

SE News  
HD **VRC's \$120m stand facing hurdles**  
BY Mark Hawthorne  
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The Victoria Racing Club has unveiled its \$120 million replacement for the historic members' grandstand at Flemington Racecourse, and hopes it can open the new facility in time for the 2017 Melbourne Cup.

The new grandstand is designed by Bates Smart, the architects behind Federation Square, Crown Melbourne and the Royal Children's Hospital.

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The "entertainment venue" includes three restaurants, eight bars and a rooftop garden, and will be built on the **site** of the existing stand.

Before the demolition work can begin, there are a number of hurdles the club must overcome.

The VRC needs to win over Heritage Victoria, which has raised concerns about the destruction of the original stand. It was built in 1924 and has a number of heritage overlays.

"There is precious little at Flemington that isn't of heritage importance, right down to the configuration of the track with its long straight," said Paul Rosa, Heritage Victoria's senior conservation manager.

"In this instance we are concerned with some particular parts of the existing members' stand, including a mural that adorns one entrance.

"It was a gift to the VRC from country racing authorities and is listed as an important work of public art."

According to Victoria's Heritage Register, Flemington is "historically significant as the oldest racecourse in Victoria, which has operated continuously since 1840 ... [and] been the **site** of the running of the Melbourne Cup since its inception in 1861".

VRC chief executive David Courtney said the club will lodge its application for a permit with Heritage Victoria on Tuesday.

"If there are objects of historical value that need to be preserved, then of course they will be preserved," Mr Courtney said.

"We need to build a facility that will take our club into the 21st century, but we want to preserve our history and traditions, too."

Mr Courtney said construction of the new stand would create 350 construction jobs in Melbourne, and increase race-day capacity from 4500 to 9000 spectators. There will, however, be fewer seats, down from 4000 to just 1544.

The new stand will instead have viewing "balconies", where spectators can stand to watch a race.

Kristen Whittle, architect and director at Bates Smart, said the focus was on comfort between races. "It's not just a bunch of seats looking at a track," Mr Whittle said.

"It's a venue you would actually want to hang out at."

Funding will come from the **sale** of two parcels of land to **Chinese property** developer Greenland Holding **Group**, which plans to build two high-rise **apartment** towers near the track.

The VRC will reap \$45 million from that **property** deal, but it must first be approved by the federal government's Foreign Investment Review **Board**.

The tower blocks also face opposition from the Greens.

Approval for the two **residential** towers will be decided by Victorian Planning Minister Matthew Guy.

If all goes to plan, demolition work on the old stand will begin after the 2015 Melbourne Cup carnival.

The opening of the new stand will also allow the VRC to increase its membership from 30,000 to 35,000 members.

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