

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25

**VICTORIAN
RACING
INTEGRITY
BOARD**



Authorised by the
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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

To The Hon Anthony Carbines MP, Minister for Racing

I am pleased to provide you with the annual report of the Victorian Racing Integrity Board for the year ending 30 June 2025, for tabling in Parliament.

As required by section 95T of the *Racing Act 1958* (the Act), the report describes the board's activities in the past year, including the performance of its statutory functions and engagement with the Victorian racing industry.

I hope that this report will help to inform the Parliament, controlling bodies, thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing industry participants, and the wider Victorian community about the Board's racing integrity oversight and advisory roles under the Act.



Her Honour Judge Katherine Bourke
Chair

31 July 2025

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

It is my privilege to present the Victorian Racing Integrity Board's (VRIB) Annual Report for 2024-25.

This year has been marked by continued progress in the Board's efforts to strengthen the integrity framework across Victoria's racing codes. VRIB has worked diligently to fulfil its statutory functions under the Act, providing independent oversight and advice to the controlling bodies. Our efforts have focused on enhancing transparency, accountability, and collaboration across the thoroughbred, harness, and greyhound racing codes.

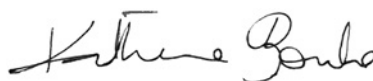
A key achievement during the reporting period was the refinement of the annual integrity planning and budgeting process. Through extensive engagement with the controlling bodies, customised models that better reflect the maturity and diversity of each code's integrity systems, have been agreed. This approach is expected to reduce regulatory burden and improve the efficiency and quality of integrity oversight.

The Board also endorsed its Investigations and Prosecutions Best Practice Standards, a significant step in promoting consistency and excellence in integrity operations. We continued to review and advise on a wide range of integrity policies and rules of racing, ensuring they align with best practice and industry expectations.

Importantly, VRIB expanded the eligibility criteria for lodging complaints under section 95H(1)(f) of the Act. This change ensures that senior integrity staff, including those directly involved in animal welfare, are empowered to raise concerns, reinforcing our commitment to a safe and fair racing environment.

As we reflect on the year's achievements, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of two Board members whose terms concluded during the reporting period. Ms Amelia Lynch brought deep legal, governance, risk management and stakeholder relations knowledge to the Board and her expertise was invaluable to our deliberations. Mr Emmett Dunne APM offered a wealth of experience in law enforcement and integrity governance, and his thoughtful contributions enriched the Board's work. On behalf of all members, I extend our sincere thanks to Amelia and Emmett for their service and dedication.

I also thank my fellow Board members, support staff, and our stakeholders across the Victorian racing industry for their continued engagement and support. Together, we remain committed to fostering a racing culture that upholds the highest standards of integrity and earns the trust of participants and the wider community.



Her Honour Judge Katherine Bourke
Chair

YEAR AT A GLANCE

2024

JULY

VRIB welcomes new Racing Victoria Chair.

AUGUST

VRIB facilitates meetings of the Intelligence & Investigations, Racing Analytical Services Limited Liaison, and Victorian Racing Industry Education Management sub-committees.

SEPTEMBER

VRIB determines to expand the eligibility of individuals able to make complaints to the Board under the Act.

OCTOBER

VRIB members attend the Sporting Integrity Symposium organised by Victoria Police and Sporting Integrity Australia.

NOVEMBER

VRIB holds cross-code integrity meeting, bringing together controlling body Chairs, CEOs and government officials to discuss integrity matters and the racing industry.

DECEMBER

VRIB provides advice, in accordance with sections 37B(1)(a)(iii) & (iv) of the Act, to the Racing Integrity Commissioner (RIC) in relation to the identification of potential areas of focus for the conduct of audits for 2024-25.

2025

JANUARY

VRIB engages with the Skills Insight Jobs Skills Council to discuss training and career development issues in the Victorian racing industry.

FEBRUARY

VRIB meets with controlling body Chairs, CEOs, and integrity heads to discuss a revised integrity planning and budget process for 2025-26.

MARCH

VRIB writes to controlling bodies requesting that their Boards review proposed changes to the integrity planning and budget process for 2025-26.

APRIL

VRIB endorses industry Investigations & Prosecutions Best Practice Standards.

MAY

VRIB writes to each controlling body to formalise integrity planning and budgeting arrangements for 2025-26 that satisfy s.95H(1)(b) and s.95H(1)(c) of the Act.

JUNE

The VRIB Chair and Deputy Chair – Greyhound Racing meet with the newly appointed RIC.



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WHO WE ARE

BOARD MEMBERS

Established in 2019 under Part IVB of the Act, VRIB is an independent statutory authority providing oversight of integrity in the Victorian racing industry (VRI).

Her Honour Judge Katherine Bourke

First appointed: 1 August 2023

Term end: 31 July 2026

Katherine has served on the County Court of Victoria since 2007 and prior to that practised as a solicitor and barrister, specialising in personal injuries and administrative law. She also represented both stewards and licensed persons in matters relating to thoroughbred and harness racing.

She has extensive knowledge of the VRI, having owned horses for many years, as well as serving as the Chair of the Bookmakers and Bookmakers Clerks Registration Committee from 2000 until her appointment to the County Court.

Further, Katherine served as a Director of the Victoria Racing Club for 18 years.

Ms Elizabeth Clarke AM, Deputy Chair

First appointed: 6 November 2019

Term end: 31 July 2025

Elizabeth has had a long involvement with racing in Victoria. She served on the board of Harness Racing Victoria from 2012 to 2019 and as Deputy Chair from 2016 to 2019. She was also a member of the Harness Racing Victoria Integrity Council and Show Cause Committee Member between 2012 and 2019. Elizabeth was Club Manager at the Terang Harness Racing Club and the Terang and District Racing Club. She was an Adviser to the Racing Appeals Tribunal from 2000 to 2011 and a member of Harness Racing Victoria Racing Appeals and Disciplinary Board. She was Chair of the Harness Racing Victoria Industry Advisory Council from 2016 until 2019. In June 2021, Elizabeth was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for service to harness racing and the community.

Mr Bryan Gurry, Deputy Chair

First appointed: 1 August 2019

Term end: 31 July 2027

Bryan was a member of the board of directors of Racing Victoria from 2008 until 2017 and represented the Racing Victoria Board on the Racing Victoria Integrity Council. Bryan has enjoyed a successful career in the law that includes establishing his own legal practice and being appointed as Partner of several national law firms.

Mr John Barrett, Deputy Chair

First appointed: 1 August 2019

Term end: 31 July 2026

John is a former Independent Member of the Greyhound Racing Victoria Integrity Council, Chief Executive of the Racing Industry Development Authority (SA), and General Manager of the Bookmakers Licensing Board (SA). He is an executive management consultant with extensive experience in governance, business performance and innovation across the public and not-for-profit sectors. A Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, he has previously held several executive director, non-executive director, company secretary and statutory regulator roles.

BOARD MEMBERS CONTINUED

Dr Catherine (Kate) Savage, Member

First appointed: 1 August 2019

Term end: 31 July 2026

Kate is an equine veterinarian and internal medicine specialist. She has worked in Australia, the USA and at the Beijing Olympics. Kate is the past President of the World Equine Veterinary Association and was a Member of the Harness Racing Victoria Racing Appeals and Disciplinary Board.

Ms Megan Hughes, Member

First appointed: 1 August 2021

Term end: 31 July 2027

Megan is a lawyer, writer and policy adviser with experience working in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. She has strong expertise in racing and administrative law, governance and integrity and has advised a range of racing bodies in Australia and Europe, most recently on animal welfare and social licence issues. Megan has worked on a number of significant justice and regulatory reforms, including the governance overhaul of the Victorian thoroughbred racing industry. She is currently Manager, Innovation and Impact at the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University. Megan is also a Director of Racing Analytical Services Limited.

Ms Amelia Lynch, Member

First appointed: 1 August 2021

Term end: 31 July 2024

Amelia is a Partner at Lander & Rogers and head of the Sports Business Group. She has developed a specialist practice in sports law, advising a broad range of clients in the sport, leisure and major events industry including national and state sporting organisations, professional sports clubs, racing clubs, major event organisers, venue/facility managers and government sport/recreation departments. She is a Director of the Victorian Institute of Sport and former Director of the Australia and New Zealand Sports Law Association.

Mr Tim Lyons, Member

First appointed: 1 August 2022

Term end: 31 July 2025

Tim has had 20 years' experience in the trade union movement as an organiser, advocate, policy specialist and senior leader. He has been a member of Federal Government boards and expert working groups on workplace relations, taxation, superannuation, procurement, and industry policy. He has had Australian and international leadership experience in relation to superannuation and retirement incomes policy, ESG and capital stewardship. He has had a long-term work focus on governance, compliance and accountability issues as a director, manager, and leader.

Mr Emmett Dunne APM, Member

First appointed: 1 August 2022

Term end: 17 April 2025

Emmett retired from Victoria Police in 2015 at the rank of Assistant Commissioner after a forty-year career in which he served in a variety of roles including as the head of the Prosecutions Division and the Professional Standards Command. He has recently concluded six years' service as a Director and Deputy Chair of Greyhound Racing Victoria, and he continues a life-long involvement in Australian Rules Football which incorporated 21 years as a member of the AFL Tribunal. Emmett resigned from the Board effective 17 April 2025.

Meeting attendance

Board member	Eligible to attend	Meetings attended
Her Hon Judge Katherine Bourke	5	5
Elizabeth Ann Clarke AM	5	5
Bryan Gurry	5	5
John Barrett	5	5
Dr Catherine (Kate) Savage	5	5
Megan Hughes	5	5
Amelia Lynch*	0	0
Tim Lyons	5	5
Emmett Dunne APM	5	4

* Ms Lynch's term finished on 31 July 2024, prior to VRIB's first meeting of the new financial year.

VISION, PURPOSE & APPROACH



OUR VISION

A fair and trustworthy racing industry that champions high standards of integrity and proactively seeks to ensure a level playing field for all participants.



OUR PURPOSE

Promote confidence in the VRI through independent and transparent oversight of the controlling bodies' integrity functions, to maintain high standards and enhance accountability and collaboration.



OUR APPROACH

Provide independent, impartial advice and recommendations about integrity issues to the controlling bodies and government, oversee and facilitate industry collaboration, and promote innovation through identification and endorsement of integrity best practice.

WHAT WE DO

VRIB provides independent oversight of Victorian racing integrity by –

- ensuring that integrity functions are not compromised by the commercial considerations of the controlling bodies.
- increasing the transparency and accountability of integrity functions.
- enhancing cross-code collaboration about integrity matters.

Primary responsibility for the control of racing, including the performance of integrity functions and compliance with the rules of racing, lies with the controlling bodies.

VRIB's functions are set out in the Act and are advisory in nature. The board has oversight of the controlling bodies' performance in the following key areas –

- integrity plans, budgets, and resourcing.
- integrity policy and licensing policy and procedure.
- integrity-related rules of racing.
- complaints about integrity issues within a controlling body.
- disciplinary action proposed against a senior integrity official.
- shared services agreements between the controlling bodies.

VRIB's oversight of racing integrity is shared with the RIC. In contrast to the Board, the RIC's focus is more operational, and includes the following core functions –

- the conduct of annual audits of internal integrity processes and systems of each controlling body.
- the investigation of complaints about integrity processes and systems.



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YEAR IN REVIEW

OVERVIEW OF FUNCTIONS & POWERS

Overview of VRIB's performance of statutory functions under Part IVB of the Act

Section	Function	Performance
95H(1)(a) and (i)	Oversee and maintain relationships between and with the controlling bodies, their integrity staff, and boards.	Undertook regular liaison with the integrity heads, chairs, chief executives, and boards of the controlling bodies through formal and informal mechanisms.
95H(1)(b), 95R(2)(b) and (d)	Endorse and make recommendations about each controlling body's annual integrity plan.	Endorsed the 2024-25 annual integrity plan for Harness Racing Victoria (HRV). (n.b. the Racing Victoria (RV) and Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) plans for 2024-25 were endorsed by VRIB in the 2023-24 financial year). Given changes made to the review process and timing of integrity planning for 2025-26, the Board will not consider / endorse plans until the beginning of the 2025-26 financial year.
95H(1)(c)	Review and provide recommendations about integrity resourcing and the integrity budgets of each controlling body.	VRIB will review integrity budgets early in the 2025-26 financial year.
95H(1)(d)	Advise and make recommendations to the controlling bodies about integrity policy and policies and procedures for participant licensing.	Reviewed and made recommendations in support of 8 integrity policies. Two of these reviews related to separate proposals for change to one policy.
95H(1)(e)	Review proposals for new or amended, integrity related rules of racing and make recommendations.	Reviewed 135 proposals for new [42] and amended [93] rules / sub-rules of racing relating to integrity, suggested some enhancements and, ultimately, made recommendations in support / support in principle of 111 proposals, with 24 not supported pending redrafting or further consideration following the outcome of stakeholder consultation by the controlling bodies.

OVERVIEW OF FUNCTIONS & POWERS CONTINUED

Overview of VRIB's performance of statutory functions under Part IVB of the Act, Cont.

Section	Function	Performance
95H(1)(f) and (g)	Receive, review, and investigate or refer to the RIC, complaints made by a member or a director of a board of a controlling body, an integrity manager or the Chief Steward or Deputy Chief Steward about integrity issues within a controlling body.	VRIB received no complaints during 2024-25.
95H(1)(h)	Liaise with the RIC and external agencies about integrity matters.	Engaged in regular, informal, and formal liaison with the RIC and other agencies.
95H(1)(j)	Provide direction about disciplinary action proposed by a controlling body against a senior integrity department staff member about internal integrity matters.	Was not required to provide direction in relation to matters involving disciplinary action proposed by a controlling body in 2024-25.
95H(1)(k)	Oversee the development of memorandum of understanding or shared service agreements between the controlling bodies.	A common service level agreement between RASL and each controlling body continues to operate.

Overview of VRIB's performance of its statutory powers under Part IVB of the *Racing Act 1958*

Section	Power	Performance
95H(1)(l)	Issue directions to a controlling body regarding integrity matters.	Power was not exercised during the reporting period.
95O	Direct a controlling body to provide information relevant to a complaint.	Power was not exercised during the reporting period.
95P	Give directions to a controlling body about a failure to comply with a recommendation.	Power was not exercised during the reporting period.
95R(2)(a)	Require a controlling body to provide further information about an annual integrity plan.	VRIB made 14 requests to HRV for further information following consideration of their 2024-25 integrity plan.
95R(2)(c)	Require a controlling body to make changes to the annual integrity plan.	Power was not exercised during the reporting period.
95S	Advise the Minister of any failure by a controlling body to prepare and submit an annual integrity plan; consider, respond to, or implement a recommendation; or comply with a direction.	Power was not exercised during the reporting period.

ANNUAL INTEGRITY PLANS & BUDGETS

The annual integrity plans and budgets identify each controlling body's strategic priorities, the operational activities they will undertake in the year ahead, and the resources required to do this.

VRIB's oversight function in relation to the integrity plans and budgets is to review, provide independent feedback, and ultimately endorse them once confident the plan is in the best interests of the industry.

The interdependent nature of the board's functions in relation to both means that VRIB assesses the plans and budgets concurrently.

VRIB subsequently considers what, if any, recommendations / requests it should make to facilitate continuous improvement in integrity outcomes through the annual integrity plan process and communicates these to the controlling bodies.

Changes to the integrity planning and budgeting processes for 2025-26

In early 2025, the full Board engaged in person with senior staff from each controlling body — Chairs, CEOs, and Integrity Heads — to discuss proposed enhancements to the integrity planning and budgeting to commence for 2025-26.

The proposals aimed to strengthen and streamline the annual integrity planning and budgeting framework, with a focus on improving assurance and fostering transparent, evidence-informed confidence in the integrity of racing.

Following these meetings, VRIB issued correspondence to each controlling body summarising the outcomes and requesting that their respective Boards review and provide feedback. Each controlling body subsequently confirmed its support for a revised integrity planning and budgeting process.

VRIB then formally established customised planning and budgeting arrangements with each controlling body to meet the requirements of sections 95H(1)(b) and 95H(1)(c) of the Act.

The revised process is designed to provide greater flexibility in the content and submission of integrity plans, while also enabling the accurate reporting of budget and resourcing information. It also encourages the efficient use of existing planning, integrity, risk management, and business systems within each controlling body.

The Board anticipates that this approach will reduce regulatory burden by eliminating duplication across integrity planning, budgeting, and performance reporting. The changes reflect the maturity of each controlling body's integrity system, and ensure that the plans and budget information provided to VRIB are relevant to each racing code and its culture, nuances and norms.

Endorsement of 2025-26 integrity plans and budgets

The Act requires VRIB to be satisfied that its endorsement of each controlling body's annual integrity plan and budget is in the best interests of the racing industry.

As for previous years, VRIB will provide an opportunity for controlling bodies to discuss their annual plan and budget with the Board and respond to members' queries.

However, in moving to a customised model, and providing the controlling bodies with greater discretion in relation to the timing of the submission of their plans, VRIB will consider the 2025-26 plans and budgets at the beginning of the 2025-26 financial year. This contrasts with previous years where VRIB considered plans in the financial year prior to their commencement. As such, the endorsement of the 2025-26 plans will be covered in VRIB's next Annual Report.

ADVICE ABOUT INTEGRITY & LICENSING POLICY

Requests & recommendations relating to the 2024-25 integrity plans

VRIB issued – under sections 95R(2)(a) and 95R(2)(b) of the Act – several additional requests to HRV following consideration of its 2024-25 integrity plan.

The requests (14 in total) made by VRIB were to address gaps identified in the controlling body's plan and provide assurance that key resourcing decisions were appropriately assessed and supported by thorough analysis and evaluation.

VRIB's function under section 95H(1)(d) of the Act is to advise and make recommendations to the controlling bodies about integrity policy, and licensing policies and procedures.

The performance of this function is ordinarily delegated to the deputy chairs unless the specific policy or procedure raises matters of cross-code application. In providing advice about these matters to the controlling bodies, the deputies draw on their significant knowledge of the applicable greyhound, harness, or thoroughbred racing code.

VRIB reviewed and made recommendations in support of 8 integrity policies in 2024-25.

The policies related to:

- Betting Policy (RV)
- Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy (RV)
- Jockey Licensing Policy (n.b. reviewed twice (RV))
- Private Interest and Probity and Conflict of Interest Policy (RV)
- Step Aside Policy (RV)
- Trainer Licensing Policy (RV)
- Rider's Agent Licensing Policy (RV)
- Stable Employee Registration Policy (RV)

Further, VRIB reviewed and made a recommendation in support of:

- Spurs – Terms of Reference (RV)

VRIB also engaged with RV and HRV in relation to whip reform.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED AMENDED & NEW RULES OF RACING

The review of proposals for new or amended rules of racing relating to integrity is a core VRIB function.

To increase expediency and efficiency, VRIB's deputy chairs perform this task under delegation – s.95HA(b) of the Act – from the Board. Each deputy has extensive knowledge of the relevant racing code, including a practical understanding of the application of the rules and interplay between the local and national rule-making bodies for greyhound, harness, and thoroughbred racing.

The controlling bodies' internal processes permit a detailed examination of the potential impact of new and amended racing rules, including consultation with each code's industry stakeholders.

At the conclusion of this process, the proposal for a new or amended rule is referred to VRIB for its review. The relevant deputy chair also considers whether the proposal raises cross-code or other issues that warrant review by the full Board.

During 2024-25, VRIB reviewed 135 proposals from the controlling bodies to amend or introduce new rules / sub-rules of racing for their code. Of these 71 related to thoroughbred / harness racing and 64 to greyhound racing.

These reviews included consideration of various changes to the Australian Rules of Racing, Australian Stud Book Regulations, Australian Harness Racing Rules, as well as feedback provided on the GRV proposed National and Local Rules stakeholder consultation process.

After reviewing each proposed rule, VRIB ultimately made recommendations in support or support in principle of their introduction or amendment, with the exception of 24 which were not supported pending redrafting or further consideration following the outcome of stakeholder consultation by the controlling bodies.

Further, deputy chairs considered the renumbering of eight and repealing of 16 existing rules / sub-rules resulting from the introduction of new, or amendments to existing, rules / sub-rules.

The internal scrutiny applied by the controlling bodies to proposed rules means that it is unusual (but not unprecedented) for VRIB to recommend a course other than introduction of the new or amended rule / sub-rule.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT INTEGRITY ISSUES WITHIN CONTROLLING BODIES

VRIB has a very limited complaint function under section 95H(1)(f) of the Act. It is protective in nature and intended to ensure the integrity department of each controlling body is free from undue internal influence.

Who can make a complaint to VRIB?

Designated persons who hold the following specific roles at a controlling body can make a complaint to VRIB:

- a board member or director
- an integrity manager
- a chief or deputy chief steward.

What type of complaints can VRIB receive?

VRIB can act on complaints about integrity issues within a controlling body made by a designated person.

Under the Act, VRIB cannot accept or respond to complaints that are:

- made by any other person (including industry participants)
- made anonymously
- about any other matter that is not an integrity issue within a controlling body.

Complaints received under section 95H(1)(f) during 2024-25

VRIB did not receive any complaints in 2024-25.

Complaint handling policy

VRIB has a complaint handling policy that has been provided to all eligible persons. The policy includes information about the Board's role, how to make a complaint and how VRIB will respond to it. The policy was reviewed by the Board in September 2024 and then provided to all eligible controlling body staff in December 2024.

During the reporting period, the Board also determined to expand the eligibility of controlling body staff that could make a complaint to VRIB (see "Complaints Expansion" below).

Other complaints

If VRIB receives a complaint that falls outside its statutory power, it will refer the matter to the appropriate entity. Ordinarily, this will be the relevant controlling body or the RIC for Victorian matters, or the responsible interstate authority. VRIB received six complaints of this nature in the reporting period.

CONSIDERATION OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Section 95H(1)(j) of the Act vests VRIB with an oversight role to consider and provide direction to a controlling body about disciplinary action it proposes to take against a senior member of an integrity department about internal integrity matters.

The function is protective in nature and is intended to ensure that adverse action is not taken against a senior integrity official 'whistle-blower' for raising concerns about integrity issues within a controlling body.

Controlling bodies bear sole responsibility for their employment relationships with staff, including the consequences of any disciplinary findings made and action taken. VRIB therefore considers that, ordinarily, it will not be appropriate for it to express an opinion about how a controlling body weighs competing considerations in favour of, or mitigating against, the different disciplinary options available to it. However, VRIB may provide guidance to assist the controlling body to determine what, if any, disciplinary sanction is open to it.

VRIB was not required to provide direction in relation to matters involving disciplinary action proposed by a controlling body in 2024-25.

RELATIONSHIPS

Controlling bodies

VRIB's endeavours to foster direct relationships with the controlling bodies and their integrity staff and works on a number of fronts to ensure that interactions remain active and beneficial, this includes:

- VRIB providing regular written updates to the controlling body chairs, chief executives and integrity department heads throughout the reporting period and seeking their feedback and input about the Board's activities and plans.
- VRIB deputy chairs liaising with the controlling bodies, providing counsel and guidance directly to integrity department heads and their senior staff when, and as, needed.

- VRIB sub-committees facilitating formal, cross-code touchpoints between VRIB and integrity staff throughout the year.
- scheduling 'cross-code' integrity meetings with controlling body chairs, CEOs, the RIC and Departmental officials to discuss industry wide issues.
- the VRIB chair, deputy chairs and executive officer maintaining regular contact with the VRI integrity heads and CEOs.

In its interactions with the controlling bodies, VRIB is conscious of the need to balance the performance of its statutory functions to oversee and maintain relationships while not placing excessive burdens on those organisations.

INTEGRITY INITIATIVES

Investigations and Prosecutions Best Practice Standards

A piece of work emanating from VRIB's Strategic Plan was for the Board to develop an Investigations and Prosecution Policy (Standards) that set out best practice in relation to the conduct of investigations and prosecutions for use by the controlling bodies.

The Board has now, with the assistance of a professional services provider (Barrister), developed, consulted, and endorsed Standards for use by the controlling bodies.

The Standards are not intended to override any policies, procedures and/or methodologies issued by the controlling bodies, but work to provide key principles which VRIB would like to see applied across the Victorian racing industry.

It is expected that each of the controlling bodies will use the Standards to update their integrity policies, procedures and/or methodologies. While VRIB expects alignment with the expectations of the Standards, the content of the controlling bodies policies, procedures and/or methodologies remain within their remit.

The development of an Investigations and Prosecutions Standards follows on from VRIB releasing Education and Fit & Proper Persons policies in 2022-23. Policy development aligns with the Board's legislative remit to provide integrity related policy advice as per s.95H(1)(d)(i) of the Act.

Complaints Expansion

Section 95H(1)(f) of the Act states that a function of VRIB is -

to receive complaints made by a member or a Director of a board of a controlling body, an integrity manager (however designated) or the Chief Steward or Deputy Chief Steward about integrity issues within a controlling body.

To ensure the individuals the Board has determined are eligible to make a complaint are aware of this function, they are provided with a copy of VRIB's Complaint Handling Policy on an annual basis.

During the reporting period the Board determined to expand eligibility under the "integrity manager (however designated)" category to include not only integrity heads and CEOs, but also those integrity staff that report directly to the head of the controlling body's integrity function.

The Board made this determination to address a concern it had that many senior integrity staff, including chief veterinarians, were unable to make a complaint to VRIB. Given the centrality of animal welfare issues to integrity, the Board felt this was an important matter to address.

Moreover, VRIB is of the view that expanded eligibility will better enable it to perform its complaints function, as it works to ensure that relevant "...integrity issues within a controlling body", are brought to VRIB's attention, and can be formally assessed and investigated, as necessary.

INTEGRITY INITIATIVES CONTINUED

Controlling Body Governance Arrangements

A focus of VRIB during the reporting period was the governance arrangements in place at the controlling bodies. The Board recognises the importance of good governance practice, especially as this relates to integrity, so as to ensure transparency, accountability and stakeholder confidence.

Practical examples of this are VRIB's work with a controlling body, via the review of integrity policy under s.95H(1)(d)(i) of the Act, to improve its governance arrangements in relation to conflicts of interest by developing separate policies for staff and directors. The Board felt this was particularly important given the differences in the nature and scope of conflicts that can arise for directors given the strategic influence and oversight inherent to these roles.

VRIB also provided advice to a controlling body in relation to the operation of its integrity sub-committee (ISC). In this instance the Board was keen to ensure that the independence of the sub-committee was given primacy, and suggested the controlling body amend its ISC charter in relation to the voting rights of ex officio members.



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GOVERNANCE

CORPORATE REPORTING

VRIB has a corporate governance and legislative compliance program to ensure it meets its legal and governance obligations, including the development and regular review of VRIB policies and processes for conflict of interest, fraud, confidentiality, document and records management, risk management, financial management and workplace standards.

Financial reporting

VRIB is funded by the VRI on a cost recovery basis through the Department of Justice and Community Safety (the Department). Detailed reporting about its financial performance, workforce data and other disclosures under the *Financial Management Act 1994* (Vic) are included in the Department's annual report.

Shared services

VRIB receives support from the Department for a range of corporate services, including information technology, human resources, and finance.

Public sector conduct

VRIB and its staff abide by the Victorian public sector codes of conduct.

Conflicts of interest

VRIB abides by the Victorian public sector model conflict of interest policy and maintains registers of private interests and gifts, benefits and hospitality. Board members and the executive officer complete an annual declaration of private interests.

Risk management

Risk management processes to meet the requirements of the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework 2016 and Risk Management Standard ISO 31000:2018 are in place, which includes compliance with the Victorian Protective Data Security Framework.

Consultancies

VRIB engaged professional services for the layout and design of its Annual 2023-24 Report and Investigations & Prosecutions Best Practice Standards.

The Board also renewed its contract with Diligent Board Services Australia Pty Ltd. during the reporting period.

Freedom of information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic) (the FOI Act) provides the public with a right to request access to information held by VRIB. No freedom of information (FOI) requests to access information under the FOI Act were received during the reporting period.

An FOI request must be made in writing, clearly describe the information or document sought, and be accompanied by the prescribed application fee made payable to the Department.

Public interest disclosures

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012* (Vic) encourages and facilitates the disclosure of improper conduct and corruption in the Victorian public sector by providing protection to people who make disclosures in accordance with its provisions.

Enquiries about access to VRIB documents can be made to –

Freedom of Information Request Victorian Racing Integrity Board

Level 16, 121 Exhibition Street
GPO Box 123
Melbourne Victoria 3000
enquiries@vrib.vic.gov.au

Any disclosure of this type about VRIB or its staff may be made to either –

Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission

Level 1, 459 Collins Street (North Tower)
Melbourne Victoria 3000
1300 735 135
www.ibac.vic.gov.au

Victorian Ombudsman

Level 2, 570 Collins Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
03 9613 6222
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