SPACES TO SHARE

AFL AT HARNESS RACING FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

Participation growth in Australian Football has been significant in recent years. The AFL is actively seeking new and innovative ways of providing spaces to accommodate and support this strong growth to ensure all Australians can participate in our great game year-round.

Sharing spaces with other sports and organisations is common practice for the AFL. The AFL continually explores ways to maximise the use and value of community sporting infrastructure with a range of stakeholders.

One way our communities approach sharing facilities has been the integration of AFL facilities at harness racing precincts across Australia where AFL spaces are established within the infield of harness racing tracks providing for AFL training and competition at both a senior and junior level.

Shared spaces within harness racing precincts have resulted in increased activation of these community assets, maximising the infrastructure and amenities at the precinct, and addressing local AFL participation needs.

The following venues demonstrate how harness racing precincts have created integration of AFL facilities to support their local community.

WIVENHOE RECREATION GROUND, WIVENHOE TAS

The Wivenhoe Recreation Ground is in the northwest region of Tasmania, boasting gorgeous views over Bass Strait, and is a crucial venue for Tasmanian football in the area. The site consists of a harness racing track, infield sports ground, grandstand and various amenity buildings to service the precinct users.

Burnie Harness Racing Club conducts approximately eight meets at the site from October to March annually. The centre of the track is used by the Yeoman and South Burnie Football Clubs, the Natone Cricket Club and the Darwin Football Association. The facility is utilised as a junior overflow training venue and hosts football competition for two clubs as well as the grand final for the Darwin Football Association. Upgrades to the grandstand and changerooms were completed in early 2025 to support the football use at the site.



BRIAN WEIGHTMAN COMPLEX, MILDURA VIC

The Brian Weightman Complex, also known as the Mildura Recreation Reserve, is considered to be a major sporting and recreation precinct for the regional city of Mildura located in northwest Victoria. The precinct is the home to many sport and recreation clubs and organisations. This precinct includes a harness racing track, three AFL / cricket ovals and a variety of other amenities to support the a range of community activities and events such as the Mildura Show.

Brian Weightman Oval sits in the middle of the harness racing track and was the home of the Sunraysia region AFL grand finals for over 70 years with a long history of supporters loving to sit in the grandstand and watch their local club.

The precinct supports the operations of two AFL clubs, Mildura FNC and Imperial FNC, and the Sunraysia Football Umpires Association. The site also supports the SFNL academy and the Bendigo Pioneers.

Scheduling of users and precinct facilities is a critical component of the successful operations of the venue to ensure equitable and safe access. For example, in winter the harness racing track is used on Monday and Friday nights whilst the inner track area is accessed Tuesday to Thursday for AFL use.

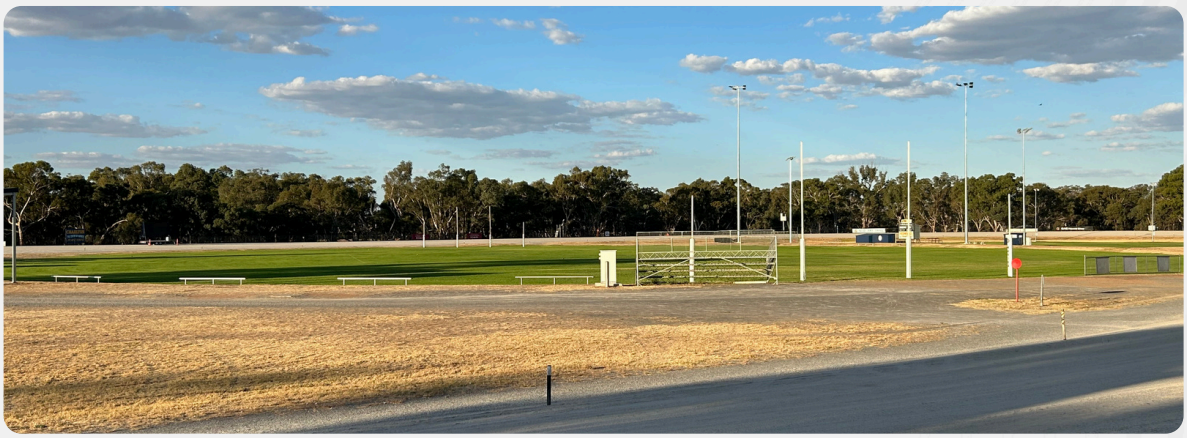
"We are extremely proud of our long history at the Brian Weightman Ovals complex so much so that we are investing club funds into the redevelopment of the third oval and the social rooms." **- Dale Stafford, President, Imperial FNC**



CHARLTON PARK, CHARLTON VIC

Charlton Park Community Bank Complex is a sporting precinct and community hub in the small town of Charlton in north central Victoria. The sporting arena is set amongst the Avoca River, creating a wonderful backdrop for all events. Charlton Park is home to the Angling, Cricket, Football, Harness Racing, Hockey, Netball, Pony and Tennis Clubs as well as the Charlton Agricultural and Pastoral Society.

In 2019, the state-of-the-art pavilion was opened as a community-built facility that enhances the natural environment, whilst providing a venue for functions, conferences, meetings as well a variety of other private and community events. This facility demonstrates how the community can come together to provide a vibrant and active space catering for the health and well-being of its community.



BRIDGETOWN SPORTS GROUND, BRIDGETOWN WA

Bridgetown is located in the south west region of Western Australia, approximately 270 kilometres south of Perth. The Bridgetown Sports Ground provides a home for the Bridgetown Football Club, Bridgetown Cricket Club and the Bridgetown Harness Racing Club and consists of a senior football/cricket ground, harness racing track and associated shared amenities. The grounds are also used for camping during events in the town.

Bridgetown Football Club joined the Lower South West Football League in 1959. The inclusion of the football club has supported the ongoing operations and maintenance of the site facilities and ensuring the sustainability of the precinct to support all users at the site. A good example of this is the recent lighting and irrigation upgrades at the oval which the Football Club was the major financial partner in the project.



CONSIDERATIONS

The above sites demonstrate the value and opportunity of harness racing and football clubs working together. Key early planning considerations when exploring the opportunity of harness racing and AFL working together include:

- Clearly determine the land owner and manager and initial interest in exploring joint access
- Consider the size of green space and amenities available at the site and carefully consider the community football needs and the ability of the site to service those needs
- Identify the current site users and times available for site access with consideration to the number of harness racing events and if training access is applicable
- Seek to understand any restrictions onsite which may limit the potential site use such as facility access points, lighting, and parking
- Consider the condition of facilities and the potential level of funding required to make the space safe and suitable for AFL programming
- Review all duty of care and occupational health and safety issues which relate to the harness racing industry and the identified site



To find out more about how innovative approaches have been used to maximise the carrying capacity of Australian Football, please reach out to **bnground@afl.com.au**