



Department of Environment Land, Water & Planning

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CAULFIELD RACECOURSE RESERVE - OUTDOOR CINEMA

Thank you for your email of 25 October 2015 to the Hon Lisa Neville MP, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water about public land manager consent for an outdoor cinema at Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. As this matter is in my area of responsibility, the minister has asked that I respond on her behalf.

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve

The Caulfield Racecourse Reserve (the reserve) is managed by the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust (the trustees). The trustees are appointed to manage the reserve for the purpose of racecourse, public recreation and public park under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Implementation of VAGO recommendations

Following the tabling in Parliament of the VAGO report Management and Oversight of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve in September 2014, the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) wrote to the Victorian Auditor General accepting all 15 recommendations. **Recommendations 1-9 of the report are actions to be taken by the trustees of the reserve.**

DELWP has been meeting regularly **with representatives of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust** to discuss progress towards implementation of the VAGO recommendations. **Recommendations 10-15 of the report are actions to be taken by DELWP.** They include the introduction of 'more rigorous oversight' of the management of the reserve and a 'comprehensive reporting framework'.

Accordingly, a 'Reporting Framework' **has been developed for the Trustees.** The Framework, which forms the basis of DELWP's increased oversight of the management of the reserve and establishes a performance monitoring and reporting regime for the management of the reserve. Its purpose is to ensure that:

- appropriate action is taken by the Trustees to satisfy the Recommendations in the VAGO report; and
- **in future**, the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve is managed in accordance with modern standards of good public sector governance, consistent with the principles and obligations in the Public Administration Act 2004.

The framework sets out:

- reporting arrangements, in the form of written reports and meetings; and
- reporting elements, which focus on VAGO Recommendations 1 to 9 and related requirements.

Via the new reporting framework, the trustees have advised DELWP that it has engaged landscape architects John Patrick Pty Ltd to prepare a Strategic Land Management Plan (SLMP). This is pleasing news, as it will assist the trustees to improve public access to the reserve and to ensure that the reserve is managed in accordance with all of its purposes. It will also assist the trustees to identify the land to be utilised as public open space and the land to be leased/licensed to the Melbourne Racing Club (MRC) in the future.

If you would like any additional information about the status of the SLMP, may I suggest that you contact the Secretary to the Trust C/-Level 1,25 Flinders Lane, Melbourne Vic 3000 or email CRRTrustees@bigpond.com.

The trustees advise that it has met with the MRC recently to consider possible upgrades and improved access points and signage at the reserve, with improved signage to be installed in the near future. At the same time, the Trust has also concentrated their efforts on developing and implementing a governance framework that is consistent with modern day governance standards, including the development and implementation of the governance policies specified in the Reporting Framework. This approach would be consistent with VAGO's recommendations and would better position the trustees to manage the reserve in the public interest. I am pleased to confirm that the trustees have adopted a set of governance rules, including a conflict of interest register, so that it is best placed to consider the recommendations of the SLMP and any other management decisions in relation to the reserve.

The trustees have previously been unable to agree on a number of matters which led the Auditor-General to recommend that the department 'explore...alternative management arrangements for the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve so that it is better placed to meet the racing and community purposes of the Crown grant'.

I can confirm that the department is considering a wide range of future management options for the reserve, including legislative changes that may be required to meet the VAGO recommendation. A bi-partisan working group is being established that will:

- Independently assess implementation to date against recommendations 1-14 of the VAGO report;
- Identify options for accelerating implementation, where necessary; and
- Identify alternative management arrangements based on the arrangements in place for other similar mixed-purpose facilities and provide the Minister with options to progress.

Outdoor Cinema

DELWP received an application for public land manager consent for the use of the reserve as an outdoor cinema. DELWP assesses proposals based on their consistency with the purpose of the reservation and any potential impact on the environmental values of the area. The use of the site as an outdoor cinema was considered to be consistent with the purpose of the reservation and there are expected to be minimal environmental impacts.

As a result of the Trust focusing its energies on addressing the VAGO recommendations, the negotiations with the MRC regarding any proposed lease/license arrangements have slowed and may take some time to finalise. In this context, as the outdoor cinema proposal will provide a benefit to the local community, DELWP revoked the original public land manager consent that contained a number of conditions and re-issued it without those restrictions. As part of the assessment process, DELWP ensured that the Trust were supportive of the proposal and that appropriate land management arrangements are in place. In the meantime, the MRC continues to pay rent in line with its previous lease.

Many routine administrative approvals are delegated to senior officers of DELWP, to ensure that requests are responded to in a timely manner. I apologise for the administrative oversight regarding the letter revoking the previous public land manager consent. As with any office environment with a high turnover of correspondence, occasionally administrative errors occur. Staff from the Port Phillip Region have been made aware of this issue and will make every effort to ensure that this does not happen again.

Planning Scheme

In relation to your planning scheme enquiry, it is the responsibility of Glen Eira City Council as the administrator of the planning scheme in that area to determine what is an allowed use under the Glen Eira Planning Scheme. Please contact Glen Eira City Council on 9524 3333 for further advice.

DELWP will continue to work with the trustees to implement all the VAGO recommendations, including the exploration of alternative management arrangements for the Reserve to ensure that this important area of Crown land is managed appropriately and in accordance with the expectations of the local and wider community.

If you would like to discuss this matter in more detail, or would like any additional information, please call Chris Padovani, Regional Manager – Land, Planning & Approvals, Port Phillip on 9210 9458 or email chris.padovani@delwp.vic.gov.au.

Thank you again for raising this matter with the minister.

Yours sincerely



Kelly Crosthwaite
Regional Director Port Phillip

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