



RDA Pakenham Master Plan – Lease Extension Proposal 2024

(Addendum to Application Submission)

Introduction

Riding for the Disabled Australia (RDA) is a nonprofit organisation that dates back approximately 60 years. It provides opportunities for anyone with a disability to enjoy safe, healthy, therapeutic, horse related activities in Australia.

RDA Pakenham is one of 34 RDA Centres located across Victoria that are affiliated with Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria (RDAV) and was developed following the closure of the Officer Centre in 2018.

Cardinia Shire Council (Council) offered a lease to RDAV over the current site at 775 Five Mile Rd., Pakenham which was taken up that same year for the use of the RDA Pakenham Centre. The lease was originally dated 11 July 2018 and is currently due to expire 31 May 2027 after a 4-year lease renewal was signed in 2023.

Proposal

RDAV is now seeking a long-term lease of the site (20-25years) to allow future development to occur for operation by its RDA Pakenham Centre, strongly aligned with various Council objectives and plans, as illustrated in this document.

RDA Pakenham Structure

RDA Pakenham is a Centre affiliated with RDAV. The Centre is made up of 30 volunteers including a committee of 12. The committee which meets monthly consists of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Volunteers Officer, Horse Welfare Officer, Fundraising Officer and a Maintenance Officer. The non executive committee members form sub committees under the welfare and maintenance portfolios.

The Centre has 15 registered riders who attend on Tuesdays or Thursdays each week for approximately 45 minutes of horse interaction and riding. As detailed in our earlier submission it is a labour intensive process to deliver our life changing programs to the community.

In an average week, volunteers spend 150 hours onsite in horse / rider related activities. In addition there are meetings with vets, farriers and other horse care professionals, ongoing repairs and maintenance of the facility, upgrading of shelters, gardening, fencing, hay carting, weed control etc. Offsite activities such as study and accreditation of the coaches, banking, preparing participant programs, secretarial work, purchasing hardware etc account for around another 10 hours. The total investment of volunteer time is in the order of 200 hours per week.

The volunteers, riders and carers / parents enjoy the community involvement where they come together to share experiences in a safe environment. The Bfirm viewing room is a safe place to gather and enjoy interaction with others as the riders go through their paces under the care of the coach and volunteers.

RDA Pakenham has recently acquired additional horses to meet plans for expansion. There are now nine horses in work / training. As the year unfolds and the new horses are trained the centre will seek to invite between 5 and 10 new riders. With the addition of extra horses all harvested hay is now being retained. In previous years we have been able to raise some much-needed funding by selling excess hay.

Funding

RDA Pakenham has been the beneficiary of some very generous donations. In order to commence operations we were donated a riding arena including post and rail fencing and surfacing, an office, toilet block, shipping container, water tanks, reticulated water system, fencing materials etc.

Over the last two years Bfirm Personal Training in Berwick have passed on the proceeds of their annual charity golf day held in October. The 2022 proceeds were used to construct the viewing room (no 12 on the Masterplan) that sits adjacent to the entry of the 'Sub Zero' Arena . The 2023 and 2024 proceeds have not yet been spent as we await the outcome of this lease extension process. A ramp to provide wheelchair access from the Bfirm room to the mounting area is high on our priority list. Supporters have been seeking information regarding our tenure at the site as they consider their levels of ongoing support.

Over the past twelve months with the generous support of the Pakenham Racing Club we have been able to put roofing over the day yards that are used to prepare the horses before

and after riding. Racing Victoria via their Off The Track program continue to provide funds and support for ex race horses that we are able to incorporate into our programs.

Riders pay a \$35 fee to RDA Pakenham each time they ride. We don't charge for days when riders can't attend due to weather related issues which impact our cashflow. It also has a significant impact on rider progress and horse training / exercise. The horses must be ridden and worked each week regardless. When weather prevents participants riding, our volunteers have to come back on another day to keep the horses fit and trained for their purpose.

We raise approximately \$1,500 twice a year from Bunnings BBQs

The Rotary Club of Pakenham has been very supportive with both funding and labour.. They have provided a pump and hardware for a washdown facility in addition to hardware and man hours to enable the construction of eight new shelters for the horses.

RDA Pakenham has not been a recipient of state or federal funding. From time to time we apply for smaller grants as we become aware of them with varying degrees of success.

Future

Cardinia is expanding rapidly and RDA Pakenham already has a waiting list of people wishing to access our services. We are limited by our volunteer numbers and ultimately our horse numbers. The two are intrinsically linked. Making our facilities available to other equine groups in our community has the potential to enhance both.

There is a dearth of undercover facilities in the shire that are available to the likes of Pony Clubs, Adult Riding Clubs, equine therapy providers and so on. We have been asked by some in the area if we intend to roof our arena.

Holiday programs for combined able bodied and disabled riders we believe would be educational to all participants and is high on our list if / when our facilities are not weather dependent.

A perimeter riding trail (no 5 on the Masterplan) and an obstacle course (no 14 on the Masterplan) are on a list for future development. Both are considered not only as enhancements of offerings to our participants but also attractions to others who may wish to access our facilities.

Much of our development hinges on weather proofing our arena but before we can start applying for funding we need to have the guarantee of tenure to support our case. Our initial Masterplan incorporated a separate sand arena for an undercover facility. Support received up to that point in our development gave us cause for optimism.

In the current economic climate we feel it would be more realistic to cover the existing facility. Ultimately a full roof is our goal, but even partial covering would allow some activity to occur when the weather isn't kind.

Land Use

The new Masterplan illustrates the development and use of the land area under the lease. The area that is not currently divided into paddocks is used for hay production. This is an important aspect of our current operating model and budgeting. The soil is currently depleted and requires improvement over a period of time which involves investment and funding. If it can't be developed, it is not an imperative to our ongoing viability, but it would mean budgetary adjustments ie our need to purchase hay at significant cost. As we develop, it is likely that we will require more horses which in turn will demand more paddocks and this area is part of our future development.

RDA's operations at 775 Five Mile Road have developed in a way that maximises the land use and future proofs our offering to the community with a disability.

Summary / Council alignment

The RDA facility in Cardinia is unique in that it is Council owned land under lease that has already been significantly improved by the tenant to enhance the services that it delivers to the community with a disability. These important community outcomes, in accordance with many Council plans and objectives, have been delivered despite all Management, development, improvement and maintenance delivered at the expense of the tenant (RDAV).

Capital improvements similarly have been made at no expense to the rate paying Cardinia community. Future infrastructure developments are also likely to be funded independently (although partnerships with Council, as suggested in the draft Equestrian Strategy 2023-2033 would be considered).

Regardless, no further extensive development can be considered for the site until the lease period can justify the expense.

In seeking to justify our future development and the provision of a 20-25 year lease, RDAV is also conscious of various Council planning documents which are supportive.

Council's support to the Pakenham RDA horse riding recreational program for people with disabilities via this proposal can significantly contribute to both the Cardinia Shire Council's Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, as illustrated below:

1. Council Plan:

- The Council Plan outlines the strategic direction and priorities for the Cardinia Shire. A horse-riding program aligns with several key aspects of the plan:
 - **Community Wellbeing:** By providing recreational opportunities for people with disabilities, the program promotes physical activity, social interaction, and mental well-being.
 - **Inclusion and Diversity:** The program fosters inclusivity by offering an accessible and enjoyable activity for a diverse range of community members.
 - **Recreation and Leisure:** Supporting horse riding contributes to the council's commitment to enhancing recreational options within the shire.
 - **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Collaborating with disability service providers, local riding clubs, and volunteers strengthens community partnerships.

2. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:

- The Health and Wellbeing Plan focuses on improving health outcomes for Cardinia residents. The horse-riding program directly supports this goal:
 - **Physical Health:** Horse riding is a form of exercise that enhances physical fitness, balance, and coordination.
 - **Social Connection:** Participants interact with others, reducing social isolation and promoting a sense of belonging.
 - **Mental Health:** Spending time outdoors, bonding with animals, and achieving riding goals positively impact mental well-being.
 - **Access and Equity:** The program ensures equitable access to recreational activities for people with disabilities.

3. Economic and Social Benefits:

- The program can boost local tourism and create employment opportunities in Cardinia (e.g., riding instructors, support staff).
- It enhances the shire's reputation as an inclusive and caring community.

Finally, and most importantly, the Cardinia Shire Council Equestrian Strategy 2023 – 2033 (Final Draft) clearly outlines the important role that RDA Pakenham plays in the Cardinia community and makes a number of clear recommendations that are supportive of the long-term lease being provided. Some highlights that we consider to be pertinent to our request are appended below.

Cardinia Shire Council Equestrian Strategy 2023 - 2033 (Draft)

The sections below relate directly to the RDAV proposal for a long term lease at 775 Five Mile Road Pakenham, ensuring the ongoing operation of the RDA Pakenham Centre for the benefit of the Cardinia community.

KEY ISSUES:

A Plan for the Future

There is a need to plan for equestrian trails **and facilities** where they will not be affected by urban development, **can be sustained long term**, and can offer more shared use opportunities.

Supporting Volunteers

Most equestrian facilities are delivered by volunteer run committees and clubs. A review of support mechanisms and educational opportunities available that build capacity and generate participation outcomes is required.

KEY OBJECTIVES

PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION

Increase equestrian participation through improved access to trails, **facilities**, and information and **ensure our equestrian clubs and reserve committees continue to be sustainable**

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.4: Collaborate with reserve committees and clubs tenanted Council owned equestrian facilities **to develop Facility Improvement Plans that guide collaborative infrastructure, maintenance and renewal activities and shared use opportunities.**

1.7: Actively seek and support grant funding applications and advocacy that aligns with the Strategy's recommendations.

1.8: Continue to support people of all abilities to participate in equestrian through Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA).

2.1: **Review current equestrian facility user agreements**, subsidies and contributions with reserve committees to ensure equitable use and **to enhance broader community access.**

2.2: **Work with peak equestrian bodies** to support and encourage programs, events and activities that are inclusive and drive participation outcomes.

3.3: Acknowledge the role of private equestrian facilities in servicing the needs of the community and encourage greater communication and information sharing with Cardinia Shire Council and the equestrian community.

GROWTH SUB-REGION RECOMMENDATIONS (ie Pakenham, Officer and Beaconsfield)

Recommendation dot point (1 of 4 recommendations): **Continue to support people of all abilities to participate in equestrian through Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA).**

INVESTMENT PRIORITISATION PRINCIPLES (ie as the Strategy is implemented)

Equity

Recommendations, projects and initiatives must be **underpinned by clear need**, and result in **equitable investment and participation opportunities**. This extends to improving and continuing opportunities for people of all genders including female participants who make up the majority of equestrians in Cardinia Shire.

Welcoming, Safe and Inclusive Environments

Recommendations, projects and initiatives must demonstrate how investment will **support and improve the delivery of welcoming, safe and inclusive environments**. This includes physical infrastructure as well as the intangible environment where people of all backgrounds and cultures are welcome, and where children feel and are safe.

Accessibility and Multi-Use

Recommendations, projects and initiatives must demonstrate multi-use and shared used outcomes resulting from investment (such as shared trails and/or **greater community access to facilities**).

Demand

Recommendations, projects and initiatives must be underpinned by **data that can justify demand** and **establish positive legacy outcomes for the equestrian community**.

Strategic Alignment

Alignment to the strategic objectives of the 2023 -2033 Equestrian Strategy and the broader objectives of Cardinia Shire Council and its stakeholders must be demonstrated.

Sustainability

Recommendations, projects and initiatives must demonstrate **sustainability** from an environmental, financial, **social and cultural perspective and that can also support greater operational efficiencies.**