

27 November 2003

*Chairman Club*

The Hon ME Delahunty MP  
Minister for Planning  
Level 17  
8 Nicholson Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

*Our Reference: 8020905L29*

Dear Minister

**RE: VRC MASTER PLAN**

Firstly, thank you for your letter of congratulations regarding the Melbourne Cup Carnival. We at the VRC are delighted with the success this year, but are determined to ensure that we continue to raise the bar, recognising the importance of this event to Melbourne and the State of Victoria.

We understand that you are in possession of officer reports prepared by the Department of Sustainability and Environment assessing five town planning applications associated with the VRC's Master Plan. As you know, the objective of the Master Plan is to clearly establish Flemington as the finest racing and training facility in Australia.

Please find attached a copy of our "Brief to Premier" which provides a summary of these applications.

As you are aware, these applications have been subject to a thorough public consultation process. The VRC has spent a considerable amount of time and expense to ensure that all the relevant State and Local government authorities, resident action groups and the wider community have been informed about the applications and aware of the relevant planning and related issues involved.

official sponsors:



victoria racing club

This has included two public information forums, meetings with the City of Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong, workshops with the three local resident action groups and extensive advertising as part of the application process. As a result of this consultation, many concessions were made including the redesign of the proposed roadworks to Smithfield Road, the provision of improved public parkland along the Maribyrnong River, reduced trading hours of the proposed entertainment facility and a further reduction of gaming machines. The Club has also offered to facilitate a community race day for the local residents.

Despite the consultation and concessions, a number of objections were lodged to each of the applications. We fear that despite each application having strong technical merit that third party appeal rights will be used to delay the commencement of these works. However, we note that Melbourne Water and VicRoads have supported the applications.

In particular, any delay of the floodwall, roadworks and open lot car park applications would have a significant impact on the future operation and upgrade of the Flemington Racecourse. Ideally, these works would occur prior to the 2004 Spring Carnival to protect Flemington from flooding (a midweek race meet was abandoned in July of this year due to rising water), to eradicate the severe traffic congestion during the Cup Carnival and to facilitate the construction of the new VRC head office.

Importantly, the provision of the floodwall would enable the reconstruction of the Flemington racetrack subsequent to the 2004 Melbourne Cup Carnival. This is a critical element of our Master Plan given the current inconsistencies with the management of the track and recent local and international criticism from some quarters of the racing industry. The Club cannot risk the cost and time associated with upgrading the racetrack without first protecting the course from flooding.

We believe that the operation of the Flemington Racecourse is of state significance. The record attendance at this year's Melbourne Cup Carnival was a total of 376,767 people. Furthermore the Carnival makes a significant contribution to the economy of Victoria estimated at over \$300 million (double that of the Australian F1 Grand Prix). On this basis we respectfully request that you call-in the planning applications under Section 97B of the Planning and Environment Act.

We note that of the five applications the proposed entertainment facility is the least integral to the functioning of the Flemington Racecourse. On that basis and in light of the economic and social issues associated with the installation of gaming machines, we would understand if this application was required to run its course through the normal planning system and VCAT process.

However, we note that in this case a planning permit is not required for the installation of gaming machines given its occupation of less than 25% of the total floor area of the venue and essentially involves the transfer of 70 of the 86 existing machines from within the racecourse to the new location also on the course. We also note that approval for the installation of the gaming machines is subject to a separate process considered by the Victorian Casino & Gaming Authority.

We are aware of the General Practice Note for Ministerial Powers of Intervention in Planning and Heritage Matters and we are confident that the applications meet the relevant criteria.

The VRC looks forward to the opportunity of meeting with you to outline the merits of the Flemington Masterplan and the current planning applications.

Yours sincerely,



**ROB FITZROY**  
**CHAIRMAN**

RMF:VRMDG\MINDELA