

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Pakula MP**

Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – COVID-19  
Minister for Industry Support and Recovery  
Minister for Trade  
Minister for Business Precincts  
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events  
Minister for Racing



Thursday, 13 August 2020

## NEW STAWELL GIFT GOVERNING BODY HITS GROUND RUNNING

A new management committee headed by Victorian Athletic League president Stephanie Spence and including broadcaster Jason Richardson has set the Stawell Gift – Australia’s oldest professional footrace – on track for a vibrant future.

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula today welcomed the appointment of the committee of management, which includes three independent members and representatives from the athletic league, the Stawell Athletic Club and the Northern Grampians Shire Council.

The independent directors are Channel Seven and Racing.com personality Richardson – the 1993 Stawell Gift winner – as well as marketing/business manager Sally Tucker and senior commercial and media executive Dustin Lockett, a finalist in the 1997 Gift.

Ms Spence and Tim Mason are drawn from the ranks of the state’s professional running body and the Stawell Athletic Club is represented by president Neil Blizzard, Robert Irvine and Wendy Hopwood while Northern Grampians mayor Cr Murray Emerson and chief executive Liana Thompson round out the 10-member committee.

Ms Spence is a former state and national league track athlete who has won over 800 metres at Stawell. She has more than 15 year’ experience working in the higher education sector and has been a board member of the Victorian Athletic League since 2016 and president since 2018.

The new team is charged with driving collaboration between key event partners and provide expertise to build sponsorship and tourism and better promote the event and region through its national broadcast.

With equal prize money for the men’s and women’s Gifts and a committee of management with 40 per cent female representation, the Victorian Government is proud to support an event that is levelling the playing field.

The Government encouraged reforms that included the establishment of a new management structure and provided a commitment of \$1.22 million in funding to secure the future of the event, which was first run in 1878.

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula**

*“The Stawell Gift is a great Victorian event that can use these new foundations to further build on its commercial, tourism and cultural appeal.”*

*“The appointment of the committee of management is a significant step forward and I congratulate all parties on their commitment and spirit of co-operation.”*

### **Quote attributable to Stawell Gift committee of management chair Stephanie Spence**

*“The Stawell Gift is an iconic event and being entrusted to be part of the group that will guide its evolution and growth is an honour.”*

### **Quote attributable to Stawell Gift committee of management deputy chair Neil Blizzard**

*“The pandemic meant that we could not hold the Gift this year which was a blow – but this new committee will now throw all of its efforts into making the 2021 Gift a great success.”*

**Media contact:** Shaun Phillips 0407 553 763 | [shaun.phillips@mstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:shaun.phillips@mstaff.vic.gov.au)