

Media Release

Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

Minister for Outdoor Recreation



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AUSTRALIA'S BEST SPRINTERS SET TO SHINE IN STAWELL

Central Park will see a showdown for the ages today as young sprinting superstars Gout Gout and Lachlan Kennedy go head-to-head in Australia's oldest and most prestigious footrace, with the running of the 143rd Stawell Gift – backed by the Allan Labor Government.

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos today attended the Stawell Gift which is delivering a major economic boost for local jobs and businesses, as the event attracts visitors from outside the region benefitting local hotels, restaurants and cafes.

The Labor Government has invested \$1.72 million to support Stawell Gift Event Management in delivering the event through to 2027.

Having already experienced two days of exciting athletics action over the Easter weekend, Stawell locals and visitors from across Australia will experience a packed schedule on Finals Day, highlighted by the Powercor Men's and Women's Gift, with finalists chasing a \$40,000 winners' cheque across both races.

The Gift finals will be hotly contested with Gout and Kennedy leading the charge in the Men's Gift, while Paris 2024 Olympics semi-finalist Bree Rizzo will headline the Women's Gift.

Other highlights on today's race schedule include Olympic 800 metre finalist Peter Bol returning to Stawell for the 1000m invitational handicap against Paris 2024 Olympian Peyton Craig.

As always, the Gift Carnival has offered plenty to enjoy off the track as well with Fashions at Central Park, Family Day on Easter Sunday, featuring the ever-popular Easter Egg hunt, the Sash Club celebrating past winners and coaching clinics for the stars of the future.

Naming rights partner Powercor—who have extended their partnership through to 2031—and broadcast partner the Seven Network are helping deliver this time-honoured event, with today's races set to showcase the picturesque Stawell and Grampians region to over one million viewers nationwide.

The Labor Government is helping Stawell and other Grampians towns draw more visitors to the region. Forward hotel occupancy data from STR shows regional Victoria reached 79 per cent on Good Friday and Easter Saturday—highlighting strong holiday visitation.

This support also includes more than \$29 million in assistance to help small businesses and communities across Western Victoria recover from recent bushfires, with funding to support both immediate relief and long-term recovery.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos

"It's incredible to watch emerging stars like Gout Gout and Lachlan Kennedy light up the track – the Gift continues to be where Australia's next sporting heroes are made."

"The Grampians region is an iconic part of regional Victoria and events like the Stawell Gift support Grampians small businesses, fill accommodation and provide a boost to the entire Stawell Community."

Quote attributable to Member for Western Victoria Jacinta Ermacora

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“The Stawell Gift is not only a highlight on our sporting calendar, it’s a major boost for our local economy—bringing visitors, filling hotels, and shining a national spotlight on everything the Grampians region has to offer.”

Quote attributable to Stawell Gift Event Management Chair Murray Emerson

“Stawell Gift Event Management is incredibly grateful to the Victorian Government for their ongoing support, which ensures the Stawell Gift remains Australia’s most prestigious footrace.”

“This investment helps us deliver a world-class event that not only showcases elite athletics but also brings visitors, energy and vital economic activity to Stawell and the wider Grampians region.”