VICTORIAN ATHLETIC LEAGUE

Rules

Draft: Effective 1st October 2026

DOCUMENT APPROVAL

Version	Approved By	Draft Approval Date	Effective Date	Description
1.0	VAL Board	30 September 2026	1 September 2027	Major update
1.1	VAL Board			
1.2	VAL Board			

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART A – BOARD & GOVERNANCE 3

1. VICTORIAN ATHLETIC LEAGUE (VAL) RULES 3
2. THE VAL BOARD 4
3. OFFICIALS 6

PART B – MEMBERSHIP, CLUBS AND EVENT ADMINISTRATION 7

4. MEMBERSHIP 7
5. ATHLETE COMPETITION GROUPS AND CATEGORIES 9
6. CLUBS 10
7. APPROVED VAL EVENTS 13
8. PRIZEMONEY 15
9. COMPETITION ENTRIES 16
10. HANDICAPS 18
11. EVENT FIELD SIZES AND PROGRESSIONS 18

PART C – COMPETITION RULES 20

12. ATHLETES AND COACH/TRAINER RESPONSIBILITIES 20
13. STARTING 23
14. RACING RULES 25
15. TIMING AND RESULTS 27
16. VAL STEWARDS AND RACE DAY OFFICIALS 29
17. RACE DAY PROTEST 32

PART D – INTEGRITY, DISCIPLINE AND APPEALS 34

18. CONDUCT 34
19. OFFENCES 35
20. INVESTIGATIONS AND CHARGES 37
21. RACE REVIEW PANEL 397
22. HEARING AND DETERMINATIONS 40
23. PENALTIES 43
24. HANDICAP REVIEWS AND APPEALS 44
25. VAL TRIBUNAL 45
26. ANTI-DOPING AND SPORT INTEGRITY 46

SCHEDULES 47

SCHEDULE 1 - DEFINITIONS 47

PART A – BOARD & GOVERNANCE

1. VICTORIAN ATHLETIC LEAGUE (VAL) RULES

1.1 These Rules are the Victorian Athletic League Rules ("Rules").
The Rules are made under the authority of the Constitution of the Victorian Athletic League Incorporated ("VAL") and are binding on all persons and organisations to whom they apply.

1.2 The purpose of these Rules is to:

a) provide a fair, transparent and consistent framework for the governance, administration and conduct of Competitions sanctioned by the VAL;
b) establish the rights, responsibilities and obligations of Members, Clubs, Athletes, Officials and other Participants;
c) promote integrity, safety, good sportsmanship and fair competition;
d) support the effective governance and administration of the VAL; and
e) complement the Constitution and the Policies and Technical Guidelines approved by the Board.

1.3 These Rules apply to:

a) the VAL;
b) Members;
c) affiliated Clubs;
d) Athletes;
e) Trainers and Coaches;
f) Officials;
g) Volunteers acting on behalf of the VAL or an affiliated Club;
h) Bookmakers authorised to operate at a VAL-sanctioned Competition; and
i) any other person participating in, or undertaking an official role in, a VAL-sanctioned Competition or activity.

1.4 Participation in a VAL-sanctioned Competition or activity constitutes acceptance of, and agreement to comply with, these Rules.

Persons to whom these Rules apply must comply with these Rules and any lawful direction given by the Board or an Official acting within the authority of these Rules.

Governance Framework and Interpretation

1.5 The governance framework of the VAL comprises the following documents.

Order	Governance Document	Purpose
1	Constitution	Governing document of the VAL
2	Rules	Governance, administration and conduct of the VAL and its Competitions
3	Policies	Governance, administrative and operational direction supporting the Rules
4	Technical Guidelines	Technical standards, methodologies and procedures supporting the Rules

1.6 Where an inconsistency exists between governance documents, the document higher in the governance hierarchy prevails.

1.7 The Board is responsible for administering these Rules and may exercise all powers conferred by the Constitution and these Rules.

The Board may make, amend or repeal these Rules, approve Policies and Technical Guidelines, and delegate any function or power in accordance with the Constitution.

1.8 Where a Technical Guideline prescribes a procedure, failure to comply with that procedure is deemed a breach of these Rules.

1.9 Unless these Rules expressly provide otherwise, a decision of the Board made under these Rules is final, subject only to any review or appeal provided for in these Rules.

1.10 Unless the contrary intention appears:

a) words and expressions have the meanings given in the Constitution unless otherwise defined in these Rules;
b) words importing the singular include the plural and vice versa;
c) words importing one gender include every gender;
d) headings are for convenience only and do not affect interpretation;
e) a reference to legislation includes any amendment or replacement of that legislation;
f) a reference to a Policy or Technical Guideline means the version approved by the Board; and
g) a reference to the Board includes a person or body exercising delegated authority on behalf of the Board.

1.11 The definitions used in these Rules are contained in Schedule 1 – Definitions.

Commencement, Amendment and Publication

1.12 These Rules take effect on the date determined by the Board ("Commencement Date") and replace all previous Victorian Athletic League Rules, Regulations and other governance instruments dealing with the same subject matter unless otherwise determined by the Board.

1.13 The Board may amend these Rules in accordance with the Constitution.

1.14 The current version of these Rules published on the official VAL website is the authoritative version.

Notice of an amendment is taken to have been given once it has been approved by the Board and published on the official VAL website. The Board may also notify Members by email, electronic newsletter, social media or other communication channels.

Members, Clubs, Athletes, Officials and Participants are responsible for ensuring they are familiar with the current version of these Rules.

1.15 Any disciplinary matter, protest, appeal or investigation commenced before the Commencement Date of these Rules shall continue to be determined under the rules or regulations in force at the time the matter commenced, unless the Board determines otherwise.

2. THE VAL BOARD

2.1 The Board is responsible for the governance, strategic direction and oversight of the VAL.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the Board must:

a) act in accordance with the Constitution;
b) promote and protect the interests of the VAL;
c) administer these Rules;
d) safeguard the integrity and reputation of the Sport;
e) support the growth, sustainability and development of professional athletics; and
f) act in the best interests of the VAL, its members and the sport.

2.2 The Board may exercise all powers necessary for the governance and administration of the VAL.

Without limiting its general powers, the Board may:

a) appoint Officials, Committees, Panels and representatives;
b) determine Membership, affiliation, registrations, licences and eligibility in accordance with these Rules;
c) approve the annual Competition Calendar and sanction Competitions and Events;
d) determine fees, levies and charges;
e) inquire into, investigate and determine any matter arising under these Rules;
f) issue directions necessary for the safe, efficient and effective conduct of VAL activities;
g) recognise, confirm or give effect to decisions, suspensions or disqualifications imposed by recognised sporting organisations where appropriate;
h) enter into agreements and arrangements necessary to fulfil the objects of the VAL;
i) take any action it considers necessary to preserve the integrity, safety, fairness and proper administration of the sport and Competitions conducted under these Rules;
j) correct any administrative error or omission where the Board considers it necessary to ensure fairness or the proper administration of these Rules; and
k) exercise any other power conferred on it by the Constitution or these Rules.

Club/Event Incentives and Exemptions

2.3 The Board may approve participation initiatives, incentives, exemptions or special competition conditions designed to promote participation, support affiliated Clubs or enhance VAL competitions.
Without limiting clause 2.2, the Board may approve but is not limited to:

a) exemption from handicap penalties;
b) accelerated handicap progression;
c) handicap maintenance or bonus handicap provisions;
d) modified competition conditions; or
e) any other participation initiative considered appropriate by the Board.

A Club seeking approval of a participation initiative shall apply to the Board in the manner and by the date determined by the Board. Unless otherwise determined by the Board, approval of a participation initiative applies only for the season or period specified in the approval.

Fees and Charges

2.4 The Board may determine, impose, vary or remove fees, levies and charges for the purposes of administering the VAL and funding initiatives consistent with its objectives.
The Board shall publish all applicable fees, levies and charges on the official VAL website or by such other means as it considers appropriate. The Board may waive, reduce or refund any fee or levy where it considers it appropriate to do so.

Emergency Powers

2.5 Where urgent circumstances require immediate action and it is impracticable to convene a meeting of the Board, the Chair may exercise emergency powers on behalf of the Board.

Where reasonably practicable, the Chair must consult a majority of Directors before exercising an emergency power.

A decision made under this Rule has the same force and effect as a decision of the Board but must be reported to, recorded in the minutes of, and may be confirmed, varied or revoked by the next meeting of the Board.

Committees and Panels

2.6 The Board may establish Committees, Panels and other bodies it considers necessary to assist in carrying out its functions.

The Board must determine the membership, terms of reference, delegated authority, reporting requirements and duration of each appointment.

Unless otherwise provided by these Rules or determined by the Board, Committees and Panels operate in an advisory capacity.

Delegations

2.7 The Board may delegate any function or power under these Rules in accordance with the Constitution.

A delegation does not prevent the Board from exercising the delegated function or power.

A decision of the Board, Committee, Panel or Official is not invalid solely because of a vacancy, defect in appointment or procedural irregularity, provided the decision was made in good faith.

3. OFFICIALS

3.1 The Board must appoint the Officials it considers necessary for the administration and conduct of Competitions.

Officials may include, but are not limited to: Handicappers, Chief Steward, Stewards, Starters, Judges, Results Officials, Photo Finish Operators, Technical Officials, Panel members, logistics and transport officers and any other Official deemed required and appointed by the Board or by delegated authority from the Board.

3.2 The Board will appoint a Chief Steward, who is responsible for the leadership and administration of the Stewarding Panel.

The Board may appoint a Chief Steward for each Competition, if required.
Where only one Steward is appointed, that Steward is the Chief Steward.

3.3 The Board must determine the terms of appointment for Officials, including their duties, authority, remuneration or honoraria (where applicable), conditions of appointment, reasonable expense

allowances (where applicable), Codes of Conduct, performance expectations, training and development requirements, and any other matters necessary for the effective administration of the VAL.

An Official remains appointed until the expiry of their appointment, resignation, removal or replacement by the Board.

All Officials must satisfy any accreditation, screening, child safeguarding, conduct and eligibility requirements determined by the Board.

PART B – MEMBERSHIP, CLUBS AND EVENT ADMINISTRATION

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 The Board may approve the following categories of membership and registration:

a) Athlete;
b) Coach/Trainer;
c) Official;
d) Club;
e) Life Member; and
f) any other category determined by the Board.

4.2 Membership categories, eligibility, fees and entitlements are determined by the Board and published in the Fees and Charges Schedule.

4.3 Eligibility criteria, nomination procedures and the approval process for Life Membership are determined by the Board and approved in accordance with the Constitution.

Registration

4.4 A person must be registered with the VAL before participating in, officiating at, or undertaking any role requiring registration at a VAL-sanctioned Competition.

Registrations are valid for the period determined by the Board.

4.5 Applications for registration or renewal must:

a) be submitted in the approved form;
b) include all information required by the Board;
c) be accompanied by the prescribed fee; and
d) include any supporting documentation requested by the Board.

Applicants must provide complete and accurate information.
The Board may request additional information before determining an application.

4.6 A person acting as a Coach/Trainer or Official at a VAL-sanctioned Competition must be registered or accredited where required by the Board.

The Board may determine the qualifications, accreditation, experience or other requirements applicable to Trainers and Officials.

4.7 The Board may approve or refuse an application for registration, renewal or accreditation for an athlete, trainer (or both) or an official.

The Board may refuse an application where it is satisfied that:

a) the applicant has not met the requirements for registration;
b) the application contains false, misleading or incomplete information;
c) the applicant is not a fit and proper person to be associated with the VAL; or
d) any other circumstance exists that, in the opinion of the Board, is contrary to the interests of the VAL or the sport.

The board may impose certain conditions and/or restrictions to an individual membership or affiliation with the VAL or VAL-sanctioned events.

A refusal of registration does not prevent a person from submitting a future application unless otherwise determined by the Board.

Member Obligations and Benefits

4.8 Every Member must:

a) comply with the Constitution, these Rules, Policies and Technical Guidelines;
b) comply with lawful directions issued by the Board or an authorised Official;
c) provide accurate and complete information to the VAL;
d) promptly notify the VAL of any change to their registration details;
e) pay all fees and charges by the due date; and
f) act honestly, fairly and in a manner that upholds the reputation and integrity of the VAL and the sport.

A Member remains subject to these Rules in respect of any conduct occurring during their period of registration, notwithstanding that their registration has expired or been cancelled.

4.9 The Board may determine the benefits available to each membership category.

Membership benefits do not create an entitlement and may be varied by the Board from time to time.

4.10 Members must pay all registration fees, entry fees, fines and other monies owing to the VAL by the prescribed due date.

A Member with outstanding monies may, until those monies are paid:

a) be ineligible to compete or officiate;
b) have registration benefits suspended or cancelled;
c) be prevented from entering Competitions; or
d) be subject to disciplinary action under these Rules.

Suspension and Cancellation of Registration

4.11 The Board may suspend or cancel a registration where:

a) a registration application contains false or misleading information;
b) a Member has breached the Constitution or these Rules;
c) a Member no longer satisfies the eligibility requirements for registration;

d) a Member fails to comply with a lawful direction of the Board; or
e) the Board considers the Member is no longer a fit and proper person to remain registered.

Suspension or cancellation of registration does not prevent the Board taking disciplinary action under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

5. ATHLETE COMPETITION GROUPS AND CATEGORIES

5.1 Athletes may compete in the following Competition Groups:

GROUP	DIVISION	ELIGIBILITY
Open	Men, Women, Combined	Athletes aged 14 years or over on the day of competition
Masters 35+	Men, Women, Combined	Athletes aged 35 years or over on the day of competition
Master 45+	Men, Women, Combined	Athletes aged 45 years or over on the day of competition
Novice	Men, Women, Combined	As defined in VAL Rules 5.3 to 5.8
Junior	Boys, Girls, Combined	Athletes aged 11 or over and under 18 on the day of competition
Under 14	Boys, Girls, Combined	Athletes aged 11 or over and under 14 on the day of competition

Note: In the case of events run over a number of days, age-based eligibility is taken from the day the event first commenced (ie. Heat 1).

Eligibility requirements for each Competition Group are determined in accordance with these Rules.

5.2 Athletes who turn 14 during the current season can continue in U14 series races, as long as they first competed in the series at age 13. This rule also applies to any other VAL series event where eligibility is determined by age.

Novice Athletes

5.3 An Athlete is eligible to compete in Novice Events where they satisfy the eligibility requirements prescribed by these Rules.

An Athlete who wins a Novice Event becomes ineligible to compete in future Novice Events unless otherwise provided by these Rules.

5.4 Novice athletes are those athletes who before the commencement of an event have not won an Open, Masters or Novice event. This includes Open, Masters and Novice equivalent races in any affiliated professional athletic league in Australia.

5.5 An athlete who has represented their Country in any athletics event sanctioned by World Athletics including but not limited to Commonwealth Games, World Championships and Olympic Games are deemed not eligible for Novice status and events.

Athletes are defined as Novice if they have not won ANY final in any event conducted by the following organisations (and/or any successor organizations):

a) the World Athletics and/or affiliated bodies (being State, National, World title including Junior Divisions Under 16 and above), excluding School competition;
b) the Australian Athletics Confederation and/or affiliated bodies (including the VAL) for events totalling a prize pool of $300 or more; or
c) the International Olympic Committee and/or affiliated bodies in an athletics related discipline (including for the avoidance of doubt Triathlon).

5.6 The Board may determine additional eligibility requirements for Novice Events and publish them in the applicable Technical Guidelines.

5.7 All Novice events shall be deemed non-penalty for any open/senior events for the currency of the season in which the event was conducted, provided that the Athlete in winning the event does not break the designated target time for that event, as adjusted for track & wind conditions.

5.8 Athletes who have entered a Novice event and, prior to competing in that event, lose their Novice status shall be re-allocated by the Chief Steward to another suitable event of similar distance to the Novice event entered at that carnival (where such event is available).

Junior Athletes

5.9 Junior Athletes are eligible to compete in the age categories determined by the Board.

Winning a Junior Event does not affect an Athlete's Novice status unless otherwise provided by these Rules.

The Board may determine specific registration, eligibility and handicapping requirements for Junior Competitions.

5.10 Any VAL-registered member under the age of 18 is required to have a parent or nominated guardian in attendance at any VAL meeting where they are competing.

6. CLUBS

6.1 A Club wishing to conduct a Competition under the auspices of the VAL must be affiliated with the VAL.

Affiliation must be renewed annually in the manner determined by the Board.

Each Club shall, following the payment no later than 2 days prior to the VAL Annual General Meeting of a non-refundable affiliation/registration fee to the amount prescribed in the current VAL Fees and Charges Schedule, be entitled to:
a) conduct athletic meetings under the VAL Rules; and
b) One vote at the VAL Annual General Meeting held following the completion of such athletic meeting conducted under the VAL Rules.
c) participate in the governance of the VAL in accordance with the Constitution.

6.2 Any VAL affiliated Club that conducts its meetings in violation of the VAL Rules described herein shall be subject to review and penalty at the discretion of the VAL Board.

The VAL may impose the following range of penalties on any Club & members of its committee who are determined to be in breach of the VAL Rules -
a) disqualification from the VAL for a period of up to & including 2 years
b) a maximum fine of up to $5,000.00

6.3 Where a Competition is cancelled due to adverse weather, venue closure, emergency, government direction or any other circumstance beyond the reasonable control of the Club, the Board may determine that the Competition is deemed to have been conducted for the purposes of affiliation and voting rights, provided the Club has taken all reasonable steps to conduct the Competition.

6.4 An affiliated Club wishing to conduct a VAL-sanctioned Competition must submit an application to the Board in the approved form and by the date determined by the Board.

The application must include:

a) the proposed Competition date;
b) the venue;
c) the proposed program of Events; and
d) any other information required by the Board.

The Board may approve an application, refuse an application, or approve an application subject to conditions.

6.5 A Club must not advertise or promote a Competition until approval has been granted by the Board.

Sanctioned Competitions and VAL Calendar

6.6 A Competition approved by the Board is recognised as a VAL-sanctioned Competition.

A sanctioned Competition must be conducted in accordance with:

a) the Constitution;
b) these Rules;
c) applicable Policies;
d) applicable Technical Guidelines; and
e) any conditions imposed by the Board.

6.7 Official programs, promotional material and advertising for a sanctioned Competition must clearly identify the Competition as being conducted under the auspices of the Victorian Athletic League.

6.8 The Board is responsible for approving and administering the annual Competition Calendar.

6.9 In determining the Competition Calendar, the Board may:

a) allocate Competition dates;
b) determine whether more than one Competition may be conducted on the same day or weekend or week;
c) approve or refuse applications for additional Competitions;
d) amend the Competition Calendar where necessary; and
e) impose conditions relating to the scheduling or conduct of Competitions.

6.10 Once approved, a Competition must not be added, removed, postponed or rescheduled without the approval of the Board.

Club Obligations

6.11 A Club conducting a VAL-sanctioned Competition must:

a) comply with the Constitution, these Rules, applicable Policies and Technical Guidelines;
b) comply with any lawful direction issued by the Board;
c) conduct the Competition safely, fairly and professionally;

d) provide suitable facilities, equipment and personnel for the proper conduct of the Competition;
e) ensure the venue and competition track complies with the applicable Technical Guidelines;
f) provide Officials and volunteers with reasonable facilities to perform their duties; and
g) comply with all conditions imposed by the Board in approving the Competition.
h) Ensure appropriate insurance, safety, government and council compliance is in place.

6.12 Clubs shall be required to use timing equipment approved, provided and installed by the VAL at their athletic meeting. In the event of the unavailability of this equipment the Club may seek approval from the VAL Board to use other equipment and operators.

6.13 A Club is responsible for the conduct of its committee members, Officials, volunteers and any person acting on its behalf during a sanctioned Competition.

6.14 A Club that fails to comply with these Rules may be subject to disciplinary action under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Competition and Event Technical Requirements

6.15 Tracks, venues, facilities and equipment used for VAL-sanctioned Competitions must comply with the applicable Technical Guidelines approved by the Board.

Technical requirements include, but are not limited to:
a) track dimensions and markings;
b) venue layout;
c) technical and power availability and access;
d) timing and photo finish equipment;
e) field equipment; and
f) access and safety requirements.

6.16 Ceremonial, promotional or advertising structures may be erected near the finish line provided they:
a) do not interfere with Competition Officials;
b) do not obstruct timing equipment or photo-finish equipment; and
c) have been approved by the Board.

Accreditation Venue and Arena Access

6.17 A Club conducting a VAL-sanctioned Competition must provide reasonable admission and operational access to persons authorised by the Board or delegated authority.

The Board or Executive Officer may issue an accreditation list for each Competition identifying persons entitled to free access to the venue and other restricted areas.

Accredited persons may include:
a) competing Athletes;
b) registered Trainers and Coaches;
c) Directors;
d) appointed Officials;
e) Honorary Life Members;
f) accredited media representatives; and
g) any other person authorised by the Board.

A Club must recognise and honour accreditation issued by the Board or delegated authority.

6.18 Without express prior approval from the Chief Steward, only the following persons are permitted on and within the designated competition arena during the course of a meeting:

a) VAL officials;
b) Club officials relevant to the club conducting the meeting;
c) Registered athletes taking part in the meeting;
d) Registered coaches or trainers with athletes who are due to compete, or who have competed, within a reasonable period; and
e) Accredited media representatives

The Chief Steward may impose a fine of up to $500 on any person who breaches this Rule.

Event Equipment and Uniforms

6.19 Competition equipment and venue infrastructure must comply with the applicable Technical Guidelines.

6.20 Athletes must wear a competition uniform including official endorsed VAL race colour/number singlets that complies with the requirements determined by the Board.

6.21 On application the Board may approve alternative uniforms including race singlets or equipment where appropriate.

Postponement and Cancellation

6.22 The Board or the conducting Club, with the approval of the Board where practicable, may postpone, suspend or cancel a Competition or Event where necessary due to:

a) adverse weather; [refer to VAL weather policy]
b) venue conditions;
c) safety concerns;
d) emergency or government direction; or
e) any other circumstance beyond the reasonable control of the Club.

6.23 Where a Competition is postponed or cancelled, the Board will determine the status of entries, prize money and refunds in accordance with these Rules.

6.24 Neither the member Club conducting the meeting that has been subject to a postponement, or the VAL shall be responsible for any expense or loss incurred by any Athlete or Trainer or other party as a consequence of any postponement or other action taken in relation to applying these Rules.

6.25 In the event of the cancellation of an event, the entry fee paid by an athlete for that event shall be refunded.

7. APPROVED VAL EVENTS

7.1 A Club may only conduct Events approved by the Board as part of a VAL-sanctioned Competition.

Unless otherwise approved by the Board, Events may be conducted over the following standard distances:

EVENT CATEGORY	STANDARD DISTANCES
Sprint	70m, 100m, 120m, 200m, 300m, 400m
Middle Distance	550m, 800m, 1000m

Distance	1600m, 1609m, 2000m, 3200m
Relay	4 × 200m

7.2 A Club wishing to conduct an Event not listed above must obtain the prior approval of the Board.

The Board may approve additional Events, exhibition Events or variations to the approved Competition program where it considers such approval to be in the best interests of the VAL and the sport.

7.3 All Clubs are required to conduct an event at their meeting which is classified as a Junior event and Under 14 events by virtue of the operation of the VAL Rules.

Event Classification

7.4 Each Event conducted at a VAL-sanctioned Competition must be classified in accordance with the classification criteria determined by the Board.

7.5 Event classifications are based on the total advertised prize money for the Event.

(a) Open, Men's & Women's Events

CLASSIFICATION	ADVERTISED PRIZEMONEY
Classic	$10,000+
Group 1	$5,001-$10,000
Group 2	$1,001-$5000
Group 3	$0-$1000

(b) Masters Events

CLASSIFICATION	ADVERTISED PRIZEMONEY
Classic	$2,000+
Group 1	$1,001-$2,000
Group 2	$0 - $1,000

(c) Junior and Novice Events

Junior and Novice Events are not classified.

Event classifications are used to determine handicap limits, penalties and other competition requirements in accordance with these Rules and the applicable Technical Guidelines.

7.6 Prizes and gifts of value attached to an event are not considered within total prizemoney value when determining event classification, unless determined and published in advance by the VAL Board.

Gift Events

7.7 Each Club should nominate its principal Gift Event when applying to conduct a Competition.

If a Club does not nominate a Gift Event, the Board may determine which Event will be recognised as the Club's principal Gift Event.

A Club may apply to conduct more than one Gift Event.

When considering an application for an additional Gift Event, the Board may have regard to:

a) the advertised prize money;
b) the Competition program;
c) athlete participation;
d) scheduling requirements; and
e) the interests of the VAL and the sport.

7.8 A Gift Event must have a minimum advertised prize pool of $2,000, unless otherwise approved by the VAL Board.

7.9 A Club may use promotional titles such as Memorial, Purse, Challenge, Handicap or Feature, provided those titles do not alter the Event classification or Gift status.

Invitation Events

7.10 A Club may conduct an Invitation Event with the prior approval of the Board.

The Board may determine the eligibility criteria and conditions applying to an Invitation Event.

Invitation Events are not required to comply with standard handicapping or entry requirements where alternative conditions have been approved by the Board. The VAL may impose alternate rules and conditions associated with invitational events.

8. PRIZEMONEY

8.1 Prize money advertised for a VAL-sanctioned Event must be paid in accordance with these Rules.

8.2 A Club must publish the total prize money for each Event before entries open.

8.3 The Board may determine minimum prize money requirements for particular Events or Event classifications.

Minimum total event prizemoney:

CLASSIFICATION	PRIZEMONEY	NOTES
Gift Events	$2,000	100m & 120m Gift Events Only
Open Events	$600	Gift Events Excluding 100m & 120m and all Open events
Open Combined Events	$700	
Junior	$300	Can be split $150 for individual Boys and Girls races
Novice	$300	Can be split $150 for individual Boys and Girls races
Under 14	$150	
Masters	$600	

Races conducted in divisions i.e. Backmarkers & Frontmarkers are considered individual events and must meet minimum prizemoney requirements.

A club may seek permission from the VAL Board to conduct an event below the minimum participation/prize money.

8.4 **Minimum Prizemoney Allocation:**

EVENT TYPE	EVENT PRIZE POOL	ELIGIBILITY	MINIMUM PRIZE MONEY
Heat and Final	Up to $2,000	▪ All finalists	Equal to or greater than event entry fee
Heat, Semi and Final	Up to $2,000	▪ All finalists	Equal to or greater than event entry fee
Heat, Semi and Final	>$2,000	▪ All losing semi-finalists ▪ All finalists	Equal to or greater than event entry fee
Final only*	>$600	▪ Finalists down to 10th place	Equal to or greater than event entry fee
GIFT: Heat, Semi and Final	>$2,000	▪ All losing semi-finalists ▪ All finalists	Equal to or greater than event entry fee

* In a Final Only event, prize money must be allocated to each finalist finishing from first through to tenth place, or to all finalists where the final comprises fewer than ten athletes.

9. COMPETITION ENTRIES

9.1 Entry fees for VAL-sanctioned Events are determined by the Board and published in the Fees and Charges Schedule.

9.2 A Club wishing to vary an approved entry fee must obtain the prior approval of the Board.

The Board may approve an alternative entry fee having regard to the Event classification, prize money or other relevant circumstances.

9.3 Entries shall be sent to the VAL by athletes on the form/process in use by the VAL at the time of entry. All entries shall be made and races run in the legal name of the competitor.

9.4 Entries shall close for all VAL-sanctioned events at the date so determined by the VAL and advertised to Athletes. All entries must be submitted by the athlete and received by the VAL no later than the advertised closing date.

No late entries past the advised close-off date are accepted under any circumstances. The responsibility for being a registered member and to enter a race within the publicised time/date rests with the athlete.

It is also the responsibility to enter the correct race and category to which they are eligible and intend to compete in.

No transfers, substitutions or credits are permitted.

9.5 An individual Club may apply to the VAL up to and including 5 calendar days prior to the date of the event requesting a "Wild Card" entry for an athlete who is categorised within the following criteria:

a) a member of an Athletics Australia-sanctioned international team within the 3 years prior to the date of the event,
b) any national or international athlete, who is ranked in their national top 10 rankings over the specific or relevant distance to the event entered as compiled by their National Association in the previous 24 months,
c) a previous winner of the event being entered,
d) an athlete whose current performances exceed the minimum performance standard required to establish a top 10 performance as defined by item (b).
e) any athlete deemed a "marquee" or "promotional" athlete as determined by the VAL Board.

9.6 The VAL shall publish the starting time of each series of events and their handicap marks approximately five days prior to the meeting entered.

Where an Athlete is not included in the list of entrants for an event and the Athlete can establish proof that the entry was submitted, the VAL has the power to ensure that the entry is still processed and that the Athlete be handicapped and permitted to compete.

Where such it becomes clear on the day of the event that an Athlete is not included in a heat, the Athlete shall be included in a heat at the sole discretion of the Chief Steward.

9.7 The VAL Board or entries administrator may refuse to accept or cancel any entry before the commencement of an event.

9.8 The VAL Board, entries administrator or Race Day Review Panel (RRP) may disqualify an Athlete at any time if it has been shown that their entry was made under false pretences or contains false or incorrect information, irrespective of whether it was an inadvertent or deliberate act.

9.9 Entry fees paid by a disqualified or suspended Athlete for meetings following their disqualification or suspension and for the period of their disqualification or suspension will not be refunded to the Athlete. Athletes may submit entries for events whilst suspended provided the events entered are outside the suspension period.

9.10 No alteration to entry fields will be taken on the day of any meeting, except in the case of an administrative error.

Refunds

9.11 Refunds of entry fees are administered in accordance with these Rules and the Fees and Charges Schedule.

9.12 The Board may determine the circumstances in which a full or partial refund is payable.

9.13 An Athlete may apply in writing to the VAL office, no later than the official advertised closing date for entries of the relevant meeting, seeking a refund of the entry monies paid. If an application is received by this date, the Athlete is entitled to receive a full refund for events in which a refund has been requested, subject to restrictions on refund that may be imposed by other Rules.

9.14 No refund of entry fees shall be payable to the athlete after the date for the closing date of entries.

Club Payments

9.15 The Board will determine the proportion of entry fee revenue payable to Clubs conducting VAL-sanctioned Competitions.

9.16 The applicable payment methodology is published in the Fees and Charges Schedule.

The Board may approve an alternative payment arrangement where exceptional circumstances exist.

10. HANDICAPS

10.1 The VAL Handicapping Technical Guidelines provide guidance, rules and policy for the allocation of athlete handicaps for individual events and categories of competition.

10.2 Maximum handicap limits for Events are prescribed in the applicable Handicapping Technical Guidelines.

10.3 A Club may apply to the Board to approve alternative handicap limits for Events conducted at its Competitions.

The Board may approve alternative handicap limits where exceptional circumstances exist or where it considers the variation to be in the interests of the Competition.

10.4 Approved handicap limits must be published before entries open.

10.5 Athlete handicaps for an event will be published on the official VAL website at least 5 days prior to the event.

11. EVENT FIELD SIZES AND PROGRESSIONS

11.1 The Board may determine the maximum number of Athletes permitted in any Event, heat or final.

11.2 **Maximum number of competitors per event:**

DISTANCE	EVENT TYPE	MAX NUMBER OF COMPETITORS	MIN NUMBER OF COMPETITORS [FINAL]
70m - 200m	Heat/Semi/Final	8	6
300m	Heat/Semi/Final	12	10*
400 m	Heat/Semi	12	-
400m	Final	10	10*
550m	Heat	15	-
550m	Final	12	10*
800m -1000m	Heat/Final	15	10
800m - 1000m Junior	Heat/Final	24	10
800m -1000m Masters	Heat/Final	50	-
1500m+	Heat/Final	50	-

*Note: In the case of min. final competitor numbers not being reached, or a draw in a heat or semi-final, the number of competitors in a final may exceed the maximum or be less than the

minimum number of competitors stipulated in the table above, providing there is an available lane for straight events and will be at the discretion of the chief Steward on the day.

11.3 The Chief Steward may alter field sizes on the day of the event having regard to

a) athlete safety;
b) track capacity;
c) event scheduling;
d) available daylight or lighting;
e) adverse weather conditions;
f) the Competition timetable; and
g) any other operational consideration.

11.4 The following event specific rules and conditions apply:

a) For sprint events conducted in lanes and where semi-finals are not conducted (i.e. runners progress from heats to final), the number of athletes in the final must be the maximum possible given the number of lanes available (e.g. 8 lanes = 8 finalists), up to a maximum of 8 athletes;
b) 550m, 800m, and 1000m races may be run in heats and final or final only;
c) Where entries exceed 150 for a particular event to be conducted over a distance less than 1500m, such events shall be conducted in two or more divisions, in the form of Frontmarkers and Backmarkers events, or Frontmarkers, Middle-markers and Backmarkers, as considered appropriate;

Heat Draws and Event Progression

11.5 The Board is responsible for process, administration and policy of heat draw and event progressions to subsequent rounds/finals.

11.6 Heat draws must be conducted fairly and consistently in accordance with these Rules and the applicable Technical Guidelines.

11.7 The method of progression from heats to subsequent rounds will be published before the commencement of the Event.

11.8 The Board may alter and/or approve an alternate policy or process for heat draws including athlete seeding and the progression and seedings in subsequent rounds and finals.

11.9 Where races are worth less than $1,000 and do not have semi-finals, if the number of entries exceeds the ability to have heat winners to a final, clubs can either introduce semi-finals or split the event into Frontmarkers and Backmarkers.

11.10 For events conducted over distances ranging from 70m to 200m, if the track used by a Club cannot practically and physically accommodate eight (8) lanes, the maximum number of competitors per heat shall be reduced accordingly. A Club that satisfies such criteria shall notify the VAL prior to the drawing of the heats.

11.11 Upon application by a Club, or such other organisation or body (including for the avoidance of doubt, the VRTA), the VAL Board may approve a different qualification system for finals for certain events that span a period of dates and are conducted as a series.

PART C – COMPETITION RULES

12. ATHLETES AND COACH/TRAINER RESPONSIBILITIES

12.1 Athletes and Trainers participating in a VAL-sanctioned Competition must:

a) comply with the Constitution, these Rules, applicable Policies and Technical Guidelines;
b) comply with all lawful directions issued by the Board, the Chief Steward, Stewards and Competition Officials;
c) conduct themselves honestly, fairly and in a manner that upholds the integrity and reputation of the VAL and the sport;
d) compete on their merits at all times; and
e) cooperate with Officials in the administration of the Competition.

Failure to comply with this Rule may constitute an offence under Part D - Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Declarations of Performances

12.2 Athletes must declare to the VAL all performances achieved outside VAL Competition that improve their recorded personal best or establish a personal best over a new distance.

12.3 Declarations must be made:

a) within seven days of the performance; or
b) before the Athlete next competes in a VAL-sanctioned Competition, whichever occurs first.

12.4 Athletes returning from competition conducted by another athletics organisation must declare those performances before competing under VAL Rules.

All information provided must be accurate, complete and capable of verification by the VAL.

Failure to comply with this Rule may constitute an offence under Part D - Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Competition Uniform, Shoes, Colours and Numbers

12.5 Athletes must compete in a clean and complete competition uniform approved by the VAL.

A garment must be worn under the competition singlet provided.

The Board may determine requirements relating to:

a) approved uniforms;
b) colours;
c) designs;
d) materials;
e) competition numbers; and
f) the display of VAL branding and approved commercial partners.

12.6 Where there is doubt as to whether a uniform complies with these Rules, the Chief Steward will determine the Athlete's eligibility to compete.

12.7 An Athlete who fails to comply with this Rule may be prevented from competing until the non-compliance is rectified, fined and or disqualified.

12.8 Athletes must wear footwear that complies with World Athletics technical requirements and any requirements determined by the Board.

Track spikes are expected to be worn in track Events.

The Chief Steward may approve an Athlete competing barefoot or in alternative footwear where satisfied that:

a) the request is reasonable; and
b) the footwear will not compromise safety or the integrity of the Competition.

Any approval remains in force until varied by the Chief Steward.

12.9 Where a Club provides approved sponsor apparel for an Event, an Athlete must wear that apparel if directed by the Club.

Failure to comply may result in disqualification from that Event.

12.10 A person must not use clothing or equipment that provides an unfair advantage or compromises the safety or integrity of the Competition. Note that wearing of a peaked cap is not permitted.

Injury and Illness

12.11 An Athlete who is unable to compete to the best of their ability because of injury or illness must notify the Chief Steward as soon as practicable.

12.12 Where an Athlete withdraws from an Event or is unable to compete in a subsequent round because of injury or illness, the Chief Steward may require evidence from a registered medical or allied health practitioner.

The Chief Steward may impose a suspension from VAL Competition for up to 14 days, commencing on the day of the injury or illness, (ie. noting that the day of the Event in which the injury or illness occurred is counted as Day 1).

The Chief Steward may permit an Athlete to return after 7 days where satisfied that:

a) a suitable medical certificate has been provided; and/or
b) the Athlete has completed a satisfactory trial as assessed by a registered VAL Coach/Trainer.

Withdrawal from Subsequent Rounds

12.13 An Athlete who has qualified for a semi-final or final must compete unless:

a) approval to withdraw has been granted by the Chief Steward; or
b) the Athlete has been excused due to injury, illness or other exceptional circumstances.

12.14 An Athlete who withdraws without approval may commit an offence under Part D - Integrity, Discipline and Appeals. An Athlete who has qualified for a semi-final or final may seek permission from the Chief Steward to withdraw where:

a) the Athlete has qualified for a Group 1 or Classic semi-final or final at the same Competition; or
b) exceptional circumstances exist.

Approval to withdraw is at the discretion of the Chief Steward.

12.15 Where an Athlete qualifies for a semi-final or final and wishes to compete in another Event before that race, the Athlete must first obtain the approval of the Chief Steward.

Acceptance and Check-In Requirements

12.16 Where and when required at specific events, Athletes must confirm their intention to compete in the manner and by the time determined by the Board or the conducting Club.

12.17 When required to do so, an Athlete who fails to confirm their acceptance within the prescribed time may be withdrawn from the Event.

12.18 The Board or its delegate may accept a late acceptance where exceptional circumstances exist and no disadvantage is caused to other Athletes or the Competition.

12.19 The VAL may require, and in such cases shall notify athletes at the time of declaration of handicaps, a 20-minute acceptance rule to apply to specified athletics meetings, or certain events at specified athletics meetings, and in such circumstances the following shall apply:

a) For events conducted over distances of up to 400m, where there is only one acceptance for a particular heat (or heats), that runner shall be transferred to another heat. Athletes moved to other heats do not automatically progress to the next round;
b) For events conducted from 550m, up to 800 metres, where there are only three acceptances or less for a particular heat (or heats), such remaining runners shall be transferred to another heat. Athletes moved to other heats do not automatically progress to the next round;

12.20 On Event Day, the Chief Steward may be required to invoke the 20-minute acceptance rule in relation to a particular event. In such circumstances, the Chief Steward shall:

a) require all entrants in such an event to confirm their intention to compete in the event no later than 20 minutes prior to the first scheduled heat for such event, such confirmation of acceptance to be provided to an official so nominated by the Club (and/or the VAL);

b) nominate an Official to whom Athletes must advise their acceptance;

c) cause to be announced over the public address system on the day of the meeting the requirements stipulated in Rule 12.20(a) together with the identity and location of the nominated official to whom athletes must advise their acceptance.

12.21 The Chief Steward may declare an event to be run as a straight final in which case heats will be cancelled and all athletes will be redrawn to a final field published before the scheduled final time.

The Chief Steward will determine in consultation with Athletes and the Club whether the final will be run at:

a) last scheduled Heat time
b) scheduled Final time
c) alternate time

In determining the cancellation of heats and a declaration of a straight final, the Chief Steward will consider the number of acceptances and the scheduled number of athletes to qualify for the final.

Where acceptances are <u>equal to or greater than 20%</u> more than the number of finalists, then heats should be conducted.

13. STARTING

13.1 The Starter has sole control of Athletes during the starting process, from the time Athletes are called to their marks until the Event has commenced.

The Starter is responsible for ensuring each Event is started safely, fairly and in accordance with these Rules.

13.2 The Chief Steward may relieve the Starter of their duties where the Starter is unable to perform those duties satisfactorily.

13.3 Where the approved starting equipment becomes inoperable, the Chief Steward may authorise an alternative method of starting the Event.

13.4 The Recall Starter assists the Starter and acts under the Starter's direction ensuring Athletes are correctly positioned before giving the all-clear, starting blocks are correctly positioned, recall the field where a false start has occurred or is believed to have occurred and advise the Starter of the reason for any recall.

Commencement of Events

13.5 Before commencing an Event, the Starter must ensure:

a) the previous Event has been cleared by the Chief Steward;
b) the Photo Finish and Timing Officials are ready;
c) the Recall Starter has confirmed that Athletes are correctly positioned; and
d) the Event is ready to commence.

13.6 Events must start at the advertised time unless:

a) the Chief Steward approves a variation; or
b) every competing Athlete agrees to an earlier start.

13.7 An Event must not be delayed because of absent Athletes unless otherwise approved by the Chief Steward.

Starting Procedure

13.8 For laned Events, the Starter will give the following commands:

a) "To Your Blocks"
b) "On Your Marks"
c) "Set"

The Event commences when the Starter fires a single shot (“the gun") from the approved starting pistol.

13.9 For circular or non-laned Events, the Starter may substitute whistle signals for the commands "On Your Marks" and "Set". i.e. Two whistles followed by the gun.

13.10 An Athlete is responsible for ensuring they start from their allocated handicap and correct starting position.
An Athlete who starts from an incorrect handicap or starting position may be disqualified and forfeit any entitlement to prize money, participation payments or awards.

13.11 Excluding Junior and Under 14 Events and unless otherwise approved by the Chief Steward, Athletes competing in laned Events must use starting blocks.

13.12 Athletes must remain stationary after the command "Set" until the starting signal is given.

13.13 An Athlete may indicate they are not ready by raising a hand while remaining in the set position with both feet in contact with the blocks or the ground.

13.14 Where one or more Athletes are clearly unsteady, the Starter may stand the field up without penalty.

False Starts

13.15 Where the Starter and Recall Starter determine that an Athlete has caused a false start, the Starter will apply the appropriate handicap penalty.

DISTANCE	PENALTY
70m	0.5m
100m	0.75m
120m	1.0m
200m	1.0m
300m	2.0m
400m	2.0m
550m	3.0m
800m	3.0m
1000m	5.0m
1500m	5.0m
1600m	5.0m
2000m	8.0m
3200m	10.0m

13.16 An Athlete who causes two false starts in the same Event will be disqualified.

13.17 Following a false start, the Starter or Recall Starter must advise the Athlete of their revised handicap position.

13.18 In non-laned events where two Athletes occupy the same revised handicap, the Athlete receiving the false start penalty will start from the outside position.

Starting Positions

13.19 In handicap Events, starting positions are allocated in the order shown in the official program. In scratch Events, starting positions are determined by ballot.

13.20 Athletes in laned events shall use two starting block pedals. The front block shall be positioned at the back of the handicap line prior to giving the all-clear to the Starter, unless the Chief Steward has provided prior approval for the athlete not to use starting blocks.

In all non-laned events the athletes starting foot position shall be behind the back of the handicap line prior to giving the all clear to the starter.

13.21 Where two or more Athletes share the same handicap in a circular non-laned event, the order of position is determined by athlete number or colour order as drawn in the official program commencing from the inside position closest to the line. The athlete closest to the line is allowed no more than half a body width from the line, unless the wider athlete permits.

13.22 In non-laned circular events athletes may start in any space away from the inside line provided they are within the designated track boundaries and do not impede other athletes on the same allocated mark. Athletes must still start in line with their designated handicap.

Starting Order and Race Colours

13.23 Competition colours are allocated in the following order:

NUMBER	COLOUR
1.	Red
2.	White
3.	Blue
4.	Yellow
5.	Green
6.	Pink
7.	Black
8.	Grey
9.	Orange
10.	Purple
11.	Red/White
12.	Blue/White
13.	Yellow/White
14.	Green/White
15.	Pink/White
16.	Black/White
17.	Grey/White
18.	Orange/White
19.	Purple/White

NOTE: After number 19 [Purple/White] VAL-numbered singlets apply from numbers 20-50.

13.24 The Board may approve an alternative colour sequence where necessary.

13.25 Athletes allocated a withheld handicap or admitted under an approved wildcard process will wear the colour allocated to their starting position unless otherwise directed by the Chief Steward.

14. RACING RULES

14.1 Athletes must compete honestly, fairly and on their merits in every Event.

14.2 An Athlete must comply with these Rules, all directions issued by the Chief Steward and Competition Officials, and any applicable Technical Guidelines.

A breach of this Division may constitute an offence under Part D - Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Ready to Start

14.3 It is the responsibility of the Athlete to be ready to start the race and to meet all requirements stipulated in the VAL Rules.

14.4 Athletes must start:

a) from their allocated handicap;
b) in their allocated lane where applicable; and
c) wearing their allocated competition colour and number.

Conduct During a Race

14.5 An Athlete must compete safely and fairly throughout an Event.

14.6 An Athlete must not:

a) deliberately impede another Athlete;
b) jostle, push, shoulder, elbow or otherwise interfere with another Athlete;
c) deliberately obstruct another Athlete's progress;
d) receive an unfair advantage;
e) engage in conduct not conducive to competing in a professional manner;
f) undertake in actions, celebration or similar conduct during a race that inhibits performance or that of others; or
g) any unsportsmanlike conduct during the Event.

14.7 The Chief Steward may disqualify or otherwise penalise an Athlete who breaches Rule 14.6.

Overtaking

14.8 An Athlete overtaking another Athlete must pass on the outside unless:

a) the other Athlete has clearly retired from the Event; or
b) the other Athlete is already competing wide of the running line.

14.9 An Athlete must be at least two metres clear before moving back towards the running line. Failure to comply may result in disqualification or other action by the Chief Steward.

Running Within the Course

14.10 An Athlete must remain within the designated course of the Event.

14.11 In laned Events, an Athlete must remain within their allocated lane unless permitted by these Rules.

14.12 The lane and lines are designated by lane-ropes, coloured [usually white] paint/ chalk or other forms of marking approved by the VAL. The designated course is taken to be the outside edge of the line. For circular events that is the far-right edge of the line that nearest the athlete when competing in an anti-clockwise direction. In sprint events, stepping on any part of the line both left and right is deemed not within the designated course.

14.13 An Athlete who leaves the designated course or lane and gains an unfair advantage, or disadvantages another Athlete, may be fined and/or disqualified.

Athletes Being Lapped

14.14 Where directed by the Chief Steward or Competition Officials, an Athlete who is about to be lapped must move at least three metres clear of the running line to allow following Athletes an unobstructed passage.

Timing Devices

14.15 Wearing of a timing device is not permitted in circular events.

Athlete Conduct in a Race

14.16 During an Event an Athlete must not:

a) deliberately look around;
b) participate in collusion or any improper race arrangement;
c) intentionally fail to compete on their merits; or
d) otherwise act in a way contrary to the integrity of the Competition.

Such conduct may constitute an offence under Part D - Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

15. TIMING AND RESULTS

Finish and Placings

15.1 The finish line is a white line at least 50 millimetres wide.

15.2 An Athlete's placing is determined by the point at which the torso reaches the vertical plane of the nearer edge of the finish line.

For the purposes of this Rule, the torso means the body excluding the head, neck, arms, hands, legs and feet.

Chief Judge and Results

15.3 The official result of an Event is determined by the Chief Judge on the day. Results are supported by the approved timing or photo finish system.

15.4 Results become official once confirmed by the Chief Judge or other authorised Official.

15.5 Official results must be published as soon as practicable following the completion of the Event.

15.6 The Chief Steward, in consultation with the Chief Judge, shall have the power to declare an Event (be it heat, semi-final, final or any other Event) a 'no race'. The Chief Steward shall have the power to order the race to be re-run, if, in their opinion, anything of substance occurred during the race to interfere with any Athlete's chance of winning. The exception to this is that the Chief Steward does not have the power to overrule a start determined by the Starter and Recall Starter.

Dead Heat and Ties

15.7 Where the Chief Judge or the Photo Finish System cannot separate two or more Athletes, the result will be declared a tie.

15.8 Where a tie remains and progression of all tied Athletes is impracticable; the remaining qualifying position will be determined by ballot.

15.9 Where qualifying for the next round is based on place and time (e.g. the winner in each heat plus the next two fastest), and there is a tie for the last qualifying position based on place, placing the tied Athletes in the next round shall reduce the number of athletes qualifying based on time.

15.10 In the circumstance of a dead heat in the final of any event of on the program, the decision will stand and prize monies shared equally between the dead-heating Athletes.

Timing Failures

15.11 Where electronic timing or wind measurement fails, the Chief Steward may determine the official result by:

a) authorising a re-run where practical;
b) adopting hand-timing plus 0.24 seconds; or
c) determining wind readings using the average of the applicable recorded readings.

Times determined under Rule 15.11 are the official times for all Competition and handicapping purposes.

15.12 A system which operates automatically at either the start or the finish, but not at both, shall be considered to obtain official times.

Note: If the timing mechanism is not started by the Starter's signal, the time-scale on the image shall indicate this fact automatically.

15.13 The Chief Judge may be called upon to provide backup information regarding race results to the Chief Steward in the case of timing, electronic or other failures.

15.14 The Chief Judge is responsible for the declaration of race results, subject to the Race Day Protest procedure under Rule 17.

Impact of Disqualification and Withdrawals

15.15 If the first placed Athlete is disqualified in a final, the 2nd placegetter shall be declared the winner, and the placing of other Athletes shall be adjusted accordingly. For example, 3rd becomes 2nd, 4th becomes 3rd etc.

15.16 Where an Athlete who has qualified for a subsequent round is disqualified before that round is conducted, the next eligible Athlete will progress.

15.17 An Athlete who withdraws because of injury or illness, or fails to report for an Event, will not be replaced.

Record Performances

15.18 The Board may recognise official VAL record performances achieved at VAL-sanctioned Competitions.

Requirements for the recognition, verification and ratification of record performances shall be prescribed in the applicable Technical Guidelines.

16. VAL STEWARDS AND RACE DAY OFFICIALS

Appointment and Responsibilities

16.1 The Board shall appoint a Chief Steward and such Stewards as it considers necessary for the conduct of VAL Competitions.

The Chief Steward shall be responsible to the Board for the administration and performance of stewarding functions.

Where the Chief Steward is unavailable, the Board may appoint an Acting Chief Steward who shall exercise all powers and responsibilities of the Chief Steward under these Rules.

Responsibilities

16.2 The Chief Steward is responsible for the safe, fair and orderly conduct of each Competition and shall:

a) supervise the conduct of all Events;
b) oversee the application of these Rules during the Competition;
c) supervise Competition Officials;
d) determine operational matters arising during the Competition;
e) maintain the integrity and safety of the Competition; and
f) perform any other function conferred by these Rules.

The Chief Steward's race-day decisions are binding unless otherwise provided by these Rules.

Race-Day Authority

16.3 For the proper conduct of a Competition, the Chief Steward or Stewards may:

a) direct and control Officials, Athletes, Trainers, Club representatives and other persons involved in the Competition;
b) appoint, replace or remove Competition Officials where operationally necessary;
c) refuse entry to, remove or exclude any person from the competition venue where necessary for safety, integrity or the proper conduct of the Competition;
d) supervise and inspect the track, equipment, facilities and competition areas;
e) stop, delay, restart, rerun, postpone, abandon or declare an Event void;
f) alter the composition of heats, lane allocations or starting positions where necessary;
g) declare an Athlete a non-starter, withdrawn or scratched;
h) reinstate an Athlete where appropriate under these Rules in Part C - Competition Rules and Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals;
i) refer the matter to the Race Review Panel to require an Athlete to undergo a handicap review;
j) conduct preliminary race-day inquiries into Athlete performances or Competition incidents in consultation with the RRP
k) utilise approved technology and equipment;
l) engage additional Officials where necessary;
m) issue warnings or lawful race-day directions;
n) impose any immediate race-day sanction specifically authorised by these Rules;
o) disqualify an Athlete from an Event where authorised by these Rules;
p) confiscate or secure equipment, substances or documents relevant to a race-day inquiry;
q) suspend betting or make any order relating to betting integrity where necessary; and
r) exercise any other operational power reasonably necessary to conduct the Competition.

Removal of Officials

16.4 Where a Steward seeks the removal of another Official, the matter shall be referred to the Executive Officer for determination.

The Executive Officer may consult with the VAL Board or other appropriate person before making a determination.

Competition Arena and Race-Day Conduct

16.5 Persons within the competition arena must comply with all lawful directions of the Chief Steward.

Unless performing an official function, persons within the arena must remain clear of Competition activities while an Event is in progress.

Coaching and Support within the Competition Arena

16.6 Coaches, parents and other support persons may enter the designated competition arena for the purpose of athlete warm-up, preparation and coaching where permitted by an Official.

Once a race has been called to the start or is in progress, coaching, timing, spectating or otherwise providing support to an athlete from within the designated competition arena is prohibited. At that time, all coaches and support persons must leave the designated competition arena or move to another location approved by an Official.

The Chief Steward or another authorised Official may, at any time, direct any person to leave or relocate within the designated competition arena where the Official considers it necessary to ensure the safe and orderly conduct of competition. A person must comply with such a direction immediately.

Performance Assessment

16.7 The Stewards may review any Athlete's performance where they reasonably believe it may involve:

a) inconsistent running;
b) an unsatisfactory performance;
c) failure to compete on merit;
d) possible race manipulation or confederacy; or
e) any other matter affecting the integrity of the Competition.

Matters Considered

16.8 In assessing a performance, the Stewards, in conjunction with the Race Day Review Panel (RRP) may consider:

g) previous performances;
h) applicable performance ranges;
i) timing data;
j) handicap history;
k) track and weather conditions;
l) wind readings;
m) differences between heats, semi-finals and finals;
n) disclosed injury or illness; and
o) any other relevant circumstance.

A performance assessment does not constitute a finding that an offence has occurred but may result in:

a) no further action;
b) a race-day determination;
c) referral to the Race Review Panel;
d) referral to the Director of Handicapping or Handicap Review Panel; or
e) the issue of a Notice of Charge under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Race-Day Inquiries

16.9 The Chief Steward may require an Athlete, Trainer or other relevant person to attend a preliminary race-day inquiry.

Any person directed to attend must do so at the time and place directed.

An Athlete under 18 years of age must attend with a parent, guardian, registered Coach or VRTA representative.

Conduct of Inquiry

16.10 Before questioning a person, the Chief Steward shall explain:

a) the purpose of the inquiry;
b) the matters under consideration; and
c) the person's obligations under these Rules.

The Chief Steward may request documents, equipment or other relevant information.

A person who fails to attend without reasonable excuse may be prevented from competing in any remaining Events at that Competition and may be subject to further action under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Referral

16.11 Where, following a preliminary race-day inquiry, the Chief Steward reasonably believes further investigation or disciplinary action is required, the Chief Steward may:

a) issue a Notice of Charge in accordance with Rule 20;
b) refer the matter to the Race Review Panel;
c) refer a handicap matter to the Director of Handicapping or Handicap Review Panel;
d) refer any other matter to the Board; or
e) take any interim action authorised by these Rules pending determination.

Any matter referred under this Rule shall be dealt with in accordance with Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Chief Steward's Report

16.12 Following each Competition, the Chief Steward shall provide a report within three days to the Board that includes:

a) the conduct of the Competition;
b) track and Competition conditions;
c) significant operational matters;
d) race-day protests determined;

e) Notices of Charge issued;
f) Matters referred to the Race Review Panel;
g) matters referred under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals;
h) outstanding investigations or reviews; and
i) recommendations for improving the administration of future Competitions.

17. RACE DAY PROTEST

17.1 An Athlete who has competed in an Event may lodge a protest concerning:
a) the application of these Rules during the Event;
b) the conduct of the Event;
c) the declared placings or official results; or
d) any other race-day matter that directly affected the Athlete's participation or result.

Who May Protest

17.2 Only an Athlete directly affected by the matter may lodge a protest. If the Athlete is under 18 years of age, then a guardian, registered Coach or a VRTA representative must accompany the Athlete.

Notice of Intention to Protest

17.3 An Athlete intending to protest must notify the Chief Steward:
a) for a matter concerning the conduct of an Event, immediately following completion of the Event and before commencement of the next heat or Event; or
b) for placings or results, as soon as practicable and no later than ten (10) minutes after announcement of the result.

The Chief Steward may extend these time limits where exceptional circumstances exist.

Formal Protest

17.4 Following notification under Rule 17.3, the Athlete must lodge the protest in writing on the approved VAL form within twenty (20) minutes of completion of the relevant heat, semi-final or final, or such longer period approved by the Chief Steward in exceptional circumstances.

A protest may not be withdrawn without the approval of the Chief Steward.

Protest Fee

17.5 The protest fee is:
a) $50 for standard Events; and
b) $250 for Classic Events.

The fee shall be refunded where the protest is upheld.

Race Day Protest Committee

17.6 A Race Day Protest Committee shall determine protests lodged under this Rule.

The Committee shall comprise:

a) an independent Chair, who may be a Board member or senior official of the conducting Club;
b) an independent Board member; and
c) an independent representative nominated by the Victorian Runners and Trainers Association.

A member must not participate where an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists.

Hearing

17.7 The Chair of the Race Day Protest Committee shall determine the time and place of the hearing having regard to:

a) the continuation of the Competition;
b) procedural fairness;
c) the reasonable opportunity for all parties to be heard; and
d) the efficient conduct of the Competition.

Each member has one vote. Decisions are determined by majority.
The standard of proof is the balance of probabilities.

A party may be represented by an advocate approved by the Chair. Legal representation is not permitted unless authorised by the Chair in exceptional circumstances.

Powers

17.8 The Race Day Protest Committee may:

a) dismiss the protest;
b) uphold the protest;
c) amend placings or official results;
d) direct that an Event, heat or part of an Event be re-run;
e) confirm or vary a race-day operational decision of the Chief Steward; or
f) make any other determination authorised by these Rules.

The Committee shall provide brief reasons for its determination.

Effect of Determination

17.9 A determination of the Race Day Protest Committee takes effect immediately.

17.10 Until a protest has been determined:

a) official placings remain provisional;
b) prize money relating to the Event may be withheld;
c) bookmakers are not required to pay dividends.

Official Result

17.11 Upon determination of the protest, the Chief Steward shall announce the decision and declare the official result.

Competition Matters Only

17.12 The Race Day Protest Committee has jurisdiction only in relation to Competition matters arising during an Event.

The Committee must not determine disciplinary, integrity, handicapping or other matters dealt with under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Where such a matter arises during a protest hearing, the Committee may refer it to the Chief Steward for action under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals.

Finality

17.13 Except as otherwise provided by these Rules, a determination of the Race Day Protest Committee is final in relation to the conduct, placings and results of an Event.

Nothing in this Rule limits a person's rights under Part D – Integrity, Discipline and Appeals in respect of a Notice of Charge, disciplinary proceedings, handicap review or appeal.

PART D – INTEGRITY, DISCIPLINE AND APPEALS

18. CONDUCT

The purpose of this Part is to protect the integrity, fairness and reputation of the VAL and to provide a transparent and consistent framework for the investigation, determination and appeal of matters arising under these Rules.

Application

18.1 This Part applies to all Participants, who remain subject to this Part before, during and after any VAL-sanctioned Competition.

Participant Responsibilities

18.2 All Participants must:

a) comply with these Rules, Board approved Policies and Technical Guidelines;
b) when competing, compete fairly, honestly and on their merits;
c) act with integrity, respect and good sportsmanship;
d) comply with all lawful directions of the Board, Officials and authorised persons;
e) cooperate with investigations conducted under these Rules;
f) provide accurate and truthful information when requested; and
g) avoid any conduct that may bring the VAL or the sport into disrepute.

Responsibility for Conduct

18.3 Participants are responsible for their own conduct and for ensuring they understand and comply with these Rules and the VAL Codes of Conduct. Ignorance of these Rules does not excuse a breach.

Principles

18.4 All matters arising under this Part shall be administered in accordance with the principles of:

a) procedural fairness;
b) natural justice;
c) impartiality;
d) transparency;
e) consistency; and
f) protection of the integrity of the sport.

19. OFFENCES

Breach of the Rules

19.1 A Participant who breaches these Rules, a Board-approved Policy or Technical Guidelines, or who fails to comply with a lawful direction of the Board, Chief Steward or other authorised Official, commits an offence and may be subject to disciplinary action under this Part.

Categories of Offence

19.2 Offences under these Rules are classified into the following categories:

a) Competition Offences;
b) Performance Offences;
c) Integrity Offences; and
d) Administrative Offences.

The category of offence determines the investigation, hearing and review process under this Part.

Competition Offences

19.3 Competition Offences are breaches occurring during the conduct of a Competition and generally require an immediate race-day decision.

Competition Offences include, but are not limited to:

a) false starts;
b) interference, obstruction or jostling;
c) competing from an incorrect handicap, lane or starting position;
d) breaches of uniform or competition requirements;
e) failing to follow the lawful direction of an Official;
f) unauthorised entry to the competition arena;
g) misconduct affecting the safe or orderly conduct of a Competition; and
h) any other breach determined by the Chief Steward to be a Competition Offence.

Competition Offences are ordinarily determined by the Chief Steward or other authorised Official in accordance with these Rules.

Performance Offences

19.4 Performance Offences relate to an Athlete's performance or conduct during a Competition where further assessment may be required.

Performance Offences include, but are not limited to:

a) Unsatisfactory Performance (UP);

b) Non-Acceptable Performance (NAP);
c) inconsistent running;
d) failing to compete on merit;
e) confederacy or race manipulation;
f) suspicious or anomalous performance trends; and
g) any other performance matter referred by the Chief Steward or Director of Handicapping.

Performance Offences may be referred to the Race Review Panel for investigation, hearing and determination in accordance with Rules 21 and 22.

Integrity Offences

19.5 Integrity Offences are conduct that threatens the reputation, fairness or integrity of the VAL or the sport.

Integrity Offences include, but are not limited to:
a) betting offences;
b) corruption, bribery or improper inducements;
c) abuse, intimidation or harassment;
d) providing false or misleading information;
e) bringing the VAL or the sport into disrepute;
f) breaches of the Anti-Doping Policy;
g) breaches of any integrity-related Policy adopted by the Board; and
h) any other conduct considered by the Board to be prejudicial to the interests of the VAL.

Integrity Offences may be investigated by the Board, Chief Steward or other person authorised under these Rules.

Administrative Offences

19.6 Administrative Offences relate to compliance with membership, registration and administrative obligations.

Administrative Offences include, but are not limited to:
a) registration breaches;
b) failure to declare performances or other required information;
c) failure to attend or cooperate with an investigation or hearing;
d) non-payment of fees, fines or levies;
e) providing false information in connection with registration or eligibility; and
f) any other administrative requirement prescribed under these Rules.

Administrative Offences shall be dealt with by the Board, Executive Officer or the person authorised under these Rules.

Multiple Offences

19.7 A single incident may constitute more than one category of offence.
Where this occurs, each offence may be investigated and determined separately under the applicable provisions of these Rules.

Classification

19.8 Where there is uncertainty as to the appropriate category of an alleged offence, the Chief Steward or Board (as applicable) shall determine the category having regard to the nature of the conduct and the purpose of these Rules.

20. INVESTIGATIONS AND CHARGES

20.1 The purpose of this Rule is to ensure that alleged breaches of these Rules are investigated fairly, consistently and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

Investigation of Alleged Offences

20.2 An alleged offence may be investigated by:

a) the Chief Steward;
b) the Race Review Panel;
c) the Board;
d) the Handicap Review Panel, where relevant to handicap matters; or
e) any other person or panel authorised by the Board.

The investigating authority shall depend on the category of offence and the nature of the alleged breach.

Powers During an Investigation

20.3 For the purpose of an investigation, the investigating authority may:

a) obtain reports from Officials;
b) review official timing, video footage, photographs and other available evidence;
c) request written submissions;
d) require an Athlete, Trainer, Official or Participant to attend an interview or hearing;
e) obtain expert advice where appropriate;
f) inspect any relevant document, equipment or other material; and
g) undertake any reasonable inquiry necessary to determine the facts.

Duties of Participants

20.4 Participants must:

a) cooperate with any investigation conducted under these Rules;
b) attend when reasonably requested;
c) provide truthful and complete information;
d) produce documents or other material reasonably requested; and
e) comply with any lawful direction given during the investigation.

Failure to comply with this Rule constitutes an Administrative Offence.

Interim Action

20.5 Where necessary to protect the integrity, safety or proper conduct of a Competition, the Chief Steward or Board may take interim action pending completion of an investigation, including:

a) preventing an Athlete from competing;
b) delaying the payment of prizemoney;
c) withholding official results where permitted under these Rules; or
d) taking any other reasonable interim action authorised by these Rules.

Interim action is administrative only and does not constitute a finding that an offence has occurred.

Evidence

20.6 In conducting an investigation, the investigating authority may consider any evidence it considers relevant, including:

a) Steward's reports;
b) official timing data;
c) video and photographic evidence;
d) witness statements;
e) Athlete and Trainer submissions;
f) betting or integrity information where relevant;
g) historical performance data; and
h) any other relevant evidence.

The investigating authority is not bound by the formal rules of evidence.

Determination Following Investigation

20.7 Following completion of an investigation, the investigating authority may determine that:

a) no further action be taken;
b) advice or education be provided;
c) the matter be referred to another authority under these Rules;
d) a handicap review be undertaken; or
e) there is a case to answer and a Notice of Charge be issued.

Notice of Charge

20.8 Where an investigating authority determines there is a case to answer, a Notice of Charge shall be issued to the person concerned.

The Notice of Charge must include:

a) the alleged offence and the relevant Rule(s);
b) a summary of the facts relied upon;
c) any potential penalty that may apply; and
d) details of the applicable hearing or review process.

A Notice of Charge is taken to have been served if it is:

a) delivered personally by the Chief Steward;
b) emailed to the Member's nominated email address recorded by the VAL within 7 days; or
c) delivered by any electronic system approved by the Board.

Unless proven otherwise, a Notice of Charge is deemed to have been received on the day it is delivered or transmitted electronically.

It is the responsibility of every Member to ensure their contact details remain current with the VAL.

Referral to Hearing

20.9 A matter in which a Notice of Charge has been issued shall proceed to a hearing under Rule 22 unless otherwise withdrawn or resolved in accordance with these Rules.

21. RACE REVIEW PANEL

Establishment

21.1 The Board shall establish a Race Review Panel ("RRP") to review Performance Offences and other matters referred under these Rules.

Purpose

21.2 The purpose of the RRP is to protect the integrity, fairness and consistency of VAL Competitions through the independent review of race performances and related matters following a Competition.

Composition

21.3 The Board shall appoint the members of the RRP, comprising:

a) an Independent Chair;
b) the Director of Handicapping;
c) the Chief Steward; and
d) the Executive Officer.

Each member has one vote. Decisions are determined by majority vote, with the Chair having a casting vote where required. Note: the Executive Officer shall act as Secretary to the Panel without voting rights.

A member must not participate where a conflict of interest exists.

Functions

21.4 The functions of the RRP are to:

a) review matters referred by the Chief Steward or Director of Handicapping;
b) consider race reports, timing data, video footage and other relevant evidence;
c) consider Athlete or Trainer submissions where appropriate;
d) investigate, hear and determine matters within its jurisdiction in accordance with these Rules;
e) refer handicap matters to the Handicap Review Panel where appropriate; and
f) make recommendations to the Board on matters affecting Competition integrity.

Matters for Review

21.5 The RRP may consider matters including:

a) Unsatisfactory Performance (UP);
b) Non-Acceptable Performance (NAP) where referred by the Chief Steward for review;
c) inconsistent running;
d) failure to compete on merit;
e) confederacy or race manipulation;
f) suspicious performance trends;
g) betting or integrity concerns; and
h) any other matter referred by the Chief Steward or Board.

Referral

21.6 The Chief Steward or Director of Handicapping may refer a matter to the RRP within 72 hours of the end of the Competition.

Determination

21.7 Following an investigation or hearing conducted under these Rules, the RRP may:

a) determine that no further action is required;
b) issue a warning or caution;
c) determine that an offence under these Rules has been proven;
d) impose any penalty authorised under Rule 23;
e) refer a handicap matter to the Director of Handicapping or Handicap Review Panel;
f) refer a matter to the Board where broader integrity or governance concerns arise; or
g) make any other determination authorised by these Rules.

Where the RRP proposes to determine whether an offence has occurred, the person concerned must be provided with a Notice of Charge and the matter shall be heard in accordance with Rule 22.

The RRP shall provide written reasons for its determination and advise the person of any applicable right of appeal.

Limitations

21.8 The RRP shall not:

a) alter race results;
b) amend official placings;
c) determine Race Day Protests;
d) determine handicap appeals reserved to the Handicap Review Panel;
e) determine appeals from its own decisions; or
f) exercise operational race-day powers reserved to the Chief Steward.

Nothing in this Rule limits the RRP's authority to impose penalties under Rule 23 in respect of matters within its jurisdiction.

22. HEARING AND DETERMINATIONS

Decision Authority

22.1 The authority responsible for determining a matter or alleged offence under these Rules shall be determined by the nature and category of the matter.

MATTER	INITIAL DECISION/ INVESTIGATION	REVIEW / HEARING	APPEAL
Competition	Chief Steward	Race Day Referee	Chief Steward has final decision or VAL Tribunal (where permitted)
Race Day Protest	Chief Steward	Race Day Protest Committee	No avenue for appeal – Decision is final as to race conduct, placings and results
Performance	Chief Steward / Race Day Review Panel Investigation	Race Day Review Panel	VAL Tribunal
Handicap	Handicapper	Handicap Review Panel	VAL Tribunal
Administrative	Chief Steward, Executive Officer or Board	Board or Executive Officer	VAL Tribunal
Integrity	Chief Steward or Board	Board or Race Day Review Panel	VAL Tribunal

The nature of the matter, rather than the person who identifies or refers it, determines the appropriate decision-making authority.

Nothing in this Rule prevents the Chief Steward from exercising any immediate race-day power authorised under Part C – Competition Rules.

Performance Review Authority

22.2 The Chief Steward may assess Athlete performances and make any immediate race-day determination or apply any performance classification expressly authorised under these Rules.

Performance matters requiring further review may be referred to the RRP in accordance with Rule 21. The RRP may investigate, hear and determine those matters and impose any penalty authorised under Rule 23.

Nothing in this Rule prevents the Chief Steward from applying a Non-Acceptable Performance or other prescribed performance classification where expressly authorised under these Rules or the applicable Technical Guidelines.

Handicap Authority

22.3 Handicap matters shall be determined in accordance with Rule 24.

The Handicapper shall undertake the initial review of an Athlete's handicap.

Where an Athlete remains dissatisfied with that determination, the matter may proceed to the Handicap Review Panel and subsequently to the VAL Tribunal where a right of appeal exists.

Conduct of Hearings

22.4 All hearings conducted under these Rules shall be conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

A person charged must be provided with:

a) reasonable notice of the hearing;
b) sufficient information to understand the charge and particulars;
c) access to the material relied upon;
d) a reasonable opportunity to respond to the charge;
e) an opportunity to present relevant evidence and submissions; and
f) a reasonable opportunity to respond to relevant evidence presented against them.

Representation

22.5 A person appearing before a hearing authority may be assisted or represented by another person approved by that authority.

Legal representation is not permitted unless approved by the Board or VAL Tribunal in exceptional circumstances.

An Athlete under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, registered Coach or Trainer, or other appropriate adult aged 18 or over.

Evidence

22.6 A hearing authority may consider any relevant evidence, including evidence obtained during an investigation under Rule 20, and is not bound by the formal rules of evidence.

Standard of Proof

22.7 All matters determined under these Rules shall be decided on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the seriousness of the allegation and its potential consequences.

Conduct of Hearing

22.8 A hearing may be conducted in person, electronically or by any other reasonable means determined by the hearing authority.

The hearing authority may:

a) determine the procedure to be followed;
b) request further information or evidence;
c) hear from witnesses;
d) seek expert or technical advice where appropriate;
e) adjourn the hearing where reasonably necessary; and
f) take any other reasonable procedural step necessary to fairly determine the matter.

Determination

22.9 Following a hearing, the hearing authority may:

a) dismiss the charge;
b) find the charge proven;
c) find the charge proven in part;
d) refer the matter to another authority established under these Rules; or
e) impose any penalty authorised under Rule 23.

The determination shall be provided in writing together with brief reasons.

Where a penalty is imposed, the determination shall identify:

a) the offence found proven;
b) the penalty imposed;
c) when the penalty takes effect; and
d) any applicable right of appeal.

Failure to Attend

22.10 Where a person has been properly served with a Notice of Charge and reasonable notice of the hearing, but fails to attend or respond without reasonable excuse, the hearing may proceed in their absence.

Effect of Determination

22.11 A determination takes effect when communicated to the person concerned or at such other time specified in the determination.

Unless otherwise provided by these Rules, the lodging of an appeal does not automatically suspend the operation of a determination or penalty.

Appeals

22.12 A person may appeal a determination only where a right of appeal is provided under these Rules. An appeal to the VAL Tribunal shall be lodged and determined in accordance with Rule 25.

23. PENALTIES

Available Penalties

23.1 Where a charge is found proven under these Rules, the hearing authority may impose one or more of the following penalties:

a) caution or warning;
b) reprimand;
c) fine;
d) forfeiture of entry fees, prizemoney or trophies;
e) referral for handicap review or adjustment in accordance with Rule 24;
f) disqualification from an event;
g) suspension from Competition or Membership for a specified period;
h) cancellation or suspension of registration, licence or accreditation;
i) exclusion from any VAL-sanctioned Competition, venue or activity;
j) permanent disqualification or expulsion, where imposed by the Board or VAL Tribunal; or
k) any other penalty authorised under these Rules.

Determining a Penalty

23.2 In determining an appropriate penalty, the hearing authority may consider:

a) the nature and seriousness of the offence;
b) intent of the person;
c) the impact of the conduct on other Participants or the sport;
d) whether the person has admitted responsibility;
e) any previous offences;
f) any mitigating or aggravating circumstances; and
g) the need for consistency, deterrence and the protection of the integrity of the sport.

Effective Date

23.3 Unless otherwise determined, a penalty takes effect immediately upon notification of the determination.

Suspended Penalties

23.4 A hearing authority may suspend all or part of a penalty subject to any conditions it considers appropriate. Where those conditions are breached, the suspended penalty may be activated in addition to any penalty imposed for the subsequent offence.

Failure to Comply

23.5 A person who fails to comply with a penalty imposed under these Rules is not eligible to participate in any VAL-sanctioned Competition until the penalty has been satisfied or otherwise determined by the Board.

Publication

23.6 The Board may publish the outcome of any disciplinary matter where it considers it appropriate in the interests of transparency, integrity or the administration of the sport.

Costs

23.7 Each party shall bear their own costs unless these Rules expressly provide otherwise or the hearing authority determines that exceptional circumstances justify a different order.

24. HANDICAP REVIEWS AND APPEALS

24.1 The purpose of this Rule is to provide a fair, transparent and independent process for the review and appeal of athlete handicaps.

Handicap Review Panel

24.2 The Board shall appoint a Handicap Review Panel ("HRP") for a one-year term to oversee the review of handicapping decisions.

The HRP shall comprise at least three persons appointed by the Board, including:

a) the Director of Handicapping;
b) at least one Board member; and
c) one person with appropriate handicapping or athletics expertise.

Functions

24.3 The functions of the HRP are to:

a) review handicapping decisions upon application;
b) ensure the Handicap Technical Guidelines are applied consistently;
c) provide quality assurance of handicapping decisions;
d) direct a Handicapper to reconsider or amend a handicap where appropriate; and
e) make recommendations to the Board regarding handicapping policy and procedures.

Handicap Review

24.4 An Athlete may apply for a review of a handicap allocated by a Handicapper in accordance with the VAL Handicapping Technical Guidelines, where an email address is provided for queries.

A Handicap Review shall be conducted by the original Handicapper.

The Handicapper may confirm or amend the handicap and shall provide brief reasons for the decision.

Note that Athletes and Trainers must request permission from the VAL via appointment before speaking to the Handicapper during the course of a meeting.

Handicap Appeal

24.5 Where an Athlete remains dissatisfied following a Handicap Review, they may appeal to the Handicap Review Panel.

The HRP may:

a) dismiss the appeal;
b) confirm the handicap;
c) direct the Handicapper to reconsider the handicap; or
d) recommend that the handicap be amended.

The HRP shall provide written reasons for its determination.

Appeal to the VAL Tribunal

24.6 An Athlete who remains dissatisfied following determination by the HRP may appeal to the VAL Tribunal in accordance with Rule 25.

Procedures

24.7 The Board may approve procedures relating to handicap reviews and appeals, including application requirements, timeframes, fees and supporting evidence through the VAL Handicap Technical Guidelines.

25. VAL TRIBUNAL

25.1 The Board shall appoint an independent VAL Tribunal ("Tribunal") to hear appeals and determine matters referred under these Rules.

Composition

25.2 The Tribunal shall comprise not fewer than three members appointed by the Board.
The Board shall appoint a Chair of the Tribunal and may appoint Deputy Chairs and additional members with appropriate legal, governance, sporting or other relevant experience.
A Tribunal member must not participate in any matter where a conflict of interest exists.

Jurisdiction

25.3 The Tribunal may hear and determine:
a) appeals from decisions of the Race Review Panel;
b) appeals from decisions of the Handicap Review Panel;
c) appeals from disciplinary decisions made under these Rules;
d) matters referred by the Board; and
e) any other matter for which these Rules confer jurisdiction on the Tribunal.

Appeals

25.4 A person entitled to appeal under these Rules may lodge an appeal with the VAL Office in accordance with the procedures approved by the Board.

Unless otherwise determined by the Tribunal, the original decision remains in force pending determination of the appeal.

Hearing Procedure

25.5 The Tribunal shall conduct proceedings fairly, impartially and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

The Tribunal may determine its own procedures, provided they are consistent with these Rules.

Powers

25.6 In determining an appeal or referred matter, the Tribunal may:

a) dismiss the appeal;
b) uphold the appeal;
c) vary or set aside the original decision;
d) substitute another decision permitted under these Rules;
e) remit the matter for reconsideration by the original decision-maker or another authority established under these Rules; or
f) make any ancillary order necessary to give effect to its determination.

Evidence

25.7 The Tribunal may receive any evidence it considers relevant and is not bound by the formal rules of evidence.

Standard of Proof

25.8 The Tribunal shall determine all matters on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the seriousness of the allegation and its potential consequences.

Determination

25.9 The Tribunal shall provide its determination in writing, together with brief reasons. Unless otherwise provided by these Rules, a determination of the Tribunal is final and binding.

Costs and Fees

25.10 The Board may determine application fees, hearing fees and Tribunal procedures from time to time.

The Tribunal may refund or retain fees in whole or in part where permitted under these Rules or the applicable Policy.

Withdrawal and Extension

25.11 An appeal may not be withdrawn without the approval of the Tribunal.
The Tribunal may extend any time prescribed for lodging an appeal where satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist and it would be fair and reasonable to do so.

26. ANTI-DOPING AND SPORT INTEGRITY

26.1 The VAL adopts the Sport Integrity Australia National Anti-Doping Policy (or any successor policy recognised by Sport Integrity Australia) as the anti-doping policy applying to all Participants.

All Participants must comply with:

a) the VAL Anti-Doping Policy;
b) the Sport Integrity Australia National Anti-Doping Policy;
c) the World Anti-Doping Code, where applicable; and
d) any other integrity policy adopted by the Board.

Jurisdiction

26.2 The Board recognises the authority of Sport Integrity Australia and any other recognised sporting integrity body to investigate, determine and enforce anti-doping and other integrity matters within their jurisdiction.

Sanctions

26.3 Any sanction, suspension, finding or determination imposed by Sport Integrity Australia or another recognised sporting body shall be recognised and enforced by the VAL in accordance with these Rules.

Integrity Policies

26.4 The Board may adopt additional integrity policies relating to matters including:

a) child safeguarding;
b) member protection;
c) competition manipulation;
d) illicit drugs;
e) complaints and dispute resolution; and
f) any other integrity matter considered necessary by the Board.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1 - DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires:

Administrative Offence means an offence classified as an Administrative Offence under Rule 19.

Athlete means a person registered or otherwise authorised to compete in a VAL-sanctioned Competition or Event.

Board means the Board of the Victorian Athletic League Incorporated and includes a person or body exercising delegated authority where permitted under these Rules.

Chair means the President or Chair of the VAL Board.

Chief Steward means the Steward appointed or authorised to exercise overall race-day authority for a Competition under these Rules and includes an Acting Chief Steward.

Classic Event means an Event classified as Classic under Rule 7.

Club means a club affiliated with the VAL in accordance with these Rules which conducts athletic "Gift" meetings and events governed by the VAL.

Coach/Trainer means a person registered, accredited or otherwise recognised by the VAL to coach, train or assist an Athlete.

Competition means a meeting or carnival sanctioned by the VAL comprising one or more Events conducted under these Rules.

Competition Offence means an offence classified as a Competition Offence under Rule 19.

Constitution means the Constitution of the Victorian Athletic League Incorporated as amended from time to time.

Designated Competition Arena means the track, infield, start and finish areas, and any other area designated for competition or controlled by officials. The boundary of the arena is:
a. any permanent fence, barrier or clearly marked field boundary surrounding the competition area; or
b. where no such boundary exists, an imaginary or marked line extending three metres beyond the outside edge of the circular track line.
The Chief Steward may vary or further define the boundary to reflect the configuration and operational requirements of a particular venue.

Director means a member of the Board.

Director of Handicapping means the person appointed by the Board to coordinate and oversee the operation of the VAL handicapping system.

Event means an individual athletic race or competition conducted as part of a VAL-sanctioned competition, including any heat, semi-final or final.

Gift Event means an Event recognised as a Gift Event in accordance with Rule 7.

Handicap means the starting mark or allowance allocated to an Athlete for an Event in accordance with the VAL Handicap Technical Guidelines.

Handicap Review means the initial review of an Athlete's Handicap conducted in accordance with Rule 24.

Handicap Review Panel (HRP) means the panel established under Rule 24 to hear and determine handicap appeals and perform the other functions conferred by these Rules.

Handicapper means a person appointed or authorised by the VAL to allocate and review Athlete Handicaps.

Integrity Offence means an offence classified as an Integrity Offence under Rule 19.

Junior Athlete means an Athlete who satisfies the age requirements for Junior Competition prescribed under Rule 5.

Life Member means a person appointed to Life Membership of the VAL in accordance with the Constitution and these Rules.

Member means a person or organisation admitted to, registered with or recognised as a Member of the VAL in accordance with the Constitution and these Rules.

Non-Acceptable Performance (NAP) means an Athlete performance classified as Non-Acceptable in accordance with these Rules and the applicable Handicap Technical Guidelines.

Notice of Charge means a formal notice issued under Rule 20 advising a person of an alleged offence under these Rules and the particulars of that allegation.

Novice Athlete means an Athlete satisfying the eligibility requirements for Novice Competition under Rule 5.

Official means a person appointed, accredited or authorised by the VAL to perform an official function under these Rules, including a Steward, Starter, Judge, Handicapper, Results Official, Photo Finish Operator or Technical Official.

Participant means any person or organisation to whom these Rules apply, including a Member, Athlete, Coach/Trainer, Official, Club representative, volunteer, bookmaker or other person participating in a VAL-sanctioned activity.

Performance Offence means an offence classified as a Performance Offence under Rule 19.

Policy means a policy approved by the Board under the governance framework established by these Rules.

Race Day Protest Committee means the committee established under Rule 17 to determine Race Day Protests.

Race Day Referee means the person appointed or authorised under these Rules to review and determine Competition Offences referred to that role.

Race Review Panel (RRP) means the panel established under Rule 21 to investigate, hear and determine Performance Offences and other matters within its jurisdiction.

Rules means these Victorian Athletic League Rules as amended from time to time.

Sanctioned Competition or VAL-sanctioned Competition means a Competition approved by the Board and conducted under the authority of the VAL.

Steward means a person appointed by the VAL to exercise stewarding functions under these Rules.

Technical Guideline means a technical standard, methodology or procedure approved by the Board that supports these Rules.

Tribunal or VAL Tribunal means the independent tribunal established under Rule 25.

Unsatisfactory Performance (UP) means an Athlete performance determined to be unsatisfactory in accordance with these Rules and the applicable Handicap Technical Guidelines.

VAL means the Victorian Athletic League Incorporated.

VAL Office means the administrative office or authorised administrative function of the VAL.

Victorian Runners and Trainers Association (VRTA) means the body representing runners and trainers recognised by the VAL for the purposes of these Rules.