and prioritisation of new facilities and infrastructure upgrades where greatest need and demand is demonstrated.
- **Collaborative investment:** Enhancing and maintaining relationships between all levels of government, industry partners and sport to promote collaborative investment into facility provision and development.
- **Event delivery:** Support partners to continue improve venues that support domestic competitions and drive activities that make a positive contribution to Victoria's state-wide economic growth.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Continue to improve facility design to create more efficient facility operation, use of resources, decrease environmental impacts and recurrent costs.

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY FOOTBALL

The benefits of investing in sport and AFL extend beyond participation alone. It also provides increased social connectedness, improved mental health and wellbeing, employment outcomes, personal development and physical health.

\$1 Spent on community football in Victoria **>** **\$4.40** Return in social value¹



\$6.8B economic benefit to the national economy²



\$2.1B economic benefit to the Victorian economy³



For every AFL/AFLW player, football reaches **10 more** people in the community²



Mental health of people aged 18-24 is **significantly** better if associated with a football club²



With **over 77,000** volunteers state-wide, football's reach into Victorian households is significant



1 in 5 people engaged in the Victorian football community are female



Children and young people who participate in quality school sport are more physically, socially and emotionally healthy. They are also more likely to participate in sport outside of school hours and be active adults⁴

– Active Schools, Active Kids, Active Communities, Department of Education and Training (2020)

1. AFL & La Trobe University 'Value of a Community Football Club' (2015). 2. AFL 'Why Footy'. 3. SRV & KPMG 'The Value of Community Sport & Active Recreation Infrastructure' (2020).

A dynamic action shot from an Australian Rules football match. In the foreground, a player in a light blue and white uniform is running with a red Sherrin Match football. She is being tackled from behind by a player in a dark blue and teal uniform. The background shows a blurred crowd and advertising banners, including one for 'CU' and another with a blue and red logo. The text 'GROWING THE HEARTLAND STRATEGY' is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

GROWING THE HEARTLAND STRATEGY

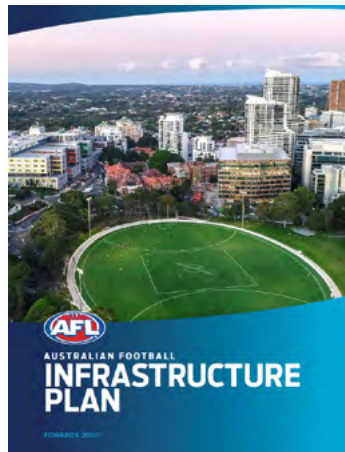
DRIVERS FOR CONTINUING TO GROW THE HEARTLAND

There are many influences driving the need to refresh and update the Growing the Heartland Strategy. These include the objectives of the AFL and its partners, trends in football, capacity of the football community, capacity of facility owners, more sophisticated data capture, and forecasted population and participation change.



NATIONAL AFL FACILITY PLANNING

The AFL's new National Infrastructure Plan – Towards 2030 provides an overarching direction for the future planning and development of Australian football facilities to 2030.



The AFL's National Infrastructure Plan – **Towards 2030** identifies that football venues have the capacity to reach most of the Australian population and positively impact communities.

Towards 2030 identifies collaborative objectives and development needs for facilities and sets the goals that will guide each State and Territory to develop their individual plans. The Plan also sets the strategic directions for elite level infrastructure and stadia used for AFL and AFLW teams.

Three overarching facility goals guide the resourcing of football infrastructure towards 2030. Under these goals, there are **ten key national facility priorities**, many of these priorities within this document are relevant and reinforced in the *Growing the Heartland Strategy 2022-2027*.

Goals	Build the capacity of community football	Enhance elite, state league and talent infrastructure	Drive innovation and growth
National facility priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve facilities to provide greater access and opportunity for our diverse football community. 2. Maximise the carrying capacity of existing ovals and the quality and functionality of supporting venue infrastructure. 3. Improve the football experience for Indigenous Australians in remote areas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver AFLW venues that support competition expansion. 2. Enhance State League and talent pathway venues to inspire and support our very best. 3. Build stadia capabilities to showcase our game. 4. Create opportunities for Indigenous talent to grow, develop and thrive on and off the field. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drive supply of new facilities in the areas of most need. 2. Innovation through indoor venues. 3. Flexible, equitable and innovative approaches to facility use.

VICTORIA'S FACILITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 2022-2027

AFL Victoria's vision, goals and objectives are aligned with the AFL's national goals for facility planning and development.

In addition, AFL Victoria has identified its own facility priorities to best meet Victoria's gaps, challenges and needs for football infrastructure.

OUR VISION	To enable well positioned, inclusive and fit-for purpose football facilities that support the sustainability of the game and AFL Victoria's strategic priorities.		
OUR GOALS	<p>Build the capacity of community football</p> <p>Create Australian football facilities that are fit-for-purpose, meet evolving local community needs and enhance the football experience for all.</p>	<p>Enhance elite, state league and talent infrastructure</p> <p>Provide high quality infrastructure and playing surfaces that meet the needs of State League competitions and talent pathways.</p>	<p>Drive innovation and growth</p> <p>Create new, bold and innovative approaches to providing venues that increase access to football for more people in more locations.</p>
OUR 5-YEAR PRIORITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Improve facilities to support and promote diversity in football. › Support inclusion through gender neutrality and universal design. › Maximise the carrying capacity of ovals. › Maximise functionality of venue infrastructure to support access and club sustainability. › Support more ovals with 100-150 lux LED lighting. › Invest in more AFL approved synthetic ovals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Deliver Venue Improvement Plans for all State League and talent venues. › 12-month access to dedicated football venues in strategic locations. › Access to AFL/W high-performance hubs. › Create opportunities for Indigenous talent to grow, develop and thrive on and off the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Plan for facilities in a regional partnership approach. › Drive the supply of new facilities in areas of most need. › Support facility provision with the education sector. › Innovate through indoor venues. › Source new and less traditional locations to activate football. › Encourage flexible, equitable and innovative approaches to facility use.

GOAL 1 - BUILD THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY FOOTBALL

Create Australian football facilities that are fit-for-purpose, meet evolving local community needs and enhance the football experience for all.

Our rationale for future focus



There are now **60% more** women and girls playing competition football than in 2017.



There are **150 more venues** used for female football competition, training and programs than in 2017.



Community football facilities **have not kept pace** with changing requirements and contemporary expectations.



57% of existing player change rooms and **51% of umpire change rooms** used for community football do not meet universal access needs.



10% of ovals in Victoria exceed the AFL's recommended "players per oval" ratio (i.e. 1:175), contributing to overuse and long-term sustainability challenges



Less than **1% of ovals** in Victoria provide AFL approved synthetic surfaces, limiting program and activation opportunities.



72% of existing ovals do not have sufficient lighting to host community club level matches (i.e. < 100 lux as per Australian Standards), limiting the safe conducting of night matches.



There are now 60% more women and girls playing competition football than in 2017.



Key priorities

- 1.1 Improve facilities to provide greater access and opportunity for the diverse football community (inclusive of players, officials, spectators and volunteers).
- 1.2 Support inclusion through gender neutral facility and amenity provision and universally designed infrastructure.
- 1.3 Maximise the carrying capacity of ovals (e.g. drainage, surface conversions, synthetic surfaces) to better support and sustain use.
- 1.4 Maximise the functionality of venue infrastructure (e.g pavilions, social spaces, spectator accommodation, digital technology) to support community access and club sustainability.
- 1.5 Support more ovals with 100-150 lux LED lighting.
- 1.6 Invest in the development and delivery of more AFL approved synthetic ovals (particularly in partnership with the education sector).



Case study: Enhancing the football experience and maximising capacity at Monbulk Recreation Reserve.

- Monbulk Recreation Reserve's vision has come to life following a collaborative master plan and \$3.8 million infrastructure development that supports and connects the community both on and off the field.
- The upgraded Monbulk Recreation Reserve delivered:
 - A new pavilion featuring unisex change rooms,
 - Upgraded playing surface
 - Oval lighting to increase capacity
- A Wall of Support highlighting mental health programs, support services and the community's contribution to the development (the Wall of Support helped to generate \$90,000 in community fundraising).
- The project engaged the Yarra Ranges Council, Victorian and Australian Governments, Monbulk Football Netball Club, Monbulk Cricket Club and the local community.
- As a result of the facility upgrade, football participation has increased 24% and female participation 550%.

GOAL 2 – ENHANCE STATE LEAGUE AND TALENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Provide high quality infrastructure and playing surfaces that meet the needs of State League competitions and talent pathways.

Our rationale for future focus



State League facilities **require costly infrastructure**. A consistent, planned and structured approach to their collective investment is required.

6/21

Only 6 of 21 State League and talent pathway venues have dedicated football only use or 12-months of the year access, restricting the capacity of talent programs.



State League **venue requirements have evolved** and now need to service a range of Australian football content (State League fixtures, AFLW, talent programs, community finals), but most don't have the capacity to cater for these additional needs.



Few venues adequately meet the AFL's Preferred Facility Guidelines. On average, State League venues are only meeting **65% of required** facility and amenity provision to conduct state level matches and high-performance activities.



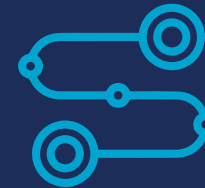
Newer and **dedicated football venues** such as Highgate Recreation Reserve are rare, and in high demand, as they provide for the full football pathway.



There is a desire from the AFL to better prepare **young Indigenous talent** for long term careers in AFL/W competitions.



Indigenous players make up **10%** of AFL lists but play an average of 20% fewer AFL games than non-indigenous draftees.



Only 6 of the 21 State League and talent pathway program venues in Victoria provide 12-month of the year access for football.



Key priorities

- 2.1** Deliver Venue Improvement Plans for all State League and talent venues to ensure they support competition and player development and provide justification for investment.
- 2.2** Identify and support the enhancement of secondary schools and universities that have potential to support and enhance youth talent pathways.
- 2.3** Negotiate and support 12-month access to facilities in strategic locations across Victoria to enable more representative squad fixtures, carnivals, training and year-round talent and community program delivery (e.g Highgate Recreation Reserve).
- 2.4** Negotiate access to existing AFL/W club high performance facilities to support youth talent, representative and Victorian team squad training.



Case study: Delivering a pathway for success through State League compliant facilities at Coburg City Oval.

- Coburg City Oval is one of the premier grounds for the Northern Metropolitan Region, originally opened in 1915, and is used by the Coburg Football Club (VFL/VFLW), EDFL Finals, Coburg Junior Football Club, Coburg FIDA, and Coburg Auskick.
- Coburg City Oval was redeveloped in 2021 to provide female friendly VFL (State League) standard change rooms and amenities for players and umpires, new function room and restored undercover grandstand.
- Redevelopment works were completed at a cost of \$6.7 million, with funding contributions provided by:
 - Australian Football Facilities Fund (AFFF) - AFL Victoria
 - Victorian Government - Moreland City Council
 - Cricket Australia
- The outcomes of the redevelopment of Coburg City Oval include:
 - The delivery of a quality talent and player pathway environment
 - Compliance with male and female State League standards
 - Enhanced club viability, sustainability and revenue growth
 - Increased participation growth
 - Improved facilities to host and cater for local league finals

GOAL 3 – DRIVE INNOVATION AND GROWTH

Create new, bold and innovative approaches to providing venues that increase access to football for more people in more locations.

Our rationale for future focus



Victoria's population between the 2016 and 2021 Census years grew by around 600,000 (5.9 million to 6.5 million). Projections indicate that it will continue to grow to 7.5 million by 2026.



Victorian football participation has **grown 15%** across Victoria since 2017.



The Metropolitan Heartland (and other localised areas) is **reaching and exceeding venue capacity**, predominately driven by strong growth in female and junior participation.



Much of Victoria's **population growth** will be experienced in Melbourne's outer growth ring, in addition to localities including Melbourne, Maribyrnong, Moreland, Mitchell and Greater Geelong.



Australian football's predominant playing age is 5 to 39. Victoria's population in this age cohort is projected to **grow by 7% over** the next five years.



At the current growth rate, demand for access to an additional 119 ovals by 2027 is projected across Victoria – **a 12% increase** in oval provision.



Opportunities to **alleviate capacity challenges** may also already exist and unlocking the potential of green spaces within schools, universities and other land areas to create shared outcomes needs to be considered.



Earlier identification of **capacity and supply issues** through partnership planning will help ensure longer-term demands are better catered for.



Indoor venues can create safe and inclusive environments to deliver inclusion programs including Wheelchair Football, AllPlay Footy and AFL Blind, in addition to year-round football activities.



Access to an additional 119 ovals for football use across Victoria will be required by 2027.



Key priorities

- 3.1 In partnership with government and the football community, continue to deliver regional football strategies across Victoria that identify the greatest areas of need and support solutions to alleviate identified challenges.
- 3.2 Support Local Government to plan for and deliver new community facilities that support sustainable football clubs and activities.
- 3.3 Support the education sector to deliver new open spaces and sporting facilities that support football activities, in particular AFL approved synthetic surfaces.
- 3.4 Investigate opportunities and potential partners to create indoor environments suitable for football to maximise year-round participation, skill development and inclusion programs.
- 3.5 Partner with land-owners / managers to develop football facilities or activate programmable spaces in less traditional settings (e.g. racecourses, golf courses and parkland precincts).
- 3.6 Connect with Melbourne's multi-cultural communities to explore opportunities for facility activation in new and diverse localities.
- 3.7 Work with the football community and Local Government to explore flexible, equitable and innovative approaches to fixturing and facility use.



Case study:

Catering for growth and innovating through synthetic surfaces at Macpherson Park Recreation Reserve

- MacPherson Park in Melton is situated within one of the fastest peri-urban growth areas on the outskirts of Melbourne.
- The \$13.3m venue redevelopment was officially opened in 2021, with Melton Football Netball Club as its primary tenant. The senior and junior clubs combined boast 430+ registered participants and had outgrown their previous facilities.
- The state-of-the-art venue now includes:
 - Two full-size floodlit football ovals
 - An junior AFL approved synthetic multi-purpose oval
 - New pavilion with 8 flexible change rooms and all gender umpire rooms
 - Club social spaces.
- Key partners that helped to transform the facility included:
 - AFL via the Australian Football Facilities Fund (AFFF)
 - Melton City Council
 - Victorian Government
- Macpherson Park Recreation Reserve redevelopment was recognised in the AFL's 2020 Ken Gannon Community Football Facility Awards, taking out the top prize.
- The delivery of this facility will help to cater for local football participation growth and create a sustainable pathway from Auskick through to senior male and female football.



WORKING TOGETHER

BRINGING PARTNERS TOGETHER, SHARING OBJECTIVES

AFL Victoria recognises the widespread support received via the Australian and Victorian Government's, Victorian Local Government Authorities and others including leagues, clubs, associations, commercial and not-for-profit partners.

It is critical that the Victorian football community and its stakeholders continue to share priorities and strive to deliver on aligned objectives and commitments over the next 5 years, particularly within the current economic climate and in the face of competing demands for investment.



SHARING INVESTMENT INTO FACILITIES

Sporting facility development projects are delivered through partnerships consisting of a range of stakeholders and funding contributors.

All levels of government provide facility development funding opportunities. Federal and State Governments provide funding via targeted grant programs that aim to increase participation and access to sport and recreation activities.

Local Governments' are the primary asset owner and manager of most community sporting facilities and provide a range of funding opportunities through grants, capital works programs and operating subsidies.

Partnerships between other sports, community and government stakeholders will continue to be vital in delivering the facilities needed to support Australian football participation.

\$374M

Estimated investment in 460+ football facility projects since 2017

\$34.5M

Total value of the Victorian Government Country Football Netball Program (CFNP)



MONITORING PERFORMANCE

Formal evaluation of strategic directions and key priorities by AFL Victoria and partners will be required to ensure ongoing and consistent alignment with government, football and community objectives.

To monitor and evaluate progress, and ensure collective strategic objectives are met, AFL Victoria will engage with stakeholders and partners via the following mechanisms over the life of the Strategy:

- > Biennial AFL Victoria LGA forum
- > AFL Victoria LGA Reference Group
- > Delivery of new, and updated regional football plans
- > Annual auditing and updating of facility data

Evaluation of strategic outcomes will also identify key successes and overall benefits for football and communities. The following monitoring and review process will be led by AFL Victoria to ensure that Growing the Heartland remains relevant for all stakeholders over the 2022-2027 period.



ONGOING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



APPENDICES

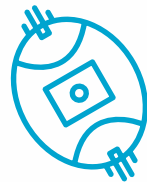
AFL FACILITY HIERARCHY

The AFL's Facility Hierarchy classifies venues into six levels based on the purpose of the facility and provision of its amenities. The Hierarchy plays an important role to ensure that the assigned level of facility matches, or dictates, the provision of infrastructure and type of use.

Junior/School	Remote	Local	Regional	State	Elite
Junior/School facilities are used for the introductory forms of Australian football such as Auskick, junior or school competitions and act as overflow training venues.	Remote grounds cater for local level competition held in remote communities. Provision at these grounds is generally a dirt playing field with no or limited player, official or spectator amenities.	Local facilities are designed to cater for local level competition within individual suburbs, townships, or municipalities and are usually also the 'home' of a seasonal club.	Regional level facilities service a collection of suburbs, townships or geographic areas within a municipality (or across municipal borders) and often cater for more than one code or activity.	State level facilities primarily service State Leagues and elite underage competitions and are seen as second tier competition facilities.	Elite level facilities provide match day venues for regular, elite AFL/W seasonal fixtures and other major events.

LOCAL LEVEL FOOTBALL FACILITIES SNAPSHOT

The following summary provides an overview of current facility provision for local, community level football. These facilities are designed to cater for local level competition within individual suburbs, townships or municipalities and are usually the 'home' of a seasonal club.



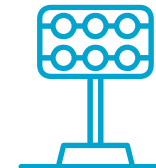
- > **1135** AFL ovals for community football across 889 venues
- > **21%** of ovals meet the preferred minimum length for community level football
- > **13%** of ovals meet the preferred minimum width for community level football
- > **64%** of grounds are rated good to excellent surface condition



- > **1994** player change rooms
- > **95%** of sites provide player change rooms
- > **71%** of player change rooms meet preferred minimum size recommendations
- > **87%** of venues provide umpire change facilities
- > **77%** of umpire change facilities are in moderate to excellent condition



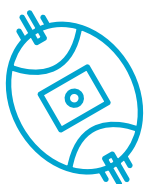
- > **40%** of player change rooms cater for all genders
- > **52%** of umpire change rooms cater for all genders



- > **939** AFL ovals provide sports lighting
- > **74%** of sports lighting does not meet recommended standard to host night games i.e. 100 lux
- > **21%** of sports lighting does not meet minimum recommendations for training i.e. 50 lux

REGIONAL LEVEL FOOTBALL FACILITIES SNAPSHOT

The following provides an overview of facility provision for 'regional' level facilities. Regional level facilities service a collection of suburbs, townships or geographic areas within a municipality (or across municipal borders) and often cater for more than one code or activity. These venues are also often used for talent and pathway programs as well as league finals and special events.



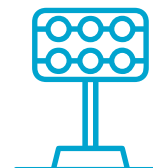
- > **70** AFL ovals for regional level football across 52 venues
- > **44%** of ovals meet the preferred minimum length for regional level football
- > **30%** of ovals meet the preferred minimum width for regional level football
- > **84%** of grounds are rated good to excellent surface condition



- > **125** player change rooms
- > **94%** of venues provide player change rooms
- > **63%** of player change rooms meet preferred minimum size recommendations
- > **89%** of venues provide umpire change facilities
- > **38%** of umpire change facilities are in moderate to excellent condition



- > **46%** of player change rooms cater for all genders
- > **59%** of umpire change rooms cater for all genders

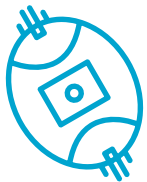


- > **63** AFL ovals provide sports lighting
- > **67%** of sports lighting does not meet recommended standard to host night games i.e. 150+ lux
- > **52%** of sports lighting does not meet minimum recommendations for training i.e. 100+ lux



STATE LEAGUE AND TALENT PATHWAY FACILITIES SNAPSHOT

The following provides an overview of facility provision for 'state' level facilities. State level facilities primarily service State Leagues and elite underage (NAB League) competitions and are seen as second tier competition facilities to the AFL and AFLW.



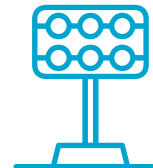
- > **26** AFL ovals for state level football across 21 venues
- > **81%** of grounds are rated good to excellent surface condition



- > **55** player change rooms
- > **100%** of venues provide player change rooms
- > **40%** of player change rooms meet preferred minimum size recommendations
- > **86%** of venues provide umpire change facilities
- > **71%** of umpire change facilities are in good to excellent condition



- > **58%** of player change rooms cater for all genders
- > **81%** of umpire change rooms cater for all genders



- > **25** AFL ovals provide sports lighting
- > **92%** of sports lighting does not meet recommended standard to host night games i.e. 300+ lux
- > **54%** of sports lighting does not meet minimum recommendations for training i.e. 100+ lux





