

7.5.2 EXTENSION OF LEASE FOR RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Responsible GM:	Wayne Mack
Author:	Erin Moore
Staff Disclosure:	All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.
Council Plan Reference:	1.1 We empower our communities to be healthy, connected and resilient 1.1.1 Plan for, and support the delivery of, accessible health and social services that address critical gaps in provision. 1.1.3 Lead by example in creating an inclusive and welcoming community for all by facilitating community education, capacity building, connection and celebration of our diversity. 5.1 We practise responsible leadership 5.1.1 Build trust through meaningful community engagement and transparent decision-making. 5.1.2 Manage our finances responsibly and leave a positive legacy for future generations.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Acknowledges the restrictions on the site leading to limited alternative uses, RDA's investment in the facility and community benefit derived in their use of the site as well as the support received through the community engagement undertaken; and
2. Resolves to allow Council officers to prepare and issue Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia a 20- year lease for part of 775 Five Mile Road Pakenham.

Executive Summary

A Notice of Motion (1108) was raised by Councillor Paton and moved by Council on the 16th of December 2024, confirming Council's in principle support for the Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia (**RDA**) being granted a 20 year lease for its use of 775 Five Mile Road, Pakenham and instructing officers to commence community engagement under section 115 of the Local Government Act 2020 for the proposal, seeking a report be brought to the March Council Meeting.

Following the December Motion community engagement was undertaken in accordance with the Local Government Act and Cardinia's Community Engagement Policy. The engagement asked community for feedback on a proposed 20-year lease term for RDA at part of the Council owned site, 775 Five Mile Road Pakenham (**Premises**). RDA are the current tenant, occupying the premises shown in the attached plan, with a lease that expires on the 31st of May 2027.

There were 51 responses received from the consultation undertaken between 20 January and 9 February 2025. All but three (3) were in complete support and included a mix of surrounding residents, those associated with the industry and the general public.

In reviewing the proposal by RDA with alignment to Council policy and plans and having an overwhelming response in support from the community, the 20-year lease term is proposed to be offered to RDA for part of the 775 Five Mile Road, Pakenham site, with a condition regarding Council's continued use of part of the land for impounding livestock.

Background

The land at 775 Five Mile Road, Pakenham is zoned Green Wedge Zone and affected by a Land Subject to Inundation Overlay and Environmental Audit Overlay. Use of the land is limited, as a majority of uses will have conditions that the site will not meet. The use is restricted to options such as agriculture and other animal related uses which the RDA use meets.

The Association

Riding for the Disabled Australia (RDA) is a not-for-profit organisation and enables individuals with a variety of disabilities, ages and backgrounds to develop independence, a sense of freedom and to reach their goals, through adaptive coaching techniques and equipment. RDA relies heavily on the efforts of volunteers. RDA Pakenham is one of 34 RDA centres located across Victoria that are affiliated with RDA and was developed following the closure of the Officer centre in 2018. RDA currently has 30 volunteers including a committee of 12. The total investment of volunteer time is in the order of 200 hours per week.

RDA has 15 registered riders who attend on Tuesdays or Thursdays each week for approximately 45 minutes of horse interaction and riding. In an average week, volunteers spend 150 hours onsite in horse/rider related activities. Riders pay a \$35 fee to RDA Pakenham each time they ride, not charging on days when riders can't attend due to weather related issues which then impacts cashflow. RDA Pakenham has recently acquired additional horses to meet its plans for expansion. There are now nine horses in training. By the end of the year RDA will seek to invite between 5-10 new riders from the current wait list of 42.

Operations are often interrupted by inclement weather. To alleviate this, RDA wish to cover part, or all, of the arena so that it can be used in all weather conditions. This type of development has proven to deliver significant positive outcomes at similar RDA sites across Victoria. Estimates for a covered arena range from \$130,000 to more than \$300,000 without permit fees and concrete footings being costed. It is intended that these costs will be borne by a combination of sponsorship, fundraising and existing reserves.

Other outcomes for RDA include working towards becoming a centre of excellence with increased participation for those on the waiting list and broadening accessibility and inclusion programs. RDA have expressed hesitation from existing benefactors and sponsors when engaging in funding discussions due to the limited tenure, which is therefore preventing RDA plans for growth and development including key infrastructure within the masterplan.

Local Support

RDA Pakenham have been the recipient of local fundraising efforts, which resulted in two significant donations. The first donation supported the construction of a multi-function room with power and amenities providing meeting/training/viewing room for parents and carers.

Significant support was achieved via the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) who installed an arena known as Subzero Arena, including post and rail fencing, drainage and an all-weather surface suited to the activities of participating riders with a disability.

Current Lease and Request

The lease between RDA and Council commenced in June 2018, offering a 5-year term, plus a further term of 4 years. The Deed of Renewal of Lease signed in 2023, exercised the option to the 31st of May 2027.

RDA have submitted a proposal to Council requesting a 20–25-year lease term. The longer period of tenure will allow RDA to continue to develop partnerships that offer funding opportunities in line with the updated masterplan attached to this report, with a key focus on securing funding for the roof structure over the existing arena for year-round activities.

Part of the land abutting RDA leased land is also currently reserved within the masterplan for 'Council's pound'. This is for impounding livestock and therefore requires unrestricted access. This arrangement requires formalising in future documentation.

Council's Lease Policy

The current policy was adopted in February 2022 and outlines guiding principles for leases and licences involving Council. Under item 4.3.4, Council will only consider a longer-term lease in circumstances where the tenant has substantially invested in the 'Council Facility'.

The investment in the RDA Pakenham site in the short period of occupation has been significant, with the development of the office and bathrooms, viewing room, arena, shelters, fencing and water tanks. Information provided also demonstrates that RDA provide substantial community benefit in their use and have substantially invested in the equestrian facility.

Other alternatives for the land were considered along with the precedent it may set for other users of Council owned land and buildings to offer a long-term lease. Due to its previous use as a landfill site, current zoning and overlay, there are limiting factors associated with potential use of the site. Officers are therefore proposing a 20-year lease.

Policy Implications

Council's Lease and Licence Policy outlines that Council will only consider a longer lease term of more than 5 years, in circumstances where the Tenant have substantially invested in the Council Facility and offer significant community benefit. Future Council's should not be unduly bound by decisions which excessively encumber land. Each of these have been considered or established in the review of the proposal.

In circumstances where a longer lease term is proposed, it requires a Council resolution to approve the lease term.

Council's Community Engagement Policy has been considered in conjunction with the proposal and is noted later in the report.

Financial and Resource Implications

An appraisal from a local real estate agent was obtained which provided the current market value for the entire parcel of land and the rental value for the entire property and the land leased by the RDA. The property value is low which reflects the encumbrances caused by the planning overlays and the previous use as a tip. The rental value for the RDA leased area is \$2,625 per annum, with any tenant responsible for annual fertiliser applications, weed control and fencing.

If a new lease is proposed, RDA as a not-for-profit organisation are eligible for subsidised rental under Council's current Lease and Licence Policy adopted in February 2022. This eligibility is reflective of the associations limited ability to earn income and as such would be charged subsidised lease rates.

The tenant's financials have been reviewed as part of our process and show their sources and level of income. The grants received have been placed aside to fund future infrastructure projects, with the roof over the arena the key priority.

Under the current lease, the Tenant is paying \$1 per annum plus GST. This will be increased in a new lease to the current minimum (peppercorn) lease rate and a clause would be inserted allowing for a review of the rent on the anniversary of the commencement date in line with any adopted Council fees and charges schedules.

There were no costs associated with the communications and engagement undertaken, other than the use of Council staff time. The consultation is detailed further in the next section of the report.

Consultation/Communication

The statutory procedures under Section 115 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to give public notice of its intentions to extend the lease for any term of 10 years or more and undertake a community engagement process in accordance with the Community Engagement Policy. This process was undertaken, following the Notice of Motion (1108) being moved on the 16th of December 2024, including the below communication and engagement activities:

- Councillor Bulletin emailed 17 January 2025.
- Information supplied to Customer Service, the Access and Ageing Team, and Compliance Team 17 January 2025;
- Letters to surrounding properties posted 17 January 2025, including the school providing instructions on how to provide feedback;
- Webpage on Creating Cardinia went live 20 January 2025;
[Proposed Lease - Riding for the Disabled Vic \(RDA\) | Creating Cardinia](#)
- Media Release (Public Notice) published 21 January 2025.
[Have your say on a 20-year lease request at 775 Five Mile Road Pakenham | Cardinia Shire Council](#)

Council received 51 responses in total, 48 providing clear support in favour of the proposal. Two individuals proceeded to seek support of an even longer term of a 20 + 20 year lease or 99 year lease. Both of which are beyond the term being considered in this proposal, and Council is unable to consider a term of 99 years in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020.

Examples of those in support include:

- 'It is a valuable service to the disability sector and does not get the funding or recognition it deserves.'
- 'Providing a long lease will provide RDAV with the stability required to allow for ongoing development of the organisation in the Pakenham area. A very worthy community organisation which provides opportunities for volunteers as well as the disabled.'
- 'I totally agree with this, I know they need the surety of tenure to get the infrastructure they need. They provide an invaluable service to the disabled and the whole community.'
- 'This is an incredible opportunity and the people involved will continue caring for the property long term. I have no involvement in this at all but can see it is such a positive impactful set up!'

There were three responses which raised queries or comments for Council's consideration which were heard at the 3rd March Councillor Briefing:

- A surrounding resident noted: *'If this lease is approved, the services should be limited to residents of Cardinia Shire only - just as other areas limit services to local residents. This should directly benefit local community.'*

In response to this: It would be unfair of Council to limit participation in RDA's activities which can improve the physical and mental health of those with disabilities in surrounding localities.

- A member of the public noted: *'Is council offering RDA a free 20 year lease? Is it appropriate for ratepayers to subsidise this group over other groups who pay for leases? ? - Perhaps we should be offering all'*

In response to this: Council have finite land and buildings and therefore we plan for the use and development of these in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Plan which identifies supply and demand. Council also has a Lease and Licence Policy, last adopted by Council in February 2022, which guides decision making for Council's leased and licensed land and buildings. The tenant will be charged in accordance with the policy in terms of rental, based on the tenant categories and will be liable for other maintenance and utility costs associated with the premises.

- Another surrounding resident noted: *'If this is approved, why aren't all not for profit organisations and groups funded within the shire? Why are small community groups paying fees for using council services? I am not in support of this decision without a wider discussion and approach.'*

In response to this: Council have a consistent approach when charging tenants and licensees who occupy Council property. The rental and term of the lease are deemed to be in line with the Lease and Licence Policy adopted by Council. It has also been considered in the decision, the There are plans to review both the Lease and Licence Policy along with associated fees and charges in the future, however this work is ongoing and will be undertaken separately from this particular proposal. All leases and licences, currently being offered, include a clause allowing Council the ability to review the rental in line with future fees and charges adopted by Council.

In acknowledging and responding within this report to these submissions, there is no reason for Council to postpone a decision on the proposal, as each item raised can be explained by Council's current policies being followed.

Conclusion

In considering the community engagement undertaken between during January and February 2025, including the level of feedback in support. It is proposed to proceed in offering RDA with a 20 year lease over their existing leased land at 775 Five Mile Road, Pakenham.

Attachments

1. Community Engagement Summary [7.5.2.1 - 2 pages]
2. Plan of Leased Area [7.5.2.2 - 2 pages]
3. Proposal from RDAV 2024 [7.5.2.3 - 10 pages]
4. Addendum to Proposal from RDAV 2024 [7.5.2.4 - 9 pages]
5. Master Plan Edited Version 2025 [7.5.2.5 - 9 pages]

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Proposed Lease - Riding For The Disabled Vic (RDAV)

Title/Question: Submit your comments
 Tool Type: Form
 Activity ID: 833
 Report Date Range: 20 Jan 2025 - 5 Feb 2025
 Date Exported: 10 Feb 2025 09:51 am
 Exported By: e.wilkinson

Contribution ID	Date Submitted	I understand that write	Upload your submission	Alternatively add comments here.	Surrounding resident/la	Neighbouring school	Associated with RDAV/ti	Industry related (disabili	Other
16299	Feb 05, 2025, 09:22 PM	Yes		Riding for Disabled should be treated like a school and be granted a 99yr lease. This is to ensure that if in the future the land is rezoned and they have spent a great deal of money on improvements,the riding for Disabled are not told to move!					Yes
16298	Feb 05, 2025, 07:33 AM	Yes		This would be fantastic!			Yes		
16297	Feb 04, 2025, 06:50 PM	Yes		This is an absolutely required service for our disabled community to not grant them the lease would be heart breaking			Yes		
16295	Feb 04, 2025, 05:47 AM	Yes		Fully support a further 20 year lease to RDA	Yes		Yes		
16294	Feb 03, 2025, 09:31 PM	Yes		This is an incredible opportunity and the people involved will continue caring for the property long term. I have no involvement in this at all but can see it is such a positive impactful set up!			Yes		Yes
16293	Feb 03, 2025, 09:05 PM	Yes		i fully support a long term lease. RDAV is a fantastic organisation.			Yes		
16292	Feb 03, 2025, 06:42 PM	Yes		Absolutely would be great for the community as it's been proven that horses are a great therapeutic tool	Yes				
16291	Feb 03, 2025, 02:31 PM	Yes		A wonderful organisation and should definitely be supported long term					Yes
16290	Feb 03, 2025, 02:25 PM	Yes		Assisting our communities is of an utmost importance. Disabilities can be supported by horse therapy and has been an important component of the student's nurturing.	Yes				
16289	Feb 02, 2025, 10:33 PM	Yes		I fully support this 20 year lease. RDAV is a long established non profit organisation that offers great benefit to the community and participants through its work. RDA should be fully supported.			Yes	Yes	
16288	Feb 02, 2025, 06:38 PM	Yes		As a resident in Cardinia shire and someone that knows the huge benefits RDA provides, I fully support the term lease for RDA			Yes	Yes	
16287	Feb 02, 2025, 06:01 PM	Yes		Yes it's a great program	Yes				
16285	Feb 02, 2025, 01:09 PM	Yes		RDAV and RDA Pakenham provide an essential service to the disability sector. For many children and adults the ability to ride and interact with the horses allows them to feel movement in their bodies. Something not possible when sitting in a wheelchair.			Yes	Yes	
16284	Feb 02, 2025, 10:13 AM	Yes	https://creating.cardinia	Please see Submission in support of the proposed 20 year lease.	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
16283	Feb 02, 2025, 09:59 AM	Yes		As a previous business owner of Pakenham Produce & Saddlery we were a long standing supporter of RDA. I fully support the extended lease, allowing them to better provide this invaluable service to the community.			Yes		
16282	Feb 02, 2025, 09:33 AM	Yes		Absolutely a requirement of this area. It's an amazing program	Yes				
16281	Feb 02, 2025, 02:37 AM	Yes		Yes they should be able to stay on and lease long term if they wish to	Yes				
16280	Feb 02, 2025, 12:42 AM	Yes		Much needed service, please accept proposal	Yes				
16279	Feb 01, 2025, 11:17 PM	Yes		Quite happy to see the RDA given a new lease. The provide a great service.					Yes
16278	Feb 01, 2025, 11:15 PM	Yes		Please Extend this lease as this is such a needed and required service. This lease should be renewed indefinitely.	Yes				Yes
16277	Feb 01, 2025, 11:13 PM	Yes							Yes
16276	Feb 01, 2025, 10:03 PM	Yes		Yes I would like to see the Rda have the 20 yr lease to continue benefiting our community	Yes				
16275	Feb 01, 2025, 09:31 PM	Yes		Such an important community organization that needs the stability of this long lease. It's in a perfect position to best serve the RDA.					Yes
16274	Feb 01, 2025, 08:16 PM	Yes		I think this would be a great initiative for the community	Yes				
16272	Feb 01, 2025, 05:29 PM	Yes		RDA should be confident that they will always have an area purposefully available for them to use. They benefit so many people and families in our Shire					Yes
16271	Feb 01, 2025, 05:16 PM	Yes		Fully support	Yes				
16270	Feb 01, 2025, 04:47 PM	Yes		this should be extended to a 20 x 20 year lease. It is a valuable service to the disability sector and does not get the funding or recognition it deserves.	Yes				
16269	Feb 01, 2025, 04:45 PM	Yes		Council should ABSOLUTELY grant the new lease to the RDAV. This is a wonderful initiative and they should absolutely have a solid future of knowing where they can set up a location that will help so many people.	Yes				Yes
16268	Feb 01, 2025, 03:29 PM	Yes		I encourage council to extend the lease to RDA as they provide opportunities for people with disabilities to engage with horses and other people in the community. The benefits to people with disabilities engaging with horses are holistic,			Yes		
16267	Feb 01, 2025, 01:37 PM	Yes		It is important to provide good facilities for the RDA and it does seem that there has been a great deal or work already completed at the site. There should be support and certainly no objection to accommodate that part of our community.					Yes
16266	Feb 01, 2025, 01:15 PM	Yes		What else would Cardinia Council use this land after being the tip site! The Disabled horse group utilise this land 200 percent and the community supports					Yes
16265	Feb 01, 2025, 08:11 AM	Yes		Support 100%. Shouldn't even need consideration. Community units built in Main St, leased for \$1 per year for 99 years. Say no more	Yes				
16264	Jan 30, 2025, 10:08 PM	Yes		I think it would be a fantastic service to continue in our community.					Yes
16263	Jan 29, 2025, 03:37 PM	Yes							Yes
16262	Jan 29, 2025, 02:24 PM	Yes		Providing a long lease will provide RDAV with the stability required to allow for ongoing development of the organisation in the Pakenham area. A very worthy community organisation which provides opportunities for volunteers as well as the disabled .		Yes			
16261	Jan 29, 2025, 07:53 AM	Yes		I support the grant of a 20 year lease to the RDAV as they provide an essential service to the community and surrounding communities. Many similar organisations have been forced out putting the demand on organisations such as this one.	Yes				
16260	Jan 28, 2025, 07:02 PM	Yes		If this lease is approved, the services should be limited to residents of cardinia shire only - just as other areas limit services to local residents. This should directly benefit local community.	Yes				
16259	Jan 28, 2025, 06:59 PM	Yes		We need the RDA in Pakenham.			Yes		
16258	Jan 28, 2025, 06:49 PM	Yes		I support RDAV with their proposal for a 20 year lease for the property on Five Mile Rd. They provide an important service to our community.					Yes

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16257	Jan 28, 2025, 05:18 PM	Yes	Why only 20 years. They can get grant improve the location then not have the lease renewed. Should have options for more years.		
16255	Jan 28, 2025, 05:08 PM	Yes	Is council offering rdav a free 20 year lease? Is it appropriate for ratepayers to subsidise this group over other groups who pay for leases? ? - Perhaps we should be offering all volunteer ran groups free use of community owned facilities.		Yes
16254	Jan 28, 2025, 04:59 PM	Yes	This is an amazing organisation run by volunteers and they should definitely be granted a 20 year lease so they can continue the great work they do for the disabled community	Yes	Yes
16253	Jan 28, 2025, 04:40 PM	Yes	This is a vital service for our disabled community and should be approved without hesitation	Yes	
16252	Jan 28, 2025, 04:22 PM	Yes	This is great idea. Children with disabilities deserve to enjoy interaction with animals and the joy of a ride on a quiet gentle horse. My daughter has friends who participate in helping at other Riding for the Disabled in the area.		Yes
16251	Jan 28, 2025, 04:02 PM	Yes	Much needed facility and group for disabled young people, provides need social interactions and an exciting activity for the young people to look forward to	Yes	Yes
16250	Jan 28, 2025, 03:32 PM	Yes	Please give the RDAV the 20 year lease they're asking for. The work they do cannot be replicated and it's unfair to expect them to keep moving on every few years. They need a permanent home so they can focus on those who need their help.		Yes
16249	Jan 28, 2025, 03:08 PM	Yes	Being that RDA is an essential service and has been for many years. I support their request for a long term lease.		Yes
16248	Jan 28, 2025, 02:41 PM	Yes	The service this service provides to people with disability is amazing . The connection people ca.n get with horses dan be life changing . This should even be a discussion		Yes
16247	Jan 28, 2025, 02:25 PM	Yes	Supported 100%, non profit organisation for the well being of those who need it	Yes	
16246	Jan 28, 2025, 01:40 PM	Yes	I totally agree with this, I know they need the surety of tenure to get the infrastructure they need. They provide an invaluable service to the disabled and the whole community.		Yes
16245	Jan 28, 2025, 12:48 PM	Yes	If this is approved, why aren't all not for profit organisations and groups funded within the shire? Why are small community groups paying fees for using council services? I am not in support of this decision without a wider discussion and approach.	Yes	Yes
16244	Jan 23, 2025, 09:03 AM	Yes	Yes it should be granted the 20 year lease		Yes
16242	Jan 20, 2025, 07:03 AM	Yes	Test	Yes	

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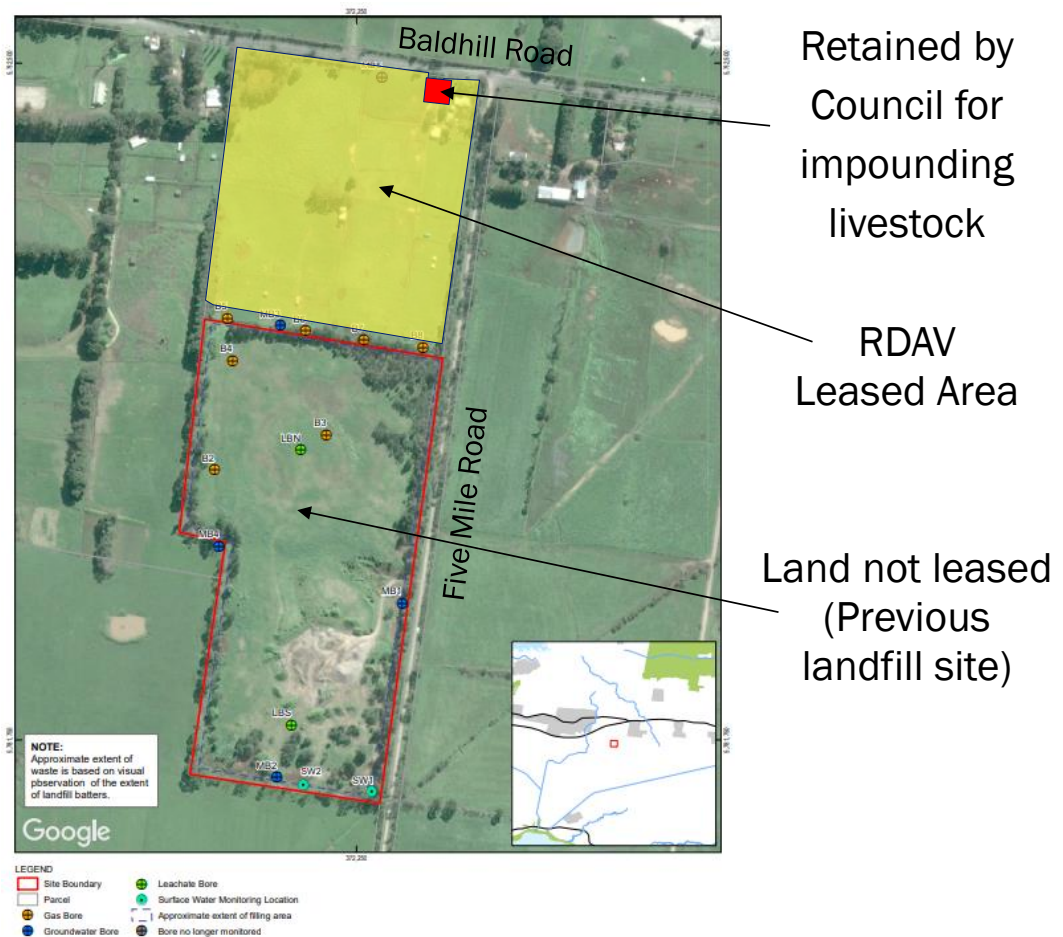
Plan of 775 Five Mile Road, Pakenham

Cardimaps imagery:



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Use of site:



Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria

Lease Extension Submission for 775 Five Mile Road, Pakenham

For extended use by the RDA Pakenham Centre – February 2024

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.



Records indicate that 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. Our understanding is that the site had previously been a dairy farm for many years before it was used by Council as the pound for lost or stray animals. In that time the land immediately to the rear of the site was a refuse tip so it appears the land had limited usage options prior to the reclamation and rehabilitation of the tip.

Site Development History

The RDA Pakenham Committee and its dedicated team of volunteers were keen to commence operations at the new site and address the challenges of a 'greenfield' site with few facilities and being in a somewhat distressed state. Council removed the original farmhouse that we understand was of fibro cement construction (asbestos) so it was imperative that some form of administration and sanitation facilities were erected as a matter of urgency to support any activation of the site.

Site development plans were prepared to provide guidance to the overall site layout so that any works would be in accordance with these plans.

Calls to potential donors and sponsors went out and facilities were made available albeit some in need of significant renovation.



Office and Toilet / Storeroom

Horse management facilities such as fencing and water management were early imperatives that demanded hardware such as pumps, underground water piping, water troughs and tanks, gates, posts and wires. The enthusiastic but small Committee of volunteers met each challenge and the site development progressed quickly until Covid 19 struck and all activities had to be suspended.

Unfortunately, 'All activities' didn't include the actions of thieves and vandals and much of the early work was lost before volunteers ultimately regained access to the site.

Not to be deterred, the Committee once more set about installing pumps, troughs, gates and so on but this time a closed-circuit security and alarm system was given a priority. Thankfully, the uninvited visitors stopped calling.

New horses were acquired and paddocks to house them were quickly developed. The water system and troughs were upgraded and in late 2022, the RDA Pakenham Centre was ready to commence classes.

Significant support was achieved from the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) who generously installed an arena including post and rail fencing, drainage and an all-weather surface suited to the activities of our participating riders with a disability. The arena was recently launched as the 'Subzero Arena' in honour of Subzero who won the Melbourne Cup in 1992.



Subzero Arena

Program Support Team

RDA Pakenham coaches have been educated to the high standards of RDA and many volunteers have been trained and inducted to assist with the unique needs of our riders.

Sponsorship and fundraising activities have been vital and essential in continuing the development of the RDA Pakenham Centre. The VRC maintains a close connection and are always keen to be informed of our progress and how they can assist.

The BFirm Gym in Berwick decided to make RDA Pakenham the recipient of the fundraising from their annual charity golf day, which has resulted in two significant donations. The first donation resulted in the erection of a viewing room for parents and carers who can now watch from a comfortable place as their charges are taken under the wings of our capable volunteers. Feedback suggests that this is valued as an opportunity to compare notes and relax with a confidence that their charges are safe and importantly – happy. This room, which now has power and split system air conditioning, is ideal for use as a meeting or training facility.



BFirm Viewing Room

The RDA Pakenham Centre currently offers services each week to 6 to 8 riders. Each rider requires 2 to 3 volunteers for their 30-minute activity. Horses must be prepared in advance of the classes including lunging, grooming and saddling before they are ready to meet their riders. Many of the riders and horses have developed a bond, which is obvious to observers.

The benefits to our riders as a result of their participation in the RDA program are enormous and profound, illustrating the ‘magic’ that happens at an RDA Centre.

After the riders have completed their activities there is a debriefing between our volunteers and coaches with parents and carers where many stories of achievements and progress are highlighted.

Next the horses are returned to the yards for unsaddling, rub down and wash before being returned to their paddocks. The RDA Pakenham horses are fed and monitored daily where water troughs, fences and the horses’ general health and wellbeing is assessed.



Rider, Coach and Volunteers

The activities at an RDA Centre are labour intensive but as all our volunteers will attest to, it is a labour of love and the rewards come in the responses from the riders.



Rider Thanking Her Mount

Future Site Opportunities

The RDA Pakenham Centre has now reached a point in its development where it is poised to increase the number of participating riders. With clear positive outcomes from participation in RDA programs evident amongst the community of people with disabilities, there is currently a wait list of 42 potential participants.

The Committee is in the early stages of discussions with local NDIS offices and educational facilities that focus on people with disabilities. This will inevitably require more volunteers, more paddocks and associated infrastructure, more horses and most importantly, more volunteers.

The short-term plan is one extra day per week with riders and one planning day per week for volunteers when riders are not onsite. The opportunity of opening on Saturdays in order to accommodate clients who are unable to attend due to school or work commitments is also being explored. Carers and parents are being encouraged to be part of an 'early intervention' focus which has shown very encouraging results in other RDA Centres.

Holiday programmes potentially involving both disabled and able-bodied participants is something the Committee is also wanting to commence this year. The goal in 2024 is to facilitate up to 20 riders per week. These activities will demand a rotation of at least 20 volunteers including qualified coaches and trained assistants. The ongoing development of the RDA Pakenham Centre requires a maintenance team, and further volunteers are also being recruited in this area. The current team is ably assisted by Pakenham Rotary, who have adopted RDA Pakenham as a project to support.

The RDA Pakenham coaches and horse contact volunteers are trained and mentored by the Committee President, Mary Longden. Mary is a highly credentialed international coach who has coached successfully at Paralympic level. Mary's experience is passed on to the community through the coaches she develops who in turn pass on their learnings via their involvement in various equine activities i.e. pony club, adult riding clubs and so on.

In rising to the current position, the support of the RDA Pakenham sponsors has been critical. As anyone involved in equine activities will attest, horses are expensive to keep and manage. In our world the care and wellbeing of our horses is second only to the care and safety of our riding clients. There is no hesitation in calling upon vets, farriers, dentists and horse therapists, when necessary. Sponsors and community grants will become even more critical now as we focus upon further development.

The Subzero arena sponsored by the VRC is first class, but operations are often interrupted by inclement weather. To alleviate this, we are keen to transform the Centre into something that can be used in all weathers. This type of development has proven to deliver significant positive outcomes at many similar RDA sites across Victoria.

For this to occur, a roof covering at least part of the arena is essential. Once built, an undercover arena would enhance not only our own operations but would also attract interest from other potential community users.

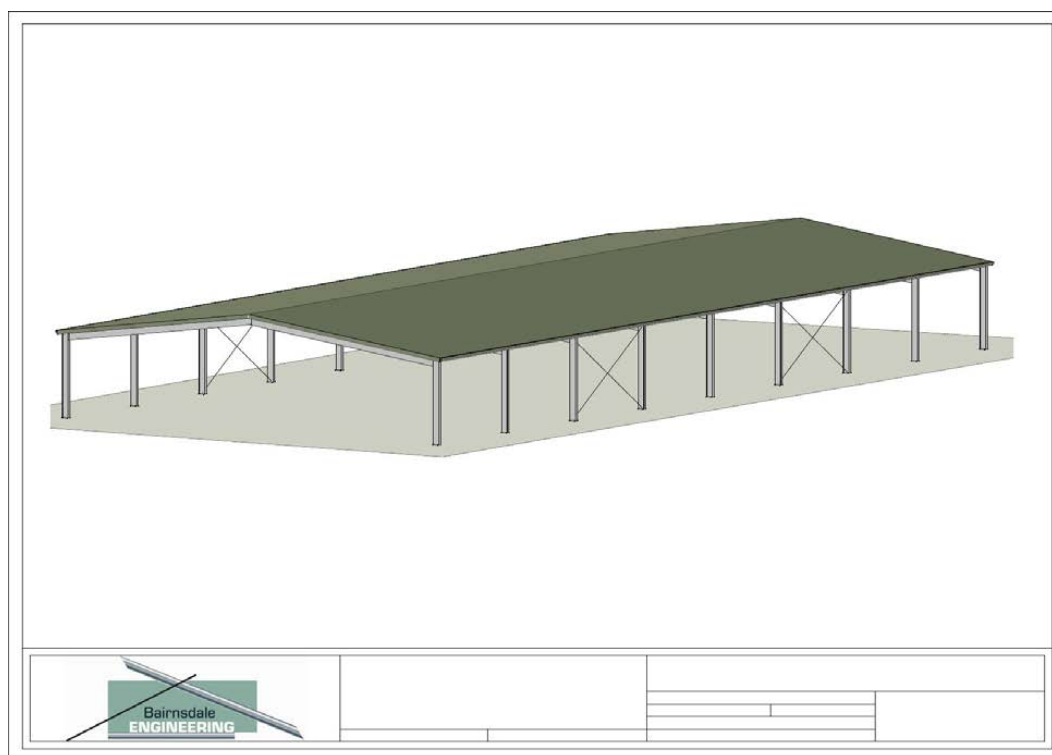
There may be an opportunity for fundraising from rental received but more importantly this could provide a facility for use by other Not-for-Profit organisations such as pony clubs, and the like. This would further develop equine activities in the Shire of Cardinia.

RDA Pakenham's exposure to the broader community will also be enhanced, which will inevitably attract more volunteers, supporters and potentially more horses for our client's activities.

Cost Estimates

Conceptual estimates for a covered arena have been provided by Bairnsdale Engineering Pty Ltd and range from circa \$130,000 to more than \$300,000 before permit fees and concrete footings. Before entering into further discussions with Council regarding development opportunities and costs, we will delve more deeply into the various options and refine the costs. More details of these plans and costings are available upon request.

It is intended that these costs will be borne by a combination of sponsorship, fundraising and existing reserves.



Conceptual Drawing – Part of Bairnsdale Engineering Submission Nov 2023

Other Site Improvements

The next developments that are at the current planning stage for RDA Pakenham include an obstacle course, round yard, and laneways that are suited to our sulky. It is intended to utilize the existing sulky and trap pony to drive children who are not suited to saddle riding around the 'farm'. This will necessitate building up the laneways that run between the carefully planned paddocks to a solid base.

The RDA Pakenham horses are fed hay daily and the Centre is fortunate to be self-sufficient in this regard. They have cut and baled hay from the unfenced area for the last 3 years. However, with each cut, the production reduces and if this is to be sustainable into the future, investment in crop management activities such as fertilizer, weed control etc. will be required. The horses are rotated between the existing 11 paddocks, which are all harrowed regularly, but to maintain good health soil tests and an appropriate application of lime is needed.



Part of Current Season Hay

The investment in the RDA Pakenham site in the very short recent period of occupation has been significant. The development of infrastructure – office and bathroom sheds, arena, viewing room, shipping container (storeroom), water tanks and fencing materials have largely been donated. Services such as electricity and plumbing have been supplied at heavily discounted prices by generous tradespeople. However, the time and effort in volunteer man-hours is immeasurable.

Future Success

RDAV and our RDA Pakenham Centre are both very supportive of the proposal for a long term lease and are very conscious of the restrictions presented by the limited tenure provided under the current lease which expires in May 2027. As the local Committee enters discussions with their existing benefactors and sponsors concerning the plans for growth and development as detailed in this document, our tenure under the lease is a theme that will clearly influence their decisions in providing further funding or infrastructure.

RDA Pakenham's major sponsor/donor has already expressed an interest in the longevity at the site and we are concerned that this very valuable connection could be lost as the year unfolds. We are also limited when applying for the various grants that are open to NFPs due to the limited tenure arrangements.

There are also obligations around the allocation of RDA Pakenham's funds and the Committee is nervous about their responsibilities in relation to the 'make good' provisions under the lease in its current form.

Many of the developments documented in RDA Pakenham's plans are simply not viable for a short-term occupancy i.e. fertilizing / liming / weed control comes at significant cost, which is amortized over years and balanced in returns (the Centre raises funds by selling surplus hay).

To justify the plans and to restore the confidence of RDA Pakenham's supporters, volunteers and indeed the Committee, RDAV is seeking the support of Council to extend the lease beyond the current expiry.

In particular, **we seek Council's support to consider a longer-term lease period of 20 – 25 years.**

In return, RDAV will support the Committee's aim to provide their service and to avail their facilities to the rapidly expanding Cardinia community and to other community bodies.

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:

- o 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:

- o 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.
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3. Economic and Social Benefits:

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

Summary & Next Steps

In summary, RDAV's RDA Pakenham Centre at 775 Five Mile Road Pakenham significantly contributes to the Cardinia community's well-being, inclusivity, and health outcomes, aligning with the council's vision and strategic plans.

We are very keen to work with Council in achieving a greater degree of permanency and welcome feedback to this proposal and to be guided on the next steps.

If any further information is required, please contact us as follows:

- RDAV CEO – Richard Amon (ceo@rdav.asn.au)
- RDAV President – Tanya Twaits (president@rdav.asn.au)
- RDA Pakenham President – Mary Longden (marylongden9@gmail.com)
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RDA Pakenham Master Plan – Lease Extension Proposal 2024

(Addendum to Application Submission to Cardinia Shire Council)

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 (20-25 years) 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 its 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 from the current wait list of 42.

In anticipation of the new horses, all harvested hay was retained this year. 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. The original Masterplan listed some of the support received such as the arena including post and rail fencing and surfacing, office, toilet block, shipping container, water tanks, reticulated water system, fencing etc.

Over the last two years BFirm Gym in Berwick have donated 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 proceeds have not yet been spent as we await the outcome of this lease extension process with a ramp to provide wheelchair access to the mounting area is high on our priority list.

BFirm have made informal enquiries concerning our lease position, which has given us cause for concern over their future sponsorship which may be threatened if the long-term lease is not provided

In recent weeks, the Pakenham Racing Club have provided funds to enable us to put some minor roofing over the 'day yards' that are used to prepare the horses before and after riding.

The Victorian Racing Club via their 'Off The Track' (OTT) program have sponsored our recently acquired OTT horse called 'Thumbtacks' - to the tune of \$10,000 to cover feed and upkeep for the coming year.

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 then impacts 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 must 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. A couple of Opportunity Shops in the area donate to us and we attend 'boot sales', fetes etc where we can sell off horse paraphernalia that has been donated to us and which is surplus to needs.

The Rotary Club of Pakenham has recently adopted us as an ongoing project. They have provided a pump and hardware for a new washdown facility in addition to hardware and man hours to enable the construction of five new shelters for the horses. They have expressed an interest in providing new helmets and boots for the riders also.

RDA Pakenham has not been a recipient of any 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 large waiting list of 42 people wishing to access our valuable 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.

We believe that Holiday programs for combined able bodied and disabled riders would be educational to all participants and is high on our list if / when our facilities are not so 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 arena. 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. If it can't be developed, it is not 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 local community with a disability.

Summary / Council alignment

The RDA Pakenham 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.

Based on our history of fundraising and strong partnerships, 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 and welcomed).

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:

- o 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:
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3. Economic and Social Benefits:

- o The program can boost local tourism and create employment opportunities in Cardinia (e.g., riding instructors, support staff).
- o 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 several clear recommendations that are very supportive of the long-term lease being provided. Some highlights from this Strategy 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.**

Summary & Next Steps

In summary, RDAV's RDA Pakenham Centre at 775 Five Mile Road Pakenham significantly contributes to the Cardinia community's well-being, inclusivity, and health outcomes, aligning with the council's vision and strategic plans.

We are very keen to work with Council in achieving a greater degree of permanency and welcome feedback to this proposal and to be guided on the next steps.

If any further information is required, please contact us as follows:

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RDA Pakenham Master Plan – Lease Extension Proposal 2024

(Addendum to Application Submission)

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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.

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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.

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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.**