VICTORIAN ATHLETIC LEAGUE

HANDICAP GUIDELINES

~ Effective 1st October 2026 ~

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION **4**

OBJECTIVES **4**

HOW DOES IT WORK **4**

KEY TERMS **5**

STEWARDING **7**

HANDICAPPING OF REGULAR EVENTS **7**

ATHLETE STATUS AND CATEGORIES **7**

ESTABLISHED ATHLETES 8
ON GOING ASSESSED ATHLETES (OGA) 8
INTERSTATE ATHLETES 9

(SEE DEFINITION IN KEY TERMS) **9**

INITIAL AND STARTING HANDICAPS **9**

INITIAL HANDICAP ALLOCATION 9
NEW SEASON STARTING HANDICAPS 10
CALCULATION OF NOTIONAL STARTING HANDICAP 10
ADJUSTMENST TO STARTING HANDICAPS 11
STAWELL GIFT EVENT PENALTIES 11
DEVELOPING ATHLETES 12
REVIEW OF NEW SEASON STARTING HANDICAPS 12

ADJUSTMENT TO HANDICAPS DURING THE SEASON **12**

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 13
ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE (AP) 13
NON-SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE (NAP) 13
UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE (UP) 14
THE ALLOCATION OF HANDICAP LIFTS 14
HANDICAP CEILING (CP) OR MAXIMUM HANDICAP 15
WINNING PENALTIES 17
DISCRETIONARY LIFT FOR CLASSIC RACES & STAWELL CARNIVAL 18

ALTERATIONS TO DECLARED HANDICAPS **18**

GIFT WIN INCENTIVES **19**

GIFT WIN INCENTIVE - HANDICAP LIFT (120M OPEN/MEN'S AND WOMEN'S GIFTS) 19
STAWELL GIFT - HANDICAP RETENTION INCENTIVE 20

HANDICAPPING OF NON-REGULAR EVENTS/CATEGORIES **22**

SPECIFIC EVENT HANDICAP GUILDELINES 22

HANDICAP LIMITS **26**

OPEN, WOMEN, *JUNIOR & **RESTRICTED (MAXIMUM HANDICAP) 26
MASTERS (MAXIMUM HANDICAP) 27

HANDICAP REVIEW & APPEALS PROCESS **27**

HANDICAP REVIEW 27
HANDICAP APPEAL – HRP 28
HANDICAP APPEAL – VAL TRIBUNAL 28

TABLE 4. HANDICAP CALCULATIONS **30**

TABLE 5. NOVICE HANDICAPS **32**

TABLE 6. HANDICAP PENALTIES **33**

OPEN, MENS & WOMENS HANDICAP PENALTIES 33
UNDER 18 HANDICAP PENALTIES 34
MASTERS EVENTS PENALTIES 34
TABLE 7. PERFORMANCE RANGE 35
TABLE 8. EVENT CATEGORIES 36

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the guidelines provided by the VAL Board to the appointed VAL Director of Handicapping, Handicap Review Panel and Handicappers to assist them in the handicapping of athletes within the VAL Rules.

These Guidelines, which are designed to facilitate greater athlete participation and strive towards regular, competitive racing, are subject to annual review by the VAL Board, with input from the VAL Rules Committee, the VAL Director of Handicapping, the Handicap Review Panel, Officials and the VRTA.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide athletes with an equal opportunity for success.

2. To provide a fair, transparent and consistent approach to handicapping.

3. To encourage athletes to compete regularly, consistently and to the best of their ability.

4. To provide clear direction to athletes, trainers and other interested parties on how handicaps are derived.

HOW DOES IT WORK

The VAL offers an opportunity for athletes of all abilities to reach a point where they are competitive in the event that they participate in, via the allocation of handicaps. A target time and ceiling time is designated for each distance and race category. Athletes entering a race are allocated a handicap, based on previous race history, that the handicapper believes is needed to run within the designated time range of the target time for that event, and less than the ceiling time. Athletes will then receive incremental lifts in their handicap as they compete in that event in the future. Those with minimal relevant race history will be handicapped more cautiously than those with a plentiful race history and may require several races for their handicap to be adjusted to a position where they are competitive in that event. As will Junior athletes competing in Open events.

Based on available data, athletes will have calculated a Notional Starting Handicap (NSH), i.e. the handicap required to run the target time, based on the speed of their previous performances. Handicappers will use this data, in conjunction with other factors, to determine the handicap for the particular event entered.

There are two classifications of events: Regular Events and Non-Regular Events. regular Events are handicapped in a more systematic fashion, where lifts are given incrementally, and the handicap is generally not pulled unless the athlete wins a race or runs under the ceiling time. Non-Regular Events are handicapped in a more discretionary fashion, with movements, although still within the range as set out in Schedule 1, more fluid.

In Regular Events, there are two classifications of athletes: Established and On Going Assessed (OGA). The method for handicapping these two classifications of athletes differs.

These guidelines explain the process in more detail.

KEY TERMS

AAC = Australian Athletics Confederation (affiliated Organisations are VAL, SAAL, TAL, NSWAL, WAAL and QAL).

Carnival/Meeting = a professional running event organised by a member club of the VAL.

VAL Rules = the officials Rules of the VAL, available on the VAL website at www.val.org.au . These Rules are separate to the Handicapping Guidelines.

VAL Handicappers = The panel of handicappers appointed by the VAL Board to handicap all events on the VAL calendar.

VAL Stewards = the appointed Stewards appointed by the VAL Board who along with the Handicappers oversee the conduct and stewarding of all events on the VAL calendar.

Handicap Review Panel (HRP) = A Panel appointed by the VAL Board to oversee the VAL Handicappers and ensure their adherence to the Handicap guidelines. Refer to Section 24 of the VAL Rules for the functions and authority of the HRP.

Director of Handicapping = An individual appointed by the VAL Board to Chair the HRP and be the direct report for all Handicappers and handicap queries, specifically to ensure the VAL Rules and Handicap Guidelines are accurately and consistently adhere to across all areas.

Event Categories = Separate event categories are Open, Men, Women, Masters, Junior and Restricted.

Established Athlete = an athlete is considered to be established within a particular event, if they have competed in that event distance the number of times specified within the Athlete Status and Category guidelines

Ongoing Assessed Athlete (OGA) = any athlete who does not satisfy established athlete criteria over a particular event.

Target Time = for a particular distance, this is the time that athletes are handicapped to, based on their best performances, at the commencement of each season. The starting times for each event are provided in the Handicap Calculations Table (Schedule 1).

Ceiling Time = the fastest time that athletes can be handicapped to run in a particular event after competing within the season over the distance in the VAL. Once an athlete has reached the ceiling point, their handicap cannot be lifted again during the season. The ceiling times for each event are provided in the handicap Calculations Table (Schedule 1).

Ceiling Point = the maximum handicap that an athlete can receive for an event in a given season, determined by reference to the athletes average MPS and the Ceiling Time.

Notional Starting Handicap = an athlete's handicap for a particular distance at the beginning of the season, determined solely on the basis of a mathematical calculation and before any adjustment for prior season performances or the athlete's finishing handicap in the prior season

New Season Starting Handicap = the handicap that an athlete will commence the new season on, after allowing for adjustments for prior season performances and the athlete's finishing handicap in the prior season.

Metres per second (MPS) = the average metres covered per second, calculated by dividing the distance run by the time taken to run that distance (e.g. the MPS of a 120m runner who runs 12.20 seconds off 6m =

(120-6)/12.20 = 9.3442)

Novice = an athlete who has never won an event under AAC rules. Note – Junior race wins do not apply.

Novice Handicap = the handicap allocated to an athlete who has not previously competed over a particular distance or similar distance, who does not have form or performances superior to the target time in the opinion of the VAL Handicappers.

Interstate Athlete = an athlete who is registered with a governing body other than the VAL and permanently resides outside the State of Victoria

Masters = an athlete aged 35 years old or over.

Lift Range = the range of lifts in handicap for an event that may be awarded by the VAL Handicappers, as set out in the Handicap Calculations Table.

Minimum Graduation = The minimum lift in that range is called the Minimum Graduation (refer to the attached Handicap Calculations Table).

Acceptable Deviation = this deviation sets the time range within which an established athlete must run in order to ensure an Acceptable Performance. For each event, the VAL Handicappers take the fastest heat time of the day run by an Established athlete and adds the Acceptable Deviation, as set out in the Handicap Calculations Table. If the athlete runs a time that is equal to or faster than this time, then they have run within the Acceptable Deviation. If the event is a straight final, the winning time is used, or if that time is under the ceiling, then the highest placed time that does not break the ceiling time is used.

Age of Performance Allowance - If in the opinion of the Handicapper a performance over 3 years old is no longer reflective of the athlete's capabilities, the Handicapper can seek approval from the Director of Handicapping and the HRP to exclude that performance from the MPS calculation. This would apply to both the starting and ceiling calculations.

Masters Allowance - A Masters allowance of up to 4 minimum graduations can be added to the calculated notional starting handicap and ceiling handicap by the Handicapper, subject to the approval of the HRP, if the Handicapper believes the calculated handicaps are no longer reflective of a Masters athlete's capabilities due to age. The adjusted starting handicap cannot exceed the finishing handicap for last season nor place the athlete under the starting time based on their best performance from the last 12 months.

STEWARDING

Stewarding is a fundamental and essential part of VAL Handicapping as it focuses on the integrity of the process. The Stewards comprise the Handicappers and Acting Stewards at the Carnival, one of whose tasks are to assess each performance.

In order for a performance to receive an AP, the Stewards need to be satisfied with the effort provided and that the performance is consistent with the athlete's capabilities.

Factors the Stewards will consider in judging a performance include:

- Satisfactory effort throughout a performance. It is a requirement to always run to win, or achieve the best possible outcome, in each performance. This includes heat and semis.
- A sensible racing strategy. For example, if competing in a distance event, how the athlete has paced themselves throughout a performance will be considered by the Stewards.
- Has the performance been hindered by lack of fitness, sickness, injury or participation in prior events or rounds. If an athlete, prior to competing, feels their performance could be hindered in some way, but wishes to compete, they are advised to discuss this with the Stewards beforehand. If the Stewards permit the athlete to run, this does not preclude or change the athlete's requirements as set out above, to achieve an AP. (i.e. normal criteria applies). What reporting a potential hindering of performance prior to competing may alleviate is further Stewarding action.
- Has there been interference in running that has sufficiently hindered an athlete and impacted on their capacity to run a satisfactory time.

If the Stewards have concerns over these or any other matters, they will address that with the athlete. Please note athletes have a right to be represented when being addressed by the Stewards and it is compulsory that all athletes under 18 years of age are represented.

Please refer to the VAL Rules, available on the VAL website or from the office, for more detail on Stewarding procedures and the potential sanctions and penalties that can apply if charged with an offence.

HANDICAPPING OF REGULAR EVENTS

(see Schedule 5 for list of regular & Non-Regular Events)

Regular events are handicapped in a systematic way. Starting handicaps are calculated at the commencement of each season. Established athletes receive automatic handicap lifts after the prescribed number of APs have been achieved, and OGA athletes gradually and systematically, and cautiously, receive handicap lifts that continually increase their competitiveness.
Non-Regular events however are determined on a discretionary basis by the Handicapper throughout the season (see Pg 22)

ATHLETE STATUS AND CATEGORIES

To assist in ensuring that all athletes are handicapped fairly, athletes are separated into the following two categories:

1. Established Athletes
2. Ongoing Assessed Athletes (or OGA)

ESTABLISHED ATHLETES

An athlete is considered to be established within a particular event, regardless of category, if they have competed in that event on 8 or more occasions in the previous 2 seasons AND have competed in that event on 14 or more occasions within the last 4 seasons in VAL competition. Verifiable performances (must have wind reading) in AAC competitions, and in State and National-based amateur competitions, over the distance, will be included in determining an athlete as Established.

For the sake of clarity, an athlete's performances in Restricted, Open, Men's, Women's & Masters events may all count towards an athlete becoming Established in the relevant distance category. Performances in Junior races will not. Junior athletes will not be deemed as Established, even if they satisfy the criteria above, until they turn 18. Only performances recorded after they have turned 18 will be used in determining their status/category.

However, for athletes over both the 800m and 1600m distances to be deemed Established they will require 6 runs in the previous 2 seasons AND 12 runs the past 4 seasons. Once an athlete has competed over the particular distance (800 or 1600 metres) 12 times, they remain an Established athlete in that specific category, unless they do not compete at all over that particular distance for 2 complete seasons, whereupon they would revert to OGA status until the criteria as outlined above is met.

The advantages for an athlete becoming established in an event are:

- It is incumbent on the Handicapper to gradually move an athlete to a potentially competitive handicap as they continue to compete in that event, so that by the time the athlete becomes Established, they have a handicap in line with their calculated Notional Starting Handicap and are therefore capable of being competitive and potentially winning. This is obviously subject to the athlete running to their capabilities.

- An athlete that is established in an event must be lifted when they have received the required number of APs, in accordance with the Handicap Rules. For the purpose of this regulation, all rounds (Heats/Semis/Final) of an individual event at a particular meeting is counted as 1 occasion in total.

- An athlete that is established has their notional starting handicap calculated using their best 3 performances (the average of the best from last 4 seasons, next 2 best from last 2 seasons), in contrast to OGA athletes who only have their best, or in some cases, 2 best performances used.

ON GOING ASSESSED ATHLETES (OGA)

(including New & Novice Athletes)

An Ongoing Assessed Athlete (OGA) is any athlete who does not satisfy the established athlete criteria for a Regular Event. over a particular distance.

An athlete may be classified as OGA in a single event or multiple events, depending on the number of performances over a particular distance. Athletes can be Established in one event distance group and OGA in another distance group i.e. 110m/120m is a distance group, 300m/400m is another distance group.

OGA athletes are not guaranteed a lift in handicap for any event and can be re-assessed at any time at the discretion of the VAL Handicappers, if warranted. However, OGA athletes will have their handicap reviewed after an AP and can receive a handicap lift within the range provided in Schedule 1, at the discretion of the Handicapper.

Once an athlete meets the number of required runs throughout a season in order to be classified as an Established Athlete, then their status once this threshold is met will change to established athlete.

INTERSTATE ATHLETES

(see definition in Key Terms)

Interstate Athletes competing in the VAL who are registered with an affiliated league will be handicapped in the same way as VAL athletes. This does NOT mean that interstate athletes will be provided with the same handicap that they have in their home state. Handicappers will take into account differences between the bodies handicapping systems and will apply a handicap generally in association with the home state handicapper.

All Interstate athletes are classified as OGA.

The same expectations for consistency of performance and running to an athlete's capabilities, are required of Interstate athletes as VAL registered athletes, in order for Interstate athletes to be considered for a lift. This includes both VAL and interstate performances.

All interstate athletes who have not competed in an AAC member organization or who do not have verified amateur performances recorded, cannot receive an initial handicap greater than the Novice handicap for their applicable category in that event. The same process and regulations apply as to all new athletes in determining their initial handicap (refer Initial Handicap Allocation and OGA Athletes Status sections of these guidelines)

INITIAL AND STARTING HANDICAPS

INITIAL HANDICAP ALLOCATION

The maximum initial handicap an athlete can receive is the Novice handicap for that distance, subject to the conditions listed below. The Novice handicaps are provided in Schedule 2 of these Handicap Guidelines and are dependent on the gender and age of the athlete.

The Target Time for each distance alongside the athlete's best performance, or potential best performance based on their personal bests over a similar distance, is used by the Handicapper to determine if an initial handicap allocation should be less than the Novice handicap and what that handicap should be. The target times for each distance and event category are available in Schedule 1 of these Handicap Guidelines.

The initial handicap for an interstate athlete entering a VAL event for the first time within the season, is calculated in the same manner as other OGA athletes. (Track, Age of Performance and Masters allowances apply where applicable).

An Interstate Athlete competing with VAL for the first time may receive more than the novice handicap, only if they have competed at least 8 times over that particular distance in the past 2 seasons in their own league.

If an Open or Masters athlete has 8 or more amateur performances over the distance at meetings run by State, National or International Athletics Bodies, which include a wind reading, within the past 12 months, they may, at the handicapper's discretion, and with approval from the HRP, be allocated a handicap based on their best performance. (Interstate athletes – refer above)

If a VAL registered athlete has competed regularly over other similar distances within the VAL, the Handicapper can apply to the HRP to allocate an initial handicap that is more than the novice handicap. This will only be approved if the athlete's performances over other similar distances clearly show they require a greater handicap to be competitive and the athlete's current handicap over the similar distance is completely out of balance with the novice handicap for the distance they are entering.

For the purpose of determining an athlete's potential best performance, distances from 70 to 400 are regarded as similar, as are 400 to 800, 800 to 1500 and 1500 to 5000.

NEW SEASON STARTING HANDICAPS

Starting handicaps are determined for Regular Events only. These include all distances and separate individual categories (Open, Men's, Women's and Masters events). Starting Handicaps will not be calculated for non-regular events including Restricted and Junior events. These will be allocated upon race entry.
Prior to the commencement of each season, the Handicappers in conjunction with the HRP, will determine the starting handicap for each registered athlete for each event they competed in the previous season.

An Athlete's starting handicap for the season for each distance will be the lesser of their last allocated handicap from the previous season over that distance, even if the Athlete did not compete from that handicap, or the calculated notional starting handicap less any adjustments required under the Handicap Guidelines.

Handicappers have discretion to apply a lift (with some restrictions) in allocating start handicaps to Established athletes who are behind their notional starting handicap, and are either uncompetitive, or have not won a race over the distance. The variation on a starting handicap is set at no greater than 20% of the last handicap allocated, and will require approval of the Director of Handicapping.

CALCULATION OF NOTIONAL STARTING HANDICAP

For Established athletes in Regular events, the calculated notional starting handicap is determined by dividing the average of the athlete's best Metres Per Second (MPS) from the last 4 seasons and the next 2 best MPSs from the last 2 seasons, into the starting time for that event. The Starting time for each event is available in Schedule 1 of these Handicap Guidelines.

For OGA athletes in Regular events, the calculated notional starting handicap is determined by dividing the average of the athlete's best Metres Per Second (MPS) from the last 4 seasons and the next best MPS from the last 2 seasons, into the starting time for that event. The Starting time for each event is available in Schedule 1 of these Handicap Guidelines.

In Masters events, for athletes over 40 years of age, the calculated notional starting handicap is determined by dividing the average of the athlete's best Metres Per Second (MPS) from the last 3 seasons and the next best MPS from the last 2 seasons, into the starting time for that event.
The Starting time for each event is available in Schedule 1 of these Handicap Guidelines.

In Distance events (550m+) the calculated notional target time handicap is determined by dividing the average of the athlete's best Metres Per Second (MPS) from the last 4 seasons and the next best MPS from the last 2 seasons, into the starting time for that event. The Starting time for each event is available in Schedule 1 of these Handicap Guidelines.

For all athletes with minimal performance history, the notional starting handicap is determined at the discretion of the VAL Handicapper based on consideration of the athlete's best MPS or performance over that or a similar distance, within or outside the VAL.

Handicapper discretion may include consideration of an athlete's performance history in events outside the VAL, including but not limited to events such as, Cross Country, Marathons, Hurdles, Beach Sprints, Long Jump and Triple Jump, or where an athlete has competed at State and/or National level in an individual event.

MPSs will be drawn from all performances over the distance, both within all event categories in the VAL and external to the VAL.

For non-Regular events, all notional starting handicaps are calculated as OGA.

For the sake of clarity, both performances used to calculate an athlete's Notional Starting Handicap may come from different rounds of the same event at the same Meeting. For example, performance in a 120m semi-final and 120m final at Stawell.

Adjustment for Synthetic Tracks

The following additions are made to times recorded on synthetic tracks for the calculation of MPSs. This is done in order to equate times on artificial tracks to that of a good grass track.

Synthetic Track Race Distance	Current adjustment (Adjustment) (seconds)
70 m	0.15
100 m / 120 m	0.20
200 m	0.40
300 m	0.75
400 m	1.00
550 m	1.00

Otherwise, 1.5 seconds per lap for events over 800m.

ADJUSTMENTS TO STARTING HANDICAPS

If an athlete has won a Group 1 or Classic event in the VAL or any other Interstate AAC Affiliated organisation in the previous season, their Actual starting handicap for the current season in the VAL, for that particular distance only, will be reduced by one minimum graduation. This is in addition to the penalty from the previous season.

Any athlete that wins two or more Group 2 or 3 races with a season may incur an additional penalty that will be applied to the athletes start handicap for the following season.

STAWELL GIFT EVENT PENALTIES

The penalty for winning at Stawell in all events in the previous season, will be applied to the lesser of the finish handicap from the previous season for that distance or the Notional starting handicap calculation for that distance for the new season. This ensures Stawell winners from the previous season, will start behind their calculated notional starting handicap by a minimum of the applicable standard penalty. For all penalties, including Stawell, please refer to the Schedule 3 of these Handicap Guidelines.

Winners of all events at Stawell will have their handicaps reassessed over all similar distances (refer Page 7) and all categories for the commencement of the next season. The Handicapper will take into account the athlete's winning performance and MPS to determine if a reduction in start handicaps in other categories and similar distances is required for the athlete to be handicapped on or behind the relevant start handicap for the new season. Any adjustments under this regulation are at the handicapper's discretion and require the approval of the HRP. This regulation does not override other penalty regulations, and it should be noted wins in open events automatically attract penalties across all categories.

Athletes who make the Women's or Men's Stawell Gift Final in the previous season, will also have their 120m start handicap reduced by the following amount. This adjustment will again be to the lesser of their finish handicap from the previous season or the Notional starting handicap calculation for the new season. Note – any penalties for winning a race during the previous season, must also be deducted from the finish handicap or NSM, if the athlete has not competed from the penalty-included handicap.

Table 1. Stawell Gift Finalist Penalties (Men's & Women's)

PLACE	PENALTY
1st	2.00m
2nd	0.75m
3rd	0.50m
4th	0.25m
5th	0.25m
6th	0.25m

The above penalties can be varied on recommendation from the handicapper by the HRP, should the handicapper consider the penalty is not commensurate with the performance recorded.

DEVELOPING ATHLETES

If in the opinion of the Handicapper an athlete has the potential for significant natural development or improved fitness levels, the Handicapper can apply to the Director of Handicapping and/or HRP to have the starting handicap for that athlete reduced. This would generally apply to junior athletes in Open events but may also include Open and Masters athletes.

REVIEW OF NEW SEASON STARTING HANDICAPS

The Director of Handicapping and the HRP will review the allocated starting handicaps to ensure compliance with the regulations. Subject to the conditions and potential adjustments outlined, the HRP will instruct the Handicapper to correct and adjust any handicaps it deems as not being in accordance with the regulations.
If the handicapper believes the potential adjustment arising from the calculated notional starting handicap is too severe and would result in the athlete being uncompetitive, the handicapper can apply to the director of handicapping and the HRP to reduce the adjustment to the starting handicap. The director of handicapping and the HRP will take into account the consistency and recent form of the athlete over this and other distances.
At all times the adjusted starting handicap cannot exceed the finishing handicap for last season nor place the athlete under the starting time based on their best performance from the last 12 months.

ADJUSTMENT TO HANDICAPS DURING THE SEASON

As athletes compete during the season their handicap can be adjusted by the VAL Handicappers on the following basis:

Every time an athlete runs their performance is reviewed by the VAL Handicappers and Stewards. In order to be entitled to receive a lift in handicap for a particular event, an athlete must achieve a sufficient number of Acceptable Performances (AP's) over the relevant distance. The number of AP's required for a handicap lift will vary depending on the distance and the category that the athlete falls into (refer Allocation of Handicap Lifts)

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

The VAL Handicappers together with the Stewards will assess each performance with the VAL, based on the time the athlete ran and their judgment in regard to the appropriate degree of effort being applied throughout the run.

The VAL Handicappers & Stewards will place each performance in one of the following categories. Please note that where an athlete has competed in multiple rounds (i.e. heat, semi, final), all rounds are classified as one performance for this assessment process:

ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE (AP)

For a performance to be classified as an AP it needs to meet the following requirements:

- For Established Athletes only - be within the Acceptable time Deviation (all rounds) as set out in Schedule 1. If the event has heats, the fastest wind adjusted heat time for the event is used. In the case of a straight final, the winning time is used.
- The performance throughout all rounds needs to be consistent with and reflective of the athlete's current capabilities, and consistent with other performances within that season.
- The Handicapper and Stewards are satisfied with the athlete's performance and effort throughout.
- The performance in all rounds, in the opinion of the Handicapper and Stewards, is unhindered by lack of fitness, sickness, injury or participation in prior events or rounds.

- Also note the following conditions apply:

    - Heat winners shall be regarded as having an AP for that performance irrespective of their time in the heat, provided that their semifinal and/or final meet the above AP requirements (i.e.: unchallenged heats or walkovers).
    - To be assessed as having an AP for a particular event, each run in the same event must be an AP.
    - If the fastest heat time breaks the Ceiling Target Time, the VAL Handicappers will assess your performance based on the next fastest heat time that does not break the Ceiling Time.
    - An AP performance in a 200m event will be considered as a credit performance toward 100/120m events, when there is no other 100/120m event at the same meeting.

NON-SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE (NAP)

(LOT, OTR, INJ, BRK, IP)

LOT = Loss of time – if an athlete loses time between their heat and semi, or semi and final, that falls within the moderate or extreme category as per the Performance Range Table (Schedule 4) this will be denoted with LOT and is likely to result in the athlete not receiving an AP for that performance, at the discretion of stewards and the Handicapper.
OTR = Outside Time Range - an athlete who records a performance that is outside the Acceptable Time Deviation (see Schedule 1). The Handicapper has the discretion to still regard this as an Acceptable performance if in their opinion the allocated handicap was inferior to that required to achieve a performance within the Acceptable Time Deviation.
INJ = Injury – denotes where an athlete has been unable to complete a race, or who failed to compete in further rounds of an event, due to injury. No AP will be issued.
BRK = Break – denotes where an athlete has broken at the start of a race. An athlete who breaks in a heat or semi-final and fails to progress, or breaks in a final, will receive an automatic NAP. Any runner who breaks and is still able to progress to the next round will not receive an NAP.

ICP = Inconsistent performance – denotes where an athlete's performance is inconsistent with previous performances. No AP will be issued.

UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE (UP)

Irrespective of the time of a particular performance, if the Handicappers or Stewards determine, based on their review, that the athlete did not give full effort throughout the race, or that the performance is anomalous with the athlete's previous performance history, then the performance will be classified as an Unsatisfactory Performance (or UP).

The athlete does not need to be formally charged under the VAL Rules for a performance to be categorised as a UP. Ideally the athlete will be advised by the Handicappers or Stewards of the issuing of a UP prior to the conclusion of the meeting. If this is unachievable or impractical, the athlete must be notified within 48 hours of the conclusion of the meeting

No handicap lift credit will be received for the performance and further sanctions, including a fine and/or handicap review may be incurred due to the more serious nature of the anomalous performance.

Right of Review for Athletes receiving a UP

An athlete who has received a UP can seek a review of this decision from the Handicap Review Panel. A review request must be submitted to the Director of Handicapping/HRP within two (2) days of the athlete being informed of the decision. The HRP will then either uphold the UP, overturn the decision, or vary the decision, in which case the athlete will be awarded an AP for the performance.

If an athlete is not satisfied with the decision of the HRP, they may appeal that decision to the VAL Tribunal, following the process outline in this document.

Running Over Multiple Distance Ranges on the same day

Acceptable Performances (APs) will only be issued to Athletes for performances in Regular Events in a maximum of two adjoining categories (see Table below), if run on the same day of a meeting. The APs will apply to the category and adjoining category of the first race the Athlete competes in at that meeting. Automatic NAPs will be applied to all performances in the other categories.

Category 1	***Category 2***	***Category 3***	***Category 4***
Sprints	**Long Sprints**	**Middle Distance**	**Distance**
70m	300m	800m (inc.1000m)	2 Mile
100/120m	400m	Mile (inc. 2000m)	
200m	550m		

THE ALLOCATION OF HANDICAP LIFTS

The Handicap Calculations Table 4 sets out the number of AP's required before an athlete is entitled to a lift in their handicap for the particular event. Once the athlete has achieved the required number of AP's the Handicappers will give them a lift in handicap from within the relevant Lift Range for that distance.

Any lift in handicap that an athlete receives, will take effect from the next Carnival where handicaps have not yet been declared.

It is important to remember the following when considering whether an athlete has met the requirements for a lift in handicap:

- If an athlete receives a UP, it automatically cancels out any APs that they have previously recorded over that distance or a similar distance.

- An athlete's placing in an event can alter whether they are entitled to a mandatory lift or discretionary lift.

- All finalists in Group 1 or Classic races will not receive an AP for that event on that particular day.

- All placegetters in Group 2 and 3 races will not automatically receive an AP for that event on that particular day. The Handicappers do have the discretion to award an AP to placegetters in these events, if they believe the quality of the field is below the average for that event and the athlete's performance would not have achieved a place in a field of normal or better quality.

- For the avoidance of doubt, the top three place getters in a race are not entitled to a lift in handicap, unless otherwise specified by the VAL Board as a special race incentive under VAL Regulation 1.7.

- Penalties for race wins are determined in accordance with the Handicap Guidelines below and listed in Schedule 3.
- Established athletes may receive a handicap lift after their first race of the season, only if their actual starting handicap is less than their Notional Starting Handicap by more than 4 minimum graduations, and is not impacted by winning penalties or Stawell penalties, to a maximum of 2 minimum graduations, subject to approval from the HRP

HANDICAP CEILING (CP) or MAXIMUM HANDICAP

An athlete cannot be lifted beyond their ceiling point calculation for that event. The Ceiling point is determined by dividing the athlete's best MPSs (refer to Calculation of Notional Starting Handicap for details on how this is obtained) into the ceiling time for the event. The ceiling times are available in Schedule 1.

During the current season, any singular performance can reduce the ceiling point from its original mathematical position. Singular performances can create a new ceiling point and impact the amount the athlete can be lifted.

Furthermore, for clarity, if the ceiling time is broken in a singular performance, the handicap must be reduced to comply with the ceiling time.

All performances external to the VAL are also included in this provision. Track and wind adjustments apply. In cases where an athlete has reached their handicap CP and if in the opinion of the Handicapper, based on current and recent form over this and all other distances, the athlete has clearly shown the ceiling point is no longer reflective of their capabilities, the Handicapper can seek the approval of the HRP to reassess the average MPS of the athlete (and therefore their CP) by taking into consideration the age of any performances in the athlete's sample of past performances. If approved this would allow the Handicapper to increase the athlete's CP.

The allowance is applied on a discretionary basis and acknowledges:

- The length of time since an athlete has performed at his/her best; and
- The athlete's eligibility for veteran status.

In addition, the Handicappers are not required to lift the handicap of an athlete who bettered the ceiling time (or came extremely close) in the prior season from a handicap that is the same, or less, than their current handicap.

Track Allowances

Track allowances will be applied in accordance with the table prepared for that season as found on the VAL website, and in these Handicapping Guidelines in Table 9, which may be updated for each new season.

Stewards retain the ability to recommend an increase to the allowance where it is deemed appropriate or to add a subsequent track allowance at another meeting should data suggest it is required. Any such allowance will be determined by the Race Review Panel (RRP) and stated in the Stewards report. All track allowances will apply to the current season for ceiling calculations and for the determination of future ratings and calculations of start and ceiling handicaps for future seasons.

Adjustment to Race Distances When Events Are Readjusted to Scratch

When handicaps for the entire field are adjusted either forward or back due to the inclusion of a Backmarker who would otherwise be handicapped behind scratch, or as a result of the field being pulled back to scratch, the handicap adjustments will be proportional to the net distance normally covered from each handicap. This is to allow for the different MPSs of athletes from different handicaps and to maintain the equity of the handicapped race with the change in distance.

For example, if an 800 Frontmarker event is handicapped to scratch and the Backmarker normally has a handicap of 70, the distance each athlete runs will be adjusted by 9.59% (70/730). The adjustments to handicap ranges would then be calculated by adding 9.59% to the distance covered from each handicap. As a result, an athlete with a normal handicap of 120 would come back 66 metres to an adjusted handicap of 54, in order to run 746 metres (680 * 1.0959).

Adjustment to Performances to Allow for Distance Variations

When calculating the MPS of a performance, the Handicapper will consider and allow for any significant variation in distance between the actual distance covered and the distance to be covered by the athlete in the particular category after allowing for the handicap of the athlete concerned.
An example would be when considering the MPS of an external 1500 performance for an athlete with a 1600 handicap either significantly greater or less than 100. Other examples would be when reviewing amateur 400 or 800 performances for athletes with large handicaps over that particular distance.
For the purpose of this regulation, a significant variation would be a variation greater than 5% between the distance actually covered in the performance being considered, and the distance to be covered by the athlete after the deduction of their handicap.
Under this regulation and in order to provide a level playing field, an MPS adjustment for specific events will be applied to the variation in distance between what was actually covered and what would be covered after the handicap deduction. If the performance being considered is less than the distance to be covered for the event being handicapped, the adjustment is added on to the MPS for the extra distance. If the performance being considered is greater than the distance to be covered, the adjustment is deducted from the MPS for the reduction in distance. The following percentage adjustments for specific distances have been arrived at after reviewing a wide range of samples for each distance and allows for the different rates of de-acceleration.

- 300/400 – 10%
- 800 – 15%
- 1500/1600 – 12%
- 3000/3200 – 10%
- Please note there is no adjustment for distances of 200 or less.

This adjustment will be used when reviewing times in external and amateur competitions, for application to VAL events. This adjustment will also be applied to convert MPSs between event categories, where variation in handicaps results in a variation in distance covered that is greater than 5%.

For example, when utilising an MPS from a performance in an open category event, for a women's or master's category and visa-versa.

This adjustment will be utilised for calculating start handicaps and for assessing if athletes have broken the ceiling time, and therefore require adjustment during the season.

Excessive Wind Readings

Where the reading from the wind gauge is measured at 4.0 +, the results of that round (heat, semi-final or final), for all Athletes who competed in that round, will not be used in ceiling point calculations and will be excluded from an Athlete's performance data.

WINNING PENALTIES

Once an athlete has won a race, they will incur a penalty in accordance with the Penalty Table. This is to give the VAL Handicappers the best possible opportunity to make every athlete competitive and with the opportunity to pick up a win.

The VAL Board can determine that certain events will not attract a penalty. This will be advised to the athletes, prior to the commencement of the event.

For every event, the Penalty Table provides the VAL Handicappers with a range of penalties they can impose based on the event category and prizemoney on offer.

The Penalty table includes both a minimum penalty and an additional discretionary penalty that is available to the Handicappers. It should be noted that the Discretionary penalty will be used to take into account considerations such as the actual prizemoney, winning time and margin and the performance and improvement shown by the athlete.

Note. Any application of a discretionary penalty by a Handicapper, can only occur following the approval the Handicap Review Panel and/or Director of Handicapping.

Race winners who break the Ceiling Time in winning an event will have their handicap readjusted to the ceiling time prior to the deduction of the winning penalty.

Women and Masters athletes who win an Open race may be penalised in both the women and Masters categories over the equivalent distance.

Wins in the Women's, Masters or Women's & Masters events will not attract an automatic penalty in the equivalent Open events. If the athlete's MPS takes them under the ceiling in the Open event off their Open handicap however, their Open handicap will be adjusted back to the ceiling.

Winners of Classic and Group 1 events can be penalized over other distances at the discretion of the VAL Handicappers. Similarly, athletes who win over the same distance more than once during a season may incur an additional penalty.

Athletes who win 2 or more professional running races within a season (this can be over multiple distances or categories) will have their handicaps reassessed over all categories and all distances (refer page 7). The Handicapper will consider if the athlete's form has improved sufficiently to warrant a handicap reduction in other events and categories including those the athlete has recorded victories in. Any adjustments under this regulation are at the handicapper's discretion and require the approval of the HRP. This regulation does not override other penalty regulations, and it should be noted wins in open events automatically attract penalties across all categories.

Athletes who win junior events can have their handicaps reviewed and adjusted in junior events over other distances, at the discretion of the Handicapper.

Winners of Classic and Group 1 events can be penalized within a Carnival for an event that is yet to commence (i.e. heats for the event haven't started), in accordance with the Guidelines provided herein and the Penalty Table.

Interstate wins by Victorians or Interstate athletes will also be penalised in accordance with the Penalty table and the Handicap Guidelines.

Discretionary Lift for Classic Races & Stawell Carnival

The VAL Handicappers with the approval of the HRP, can provide a discretionary lift of up to 2 minimum graduations to athletes for Classic races and all Stawell events that are not a part of the athlete's normal handicap. The purpose of this discretionary lift is to reward athletes who have recorded wins in lower graded events over the same distance earlier in the season and received a handicap penalty as a result of those wins, and to provide more competitive racing in our major events and at Stawell.
It can also be applied to new and interstate athletes with a strong racing history in other competitions, such as state & national level amateur athletes whose handicap is behind novice, in order to place them above the starting time in Classic races and for Stawell events, without the discretionary lift being a part of their normal handicap.

Athletes who have won a Classic or Group 1 event in the event category and distance or similar distance, over the last 2 seasons, are not eligible for this discretionary lift.
All discretionary lifts in this category, require the approval of the HRP.

In all cases, after the discretionary lift, the athlete's handicap must remain on or inside their ceiling handicap for that distance.

This discretionary lift is not a part of an athlete's allocated finishing handicap and will not be carried forward into the starting handicap for the following season.

ALTERATIONS TO DECLARED HANDICAPS

No handicap can be altered after declaration unless:

a) An athlete wins another race over the same (or similar) distance after the declaration of handicaps for a subsequent Carnival.

b) An athlete breaks the Ceiling Time over the same (or similar) distance after the declaration of handicaps for a subsequent Carnival.

c) An athlete wins a Classic or Group 1 event at a Carnival. In such cases, the athlete may at the sole discretion of the VAL Handicappers be subject to a handicap penalty applying to their handicap over the same or similar distance in an event at the same Carnival. Consistent with the VAL Rules, no penalty will apply to the same or similar distance where the subsequent event has already commenced (i.e. the athlete has already competed in a heat or semi-final and qualified for a final).

d) An athlete receives a handicap penalty under the VAL Rules as a result of a handicap review initiated by the VAL Stewards.

e) It can be clearly established that the VAL Handicapper/s have not correctly applied the Handicap Guidelines in setting the handicap (this includes instances where an athlete successfully appeals their handicap).

f) There has been a clear and proven handicapping or administrative error.

GIFT WIN INCENTIVES

GIFT WIN INCENTIVE - HANDICAP LIFT (120m Open/Men's and Women's Gifts)

Gift Win Incentives are endorsed by the VAL Board on an annual basis as incentives to reward athletes who compete regularly throughout the season with the VAL. These are in the form of handicap bonus to be applied to their winning handicap for a future event within that season. The handicap bonus cannot take the athlete beyond the handicap of 10m.

Table 2. 2026/27 Gift Win Incentives – 120m Handicap Lifts (Open/Men's & Women's)

TIMEFRAME	H/Cap	HANDICAP LIFTS
Up until 1st January	All H/Caps	0.75m
From 1st JANUARY	H/Cap 0m-3m H/Cap 3.25m-5.75m H/Cap 6.00-7.75m H/Cap≥ 8m	1m 0.75m 0.5m 0.25m
Geelong	Retain Winning Mark	

Note – incentives gained through a win in a NSWAL competition are subject to handicapper discretion.

The VAL Board has the power to declare a race not eligible for incentives, or vary the incentive amount prior to start of season, or during the season, in the event of changes to the season calendar or prizemoney, including interstate races where the event is endorsed by the VAL.

Eligibility criteria to receiving a Gift Win Incentive:

1. To be eligible for a Gift Win Incentive, athletes must have competed a set number of times over the 100m/120m sprint distance in the previous and current season to be eligible for the Incentive, as follows:
   • For elite (top 20 nationwide / international / marquee runners) – none specified • Below novice handicap – 4 runs
   • Interstate athletes – 4 runs (but at least 2 in the current season)
   • Athletes with handicaps > or equal to 6m – 6 runs.
   For clarity, the Incentive can be gained if the winning performance is the fourth performance for below novice and Interstate athletes, and the sixth performance for athletes with a handicap of 6 or more.

2. Once an athlete wins a second event in the VAL or in any other Interstate Professional League over the 100m/120m distance, they will become ineligible for an Incentive.

3. The Incentive will be added to the athlete's current VAL handicap when winning their qualifying race. Standard penalties will apply for all other events. For the sake of clarity, in an event where the field has been lifted, such as to accommodate an athlete who would otherwise be handicapped behind scratch, the Gift Win Incentive for the winning athlete will be applied to that athlete's current VAL handicap rather than the temporary lifted handicap. Additionally, where an athlete wins after breaking in a final, the Incentive is applied to the handicap the Athlete has won from, not the handicap allocated prior to the break.

4. In receiving this Incentive, athletes may not be handicapped to a handicap that places them beyond their ceiling handicap; however, they may receive a portion of the allocated Incentive so that they are handicapped to that ceiling handicap. More information on ceiling times can be found within these Handicap Guidelines.

5. An athlete may not receive a handicap that is more than 2 metres from their season start handicap.

6. The Incentive will not be applied to a handicap of 10m or greater.

7. Athletes who are allocated a UP (Unacceptable Performance) during the season will not automatically qualify for a Gift Win Incentive. Any lift applied will be at the discretion of the VAL Stewards.

8. Gift Win Incentives will not be carried forward to future seasons.

9. Athletes must advise the VAL via email of their intention to use the Gift Win Incentive in an upcoming event prior to the closing of entries for that event. Any Gift Win Incentives not used prior to Stawell will be applied to the Athlete's Stawell handicap, subject to the provisions of the eligibility criteria.

10. If an Athlete wins a race while using their Gift Win Incentive, the penalty is deducted from the handicap the Athlete held before the Incentive was added, being the handicap from their qualifying (Incentive-winning) race less the win penalty incurred for that qualifying win.

STAWELL GIFT - HANDICAP RETENTION INCENTIVE

Athletes who win events in the following categories may become eligible to retain that winning handicap at Stawell in the same event:

- 70m all categories
- 100/120m Masters
- 300m Masters
- 400m all categories
- 550m Open
- 800m all categories
- 1600m Open
- 3200m Open

Eligibility criteria for Stawell Handicap Retention:

1. To be eligible to retain a winning handicap, in the above event categories, athletes must have completed 3 VAL sanctioned races, each at a different Meeting, over the applicable distance in the previous or current season in their respective category (i.e. Master, Women's & Men's) prior to being eligible for the Handicap Retention Incentive, or have a handicap that is less than the novice handicap.

For the sake of clarity.

- Performances in 300m events do not count as one of the 3 VAL qualifying races for any 400m event at Stawell.
- Performances in Men's or Open 400m events do not count as one of the 3 qualifying races for the 400m Women's event at Stawell.
- Performances in Junior & Restricted events do not count as one of the 3 qualifying races for any event at Stawell.
- Performances in Men's or Open 400m events do count as one of the 3 qualifying races for the 400m Open Backmarkers/Frontmarkers events at Stawell.
- Performances in Men's or Open 70m events do count as one of the 3 qualifying races for the 70m Men's at Stawell.

For the sake of clarity - a win in an Open event can only result in a 'Stawell Handicap Retention' in the equivalent Open event, or Men's event where the two events are handicapped under the same Ceiling Time at Stawell.

2. If an athlete wins subsequent events over the same distance and in the same category, they are still eligible to receive their most recent winning handicap at Stawell.

3. In retaining their winning handicap, athletes may not be handicapped at Stawell to a handicap that places them beyond their ceiling handicap. More information on ceiling times can be found within the Handicap Guidelines.

4. Athletes will retain their current VAL handicap for Stawell Meeting races only. Standard penalties will apply for all other events. For the sake of clarity, in an event where the field has been lifted, such as to accommodate an athlete who would otherwise be handicapped behind scratch, the 'Stawell Handicap Retention Incentive' for the winning athlete will be applied to that athlete's current VAL handicap rather than the temporary lifted handicap. Additionally, here an athlete wins after breaking in a final, the Incentive is applied to the handicap the Athlete has won from, not the handicap allocated prior to the break.

5. Athletes that are allocated a UP (Unacceptable Performance) during the season will not automatically qualify to retain their winning handicap at Stawell. Any decision will be at the discretion of the VAL stewards.

6. If circumstances prevent an event from being conducted at Stawell, 'Retained Handicaps' will not be carried forward to future seasons.

7. Winners of races with a total prize pool greater than $2,000 will not be eligible to retain their winning handicap in that event at Stawell.

HANDICAPPING OF NON-REGULAR EVENTS/CATEGORIES

Regular events are handicapped in a more systematic way, as explained above. Starting handicaps are calculated at the commencement of each season. Established athletes receive automatic handicap lifts after the prescribed number of APs have been achieved, and OGA athletes gradually and systematically, and cautiously, receive handicap lifts that continually increase their competitiveness.
Non-regular events however are determined on a discretionary basis by the Handicapper throughout the season. No starting handicaps will apply, with handicaps assessed on entry. The following offers a guide as to how these events should be treated by the Handicapper:
Initial Handicap and Season Starting Handicap

For athletes entering these events for the first time, the following performance inputs can be used to calculate an initial handicap:

- 8 Verifiable Performances in VAL /SAAL /NSWAL in past 2 seasons
- 6 Verifiable Amateur performance in past 12 months

The handicapper will use the athletes best verifiable performance to set an initial or season starting handicap based on the events published starting time, if the above criteria are met.

Conditions:

- If an athlete has no Verifiable Performance History, they will receive a set novice handicap for that event – Refer to Table of Novice Handicaps.
- The allocated initial/starting handicap cannot exceed a handicap that places the athlete under the starting time for that distance based on their best verifiable performance both within and external to the VAL.
- The allocated handicap is to consider the previous performances of the athlete over the distance and other similar distances in all categories, including Open, Restricted and Junior Adjustment to Handicaps

The handicapper may adjust an athlete's handicap as they compete regularly throughout the season and progress towards the event's Ceiling time.

- The handicapper will consider the potential for rapid improvement of new and developing athletes in determining the allocated handicaps.
- Handicaps can be reduced from the last allocated handicap based on the above circumstances.
- The allocated handicap cannot exceed a handicap that places the athlete under the ceiling time for that distance based on their best verifiable performance both within and external to the VAL.
- Throughout the season as the athlete competes over the event distance in the VAL, provided they receive an Acceptable Performance, at the discretion of the Handicapper, they can be lifted out to a maximum handicap based on the ceiling time for that event.

Handicappers will also be guided by the following:

SPECIFIC EVENT HANDICAP GUILDELINES

Restricted events

- An allocated handicap for restricted events can exceed or be less than the athlete's Open handicap for the distance, however
- handicap movement from each performance over the distance cannot exceed the amount provided in the Handicap Calculations Table for that distance.

- Handicap movement in Novice events will be more gradual than in Junior events and will be more closely aligned with the athletes Open Handicap over the distance.

Junior events

- If the athlete does not have a previous performance over the distance or similar distance, the Handicapper will determine an appropriate starting handicap based on the athlete's age and gender.
- If an athlete runs faster than the net time for the distance in any category or external to the VAL, allowing for their handicap, their next allocated handicap for that event will be reduced back to the net time.
- Handicap movement in Junior events will often be quicker than in Novice and Open events, depending on the athlete performances, with the aim being to quickly move the athlete to a competitive handicap.

Women's 200m

- handicaps are predominantly calculated from the current Women's 120m handicaps at the time. Previous performances, personal bests and victories over 200m are also taken into consideration by the Handicapper.
- Penalties for previous wins over 200m will apply.
- The event is non-penalty for all other distances.

Open 200m

- All 200m events are handicapped on a discretionary basis
- The 120m handicaps will be used as a guide for the Handicapper but are not the single determining factor, recognising that the capacity of athletes to run 200m varies from that of the 120m.
- The initial handicap allocation for an athlete entering the 200m for the first time will not exceed the lesser of 1.6 times (x) their 120m handicap, or a handicap allocated based on the target time and the athlete's best MPS over all sprint distances up to 200m both within and external to the VAL.
- In determining the starting handicap, the Handicapper will consider the athlete's performances over the 200m as well as over other sprint distances up to 400m.
- External performances and personal bests over 100m and 200m events will also be used to determine the starting handicap. Track allowances apply.
- Penalties for wins over the 200m distance will apply however penalties for wins over other sprint distances won't automatically apply, unless the performance and MPS is judged by the Handicapper to take the athlete under the ceiling time.
- The Handicapper can also apply a penalty to the 200m for wins in Classic and Group 1 events within or external to the VAL over distances between 70m and 400m.
- The 200m event is non penalty for other distances, with the possible exception of the Stawell 200m, which can attract a discretionary penalty for other similar distances as a Group 1 event. This will depend on MPS calculations in relation to the other handicap in question.

Women's 300m

- Handicaps are predominantly drawn from the current Women's 400m handicaps at the time. If an athlete entering the Women's 300, does not have a current Women's 400m handicap, her Women's 300 handicap will be derived from her PBs, performances and handicaps over other events.
- Penalties for previous wins over 300m in all categories will apply.
- A win in the Women's 300m by a Masters athlete attracts a penalty in Masters 300m events in accordance with the Penalty Table. It is non-penalty for all other distances.

Open 300m

- The 400m handicaps will be used as a guide for the Handicapper but are not the single determining factor recognizing that the capacity of athletes to run 300m varies for sprinters as opposed to 400m athletes.
- If an athlete entering an Open 300m for the first time, has a history in the Open 400m, their initial handicap will not exceed three quarters (¾) of their current 400m handicap minus 5. (Hence an athlete with a 400m handicap of 20m, would have an initial 300m handicap of 10m.
- The novice 300m handicap is 10m.
- If an athlete entering an Open 300m, has a current 300m Masters handicap, this can also be used to allocate a current 300m Open handicap, allowing for the difference in starting times between the two categories.
- If an athlete entering the 300m for the first time, has a 120m handicap behind the novice handicap of 6, the Handicapper will use their discretion to place the athlete on a 300m handicap behind the novice handicap of 10m.
- The Handicapper will consider the athlete's performances over the 300m as well as over other sprint distances up to 400m.
- Throughout the season if the athlete records a personal best MPS over distances from 100m to 400m either within or external to the VAL then if the Handicapper believes this improvement would take the athlete under the ceiling time in the 300, the Handicapper has the discretion to adjust the athlete's 300 handicap back to the ceiling time.
- Penalties for wins over the 300m Open distance will apply however penalties for wins over other distances and categories won't automatically apply, unless the performance and MPS is judged by the Handicapper to take the athlete under the ceiling time.
- The Handicapper can also apply a penalty to the 300m for wins in Classic and Group 1 events within or external to the VAL over distances between 70m and 400m.
- The 300m event is non-penalty for other Open distances, however if it is a Classic or Group 1 event, it can attract a penalty for similar Open distances at the Handicapper's discretion.
- Wins in the Open 300m will attract a penalty in Women's and Masters 300m events.

Open 550m

- The 400m handicaps will be used as a guide for the Handicapper but are not the single determining factor recognizing that the capacity of middle-distance athletes who compete over the 800m distance, to better handle the 550m distance than sprinters and 400m metre athletes.
- The initial handicap allocation for an athlete entering the 550 for the first time will not exceed the lesser of 1.25 times their 400m handicap, or a handicap allocated based on the start time and the athlete's best MPS over the 400m or 800m distances both within and external to the VAL, converted to the 550m distance.
- The conversion factors are an addition of 7% to the 400m MPS, or a reduction of 7.5% to the 800m MPS.
- The athlete's performance over 400m and 800m will be considered utilising the conversion formula outlined above.
- Penalties for wins over the distance will apply to the athlete's 550m handicap, however penalties for wins over the 400m and 800m distances won't automatically apply, unless the performance and converted MPS takes the athlete under the ceiling time.
- The Handicapper can also apply a penalty to the 550 for wins in Classic and Group 1 events within or external to the VAL over distances between 400m and 800m.
- The 550m event is non-penalty for other distances, however if it is a Classic or Group 1 event, it can attract a penalty for Similar distances such as the 400m and 800m, at the Handicapper's discretion.

Women's 800m

- Penalties for wins over the 800m distance in all categories will apply to the athlete's Women's 800m handicap.
- The Handicapper can also apply a penalty to the Women's 800m handicap for wins in Classic and Group 1 events within or external to the VAL over distances between 400m and 1600m.
- Wins in the Women's 800m is non-penalty for Open events
- If it is a Classic or Group 1 event, it can attract a penalty for other categories or similar distances such as the 400m and 1600m, at the Handicapper's discretion.

Master's 800m 45+

- Once an athlete has competed in the Masters 45+ 800m, if they receive an Acceptable Performance, at the discretion of the Handicapper they can be lifted within the season to maximum handicap based on the ceiling time (refer, schedule 1).
- Penalties for wins over the 800m distance in all categories will apply to their Masters 45+ 800m handicap.
- The Handicapper can also apply a penalty to the Masters 45+ 800m handicap for wins in Classic and Group 1 events within or external to the VAL over distances between 400 and 1600.
- Wins in the Masters 45+ 800m attracts a penalty in Masters category. If it is a Classic or Group 1 event, it can attract a penalty for other categories or similar distances such as the 400 and 1600, at the Handicapper's discretion.
- If performances reflect an MPS that breaks the athlete's ceiling in other categories, their handicaps in those categories will be adjusted in accordance with the regulations.

Masters 1600m

- If the athlete has a current handicap in the Open 1600m, their initial 1600m Masters handicap will be the maximum of their Open 1600m minus 90metres, or a handicap that places them on the start time, based on their best performance
- New athletes will be placed on the maximum of the relevant novice handicap for their category (refer Schedule 2). If the new athlete's recent personal best reflects, they should be behind the novice handicap, they will be handicapped to the start time.
- The athlete's performances in the Open 1600m will be taken in account in assessing the starting handicap.
- External performances and personal bests over distances from 800m upwards will also be used to determine the starting handicap.
- Penalties for wins in Open 1600m events will apply to the athlete's Masters 1600m handicap.
- The Handicapper can also apply a penalty to this event for wins in Classic and Group 1 events within or external to the VAL over distances from 800m to 3200m.
- Penalties for wins in the Masters 1600m won't automatically apply to the athletes Open 1600m handicap.

Open 3200m

- The 1600m handicaps will be used as a guide for the Handicapper but are not the single determining factor recognizing that the capacity an athlete to compete over 3200m, differs from that of the 1600m.
- Where an athlete is yet to compete regularly over the 3000m/3200m distance, their 1500m/1600m form will be used to allocate an appropriate 3200m handicap.
- Performances over 5000 and longer will also be considered in assessing an athlete entering the 3200 for the first time.

- The initial handicap allocation for an athlete entering the 3200 for the first time will not exceed the novice 3200m handicap or a calculation based on the athlete's 1600m handicap of two times their 1600m handicap, less 80m.
  (For example, if an athlete entering the 3200m for the first time, has an open 1600m handicap of between 100m and 115m, the Handicapper will, subject to external form over distances from 3000m upwards, allocate a maximum 3200m handicap of 150m.

  Again, by way of example if an athlete entering the 3200m for the first time has an Open 1600m handicap of 130m, the handicapper can place the athlete on a maximum handicap in the 3200m of 180m ((130m*2)-80m).
- Athletes entering the 3200m for the first time with 1600m handicaps behind the Novice handicap of 100m, the maximum initial 3200m they can receive is two times their 1600m handicap, less 80m. This is due to the fact that in the 1600m they are handicapped as "better than novice" athletes.
- Athletes entering the 3200m for the first time with external times over 1500m or longer that, based on the starting time of 9.30, takes them under the Novice handicap of 150m, they will be allocated a starting handicap less than 150m that reflects their external performances and personal bests. Track allowances apply.
- Penalties for wins over the distance will apply however penalties for wins over other distances won't automatically apply, unless the performance and converted MPS takes the athlete under the ceiling time.
- The Handicapper can also apply a penalty to the 3200m for wins in Classic and Group 1 events within or external to the VAL over the 1600m distance

HANDICAP LIMITS

The following maximum handicap limits apply to events conducted by Clubs at Meetings held under the VAL Rules:

Table 3. Handicap Limits

OPEN, WOMEN, *JUNIOR & **RESTRICTED (Maximum Handicap)

DISTANCE	CLASSIC	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	Restricted & U14-U18
	$10,000 +	$5,001 - $10,000	$1,001- $5,000	$0 - $1,000	$0 +
70m	7m	12m	14m	16m	20m
100m	10m	12m	15m	25m	30m
120m	12m	14m	18m	30m	36m
200m	20m	24m	30m	30m	60m
300m	30m	45m	60m	75m	90m
400m	40m	50m	60m	100m	120m
550m	55m	66m	90m	140m	140m
800m	80m	100m	140m	200m	200m
1500m	150m	200m	300m	400m	400m
1600m	160m	240m	320m	400m	No Limit
3200m	320m	400m	500m	600m	600m

MASTERS (Maximum Handicap)

DISTANCE	CLASSIC	GROUP 1	GROUP 2
	$2,001+	$1001 - $2,000	$0 - $1,000
100m	30m	30m	30m
120m	36m	36m	36m
300m	90m	90m	90m
400m	100m	100m	120m
550m	140m	140m	180m
800m	240m	280m	320m
1600m	400m	400m	400m

* Junior races – Ex. U14, U18 minimum prize pool is $300 and discretionary handicapping.

** Restricted – minimum prize money is $300 and discretionary handicapping.

HANDICAP REVIEW & APPEALS PROCESS

If, after reading these Guidelines, it is not clear to you how the handicap you have received has been calculated, there are a number of avenues open to you to either (a) check that it is correct or (b) request an amendment.

If you are considering asking for a review of your handicap, or appealing your handicap, it is important that you read the VAL Rules & Handicap Guidelines in detail. The explanation below is designed as a summary only and does not in any way seek to amend, explain, confirm or alter the formal VAL Rules (in their entirety).

As a starting point, if you are a member of the Victorian Runners and Trainers Association (VRTA) you may wish to consult a representative for assistance in understanding your handicaps. Contact details can be found on the VAL website at www.val.org.au/Membership/VRTA or by contacting the VAL office.

Once handicaps have been declared for a particular Carnival, you are able to lodge an application for review or an appeal against your handicap. The procedures for doing so are set out in detail in Part D of the VAL Rules and are summarised below:

STEP 1 – (via the Handicapper)

HANDICAP REVIEW

1. To apply for a review of your handicap, you must lodge the Handicap Review Application by emailing handicaps@val.org.au. When applying for a review, you must clearly state the basis of your request and why you believe your handicap is incorrect (this includes providing any evidence).

2. Your review will be sent to the relevant VAL Handicapper within 24 business hours of receipt. The VAL Handicapper will review the application and all relevant circumstances and provide a brief written response to the Director of Handicapping, who will ensure this is emailed back to the applicant as soon as it is received. The review by the VAL Handicapper may or may not result in a change to your handicap.

3. Athletes, or their VAL-registered coach on their behalf, may ask for a review of their handicap a maximum of three times per season. This applies per athlete, per distance. Should there have been a clear handicapping error, that query will not count as one of the three.

STEP 2 - (via Handicap Review Panel)

HANDICAP APPEAL – HRP

1. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Handicap Review provided by the Handicapper, then you have the right to lodge an appeal against your handicap with the HRP.

2. You must lodge your HRP Handicap Appeal application with the Director of Handicapping within 24 hours of receiving a response from the Handicapper for your Handicap Review Application. If you lodge your appeal on a race day, you must lodge it with the VAL Stewards.

3. The Director of Handicapping will forward the appeal to the Handicap Review Panel (HRP) for consideration and forward the HRP response to the athlete as soon as it is received. The review by the HRP may or may not result in a change to your handicap.

4. The first handicap appeal to the HRP per season will not incur a cost; future HRP considerations will attract a fee of $50

STEP 3 – (via VAL Tribunal)

HANDICAP APPEAL – VAL TRIBUNAL

1. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the HRP appeal then you have the right to lodge an appeal against your handicap with the VAL Tribunal (fees apply, see Part D of the VAL Rules). To do this you must submit the Handicap Appeal application by contacting the VAL Office within 24 hours of receiving your response from the HRP.

2. The Executive Officer of the VAL will convene a hearing with the VAL Tribunal and may take into consideration your availability when setting the date, time and location of the hearing. The Executive Officer of the VAL will advise you when the hearing is to be held, and you must make reasonable efforts to make yourself available.

3. If you wish to present a submission of your arguments for the appeal in writing, you must lodge it with the VAL office at least 24 hours prior to the hearing.

4. The VAL Handicapper and the Handicap Review Panel may choose to make oral submissions to the VAL Tribunal in response to your appeal application, in addition to relying on the content of the VAL Handicapper's report (i.e. from the initial Handicap Review).

5. You may also make oral representations to the VAL Tribunal. You may also ask the VAL Tribunal members if a representative (who cannot be a lawyer) can make such oral submissions on your behalf. The VAL Tribunal has the discretion to allow (or not allow) you to have a representative to make submissions for you.

6. The VAL Tribunal may either dismiss your appeal or they may uphold your appeal and in doing so may recommend you be re-handicapped by the HRP & Handicapper, taking into account the relevant matters presented in the appeal hearing.

7. If your handicap is adjusted, this adjusted handicap applies until you are subject to any other penalties under the VAL Rules or the next declaration of handicaps.

8. If your appeal is successful, you will receive a refund of 100% of your application provided there are no expenses in meeting costs of the panel members. Any cost will be taken out of the application fee.

TABLE 4. HANDICAP CALCULATIONS

EVENT	MINIMUM GRAD/N	ESTABLISHED ATHLETES		ONGOING ASSESSMENT ATHLETES		TARGET TIMES		TIME RANGE
		NO. OFAP's	LIFT RANGE	NO OF AP's	LIFT RANGE	TARGET	CEILING	ACCEPTABLE DEVIATION
70 OPEN	0.25m	3	0.25m-0.50m	1	0.25m-2m	7.75	7.60	0.30
70 WOMENS	0.25m	3	0.25m - 0.50m	1	0.25m -0.75m	8.50	8.35	0.30
120 U18 BOYS	0.25m	N/A	N/A	1	0.25m – 2.00m	13.20	13.00	0.55
120 U18 GIRLS	0.25m	N/A	N/A	1	0.25m – 2.00m	14.50	14.30	0.55
120 U18 MIXED	0.25m	N/A	N/A	1	0.25m – 2.00m	13.20	13.00	0.55
120 OPEN/MEN (100)	0.25m	3	0.25m-0.50m	1	0.25m-2m	12.45 (10.38)	12.25 (10.21)	0.55 (0.45)
120 WOMEN (100)	0.25m	3	0.25m-0.50m	1	0.25m-2m	13.90 (11.58)	13.70 (11.42)	0.55 (0.45)
120 MASTERS (100)	0.25m	3	0.25m-0.75m	1	0.25m-2m	13.20 (11.00)	13.0 (10.83)	0.55 (0.45)
200 OPEN	1.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 8m	21.00	20.80	N/A
300 OPEN	1.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 12m	34.50	33.50	N/A
300 MASTERS	1.0m	3	1m – 2m	1	0 – 12m	36.00	35.00	2.00
300M WOMENS	1.0m	N/A	N/A	N/A	0 – 12m	39.00	37.5	N/A
400 OPEN/MENS	1.0m	2	1m – 2m	1	0 – 8m	47.60	46.50	2.00
400 WOMEN	1.0m	2	1m – 2m	1	0 – 8m	53.90	52.80	2.00
400 UNDER 18	1.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 8m	50.00	48.90	2.00
550 OPEN	1.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 10m	70.00	69.00	N/A
800 / 1000 OPEN	2.0m	2	2m – 6m	1	0 – 20m	1.54.0	1.52	5.00
800 WOMEN	2.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 30m	2.10.0	2.08.0	N/A
800 MASTERS 45+	2.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 30m	2.05.0	2.00.0	N/A
1600 OPEN	5.0m	2	5m – 10m	1	0 – 40m	4.10.0	4.06	11.00
1600 MASTERS	5.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 60m	4.25	4.21	N/A

3200 OPEN	5.0m	N/A	N/A	1	0 – 80m	9.30	9.20	N/A

NOTES:

1. All Junior and Restricted events over all distances are handicapped on a discretionary basis
2. For those distances listed as N/A for established athletes, all athletes are "OGA"
3. Established Masters athletes may receive a lift after 2 satisfactory performances in open races (in the opinion of the handicapper and stewards), even if those performances fall outside the AP time range. Should the athlete fail to run within the time range, the handicapper has the discretion to reassess the handicap and lift required following approval from the HRP.

TABLE 5. NOVICE HANDICAPS

DISTANCE/ CATEGORY	UNDER 35		35 – 44 Y/O		OVER 45	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
70m						
OPEN/MENS	4m	9m	6m	11m	7.5m	12.5m
WOMENS	NA	4m	NA	6m	N/A	7.5m
120m						
OPEN/MENS	6m	17m	9m	20m	10m	25m
WOMENS	NA	6m	NA	9m	N/A	10m
MASTERS	NA	NA	5m	17m	N/A	N/A
MASTERS (45+)	NA	NA	10m	25m	10m	25m
RESTRICTED	6m	17m	9m	20m	N/A	N/A
200m						
OPEN/MENS	10m	26m	15m	30m	20m	34m
WOMEN	NA	10m	NA	15m	N/A	20m
300m						
OPEN/MENS	10m	35m	18m	42m	25m	48m
WOMENS	NA	15m	NA	22m	N/A	25m
MASTERS	NA	NA	10m	36m	18m	42m
400m						
OPEN/MENS	20m	54m	30m	62m	40m	70m
WOMEN'S	NA	20m	NA	30m	N/A	40m
RESTRICTED	20m	54m	30m	62m	N/A	N/A
550m						
OPEN	25m	75m	35m	85m	45m	95m
800m						
OPEN	40m	110m	60m	126m	80m	140m
WOMEN'S	NA	50m	NA	70m	N/A	90m
MASTERS (45+)	Male 45	Female 45	Male 50	Female 50	Male 55	Female 55
	60m	130m	80m	150m	100m	170m
	Male 60	Female 60	Male 65	Female 65	Male 70	Female 70
	120m	190m	140m	210m	160m	230m
1600m						
OPEN	100m	260m	150m	290m	180m	320m
MASTERS	NA	NA	50m	200m	80m	230m
RESTRICTED	100m	260m	150m	290m	N/A	N/A
3200m						
OPEN	150m	400m	250m	470m	300m	530m

TABLE 6. HANDICAP PENALTIES

OPEN, MENS & WOMENS HANDICAP PENALTIES

DISTANCE	TOTAL $	MINIMUM PENALTY.	+ DISCRETION
70	UP TO $600	0.50	0.50
	$601 TO $1000	0 .75	0.50
	$1001 TO $3000	1.00	0.75
	$3001 +	1.00	1.00
	STAWELL	1.50	1.50
100/120	UP TO $600	0.50	0.75
	$601 TO $3000	0.75	0.75
	$3001 TO $5000	1.00	0.75
	$5001 TO $7500	1.25	1.00
	$7501 TO $10000	1.50	1.25
	$10001 TO $12500	1.75	1.50
	$12501 TO $15000	2.00	1.75
	$15001 +	2.00	2.00
	STAWELL	2.00	See Stawell Gift Finalist Section
200	UP TO $2000	2.00	2.00
	$2001 +	3.00	3.00
	STAWELL	4.00	4.00
300/400	UP TO $600	2.00	2.00
	$601 TO $1000	3.00	3.00
	$1001 TO $1500	4.00	4.00
	$1501 TO $2000	5.00	5.00
	$2001 TO $3000	6.00	6.00
	$3001 TO $4000	7.00	7.00
	$4001+	8.00	8.00
	STAWELL	8.00	8.00
550	UP TO $600	3.00	3.00
	$601 TO $750	4.00	4.00
	$851 TO $1100	5.00	6.00
	$1101 TO $1500	6.00	6.00
	$1501 TO $2000	7.00	8.00
	$2001 +	8.00	8.00
	STAWELL	10.00	10.00
800/1000	UP TO $600	4.00	4.00
	$601 TO 850	6.00	6.00
	$851 TO $1100	8.00	8.00
	$1101 TO $1500	10.00	10.00
	$1501 TO $2000	12.00	12.00
	$2001 TO $3000	14.00	14.00
	$3001+	16.00	16.00
	STAWELL	16.00	16.00
1600	UP TO $600	10.00	10.00
	$601 TO $1000	15.00	10.00
	$1001 TO $1500	20.00	15.00
	$1501 TO $2000	25.00	20.00
	$2001 TO $3000	30.00	25.00
	$3001 +	30.00	30.00
	STAWELL	30.00	30.00
3200	UP TO $600	20.00	20.00
	$601 TO $1000	30.00	20.00
	$1001 TO $1500	40.00	30.00
	$1501 TO $2000	50.00	40.00
	$2001 +	50.00	50.00
	STAWELL	50.00	50.00

Note: Any multiple winner over the same distance may incur an additional penalty.

Any application of a discretionary penalty by a Handicapper, can only occur following the approval the HRP and/or DoH.

UNDER 18 HANDICAP PENALTIES

DISTANCE	TOTAL $	MINIMUM PENALTY	+ DISCRETION
100/120	$300 UPWARDS	1.50m	1.50m
300/400	$300 UPWARDS	3m	3m

Note: Any multiple winner over the same distance may incur an additional penalty.

MASTERS EVENTS PENALTIES

DISTANCE	TOTAL $	MINIMUM PENALTY	+ DISCRETION
100/120	UP TO $700	0.5m	0.75m
	$701 TO $900	0.75m	0.75m
	$901 TO $1100	1.00m	1.00m
	$1101 TO $1500	1.25m	1.25m
	$1501-$2000	1.50m	1.50m
	$2001+	2.00m	2.00m
	STAWELL	2.00m	2.00m
300	UP TO $700	2.00m	3.00m
	$701 TO $900	3.00m	3.00m
	$901 TO $1200	4.00m	4.00m
	$1201+	6.00m	6.00m
	STAWELL	8.00m	8.00m
800	UP TO $700	8.00m	10.00m
	$701 - $900	10.00m	12.00m
	$901 +	10.00m	14.00m
	STAWELL	16.00m	16.00m
1600	UP TO $700	10.00m	20.00m
	$701 TO $900	15.00m	25.00m
	$901 +	20.00m	30.00m
	STAWELL	25.00m	35.00m

Note: Any multiple winner over the same distance may incur an additional penalty.

Any application of a discretionary penalty by a Handicapper can only occur following the approval the Handicap Review Panel and/or Director of Handicapping.

TABLE 7. PERFORMANCE RANGE

The Performance Range schedule below shall be used as a guide to determine the degree to which the recorded performance was inconsistent. Factors outside of the below schedule may also be taken into consideration when reviewing an athlete's performance – please refer to VAL Rules Section 19 for a full outline of 'Offences' that may be taken into consideration when an athlete's performance is assessed.

The below table will be used as a guide for the penalty options available to the Chief Steward, under the VAL Rules – Section 19.

	WITHIN A MEETING		
Distance	**Acceptable Range (seconds)**	**Moderate Range (seconds)**	**Extreme Range (seconds)**
70m	Within 0.15	0.15 to 0.3	> 0.3
100m	Within 0.15	0.15 to 0.4	> 0.4
120m	Within 0.15	0.15 to 0.4	> 0.4
200m	Within 0.3	0.3 to 0.5	> 0.5
300m	Within 0.6	0.6 to 0.9	> 0.9
400m	Within 0.8	0.8 to 1.2	> 1.2
550m	Within 1.0	1.0 to 1.5	> 1.5
800m	Within 1.5	1.5 to 2.0	> 2.0
1500m/1600m	Within 4.0	4.0 to 8.0	> 8.0
3200m	N/A	N/A	N/A

TABLE 8. EVENT CATEGORIES

REGULAR EVENTS	NON-REGULAR EVENTS
70m Open, Men's, Women's	200m Open, Men's, Women's
100m or 120m Open, Men's, Women's, Masters	300m Open, Men's, Women's
400m Open, Men's, Women's	550 Open
800m Open	800m Women's
1600m Open	800m 45+
300m Masters	1600m Masters
	3200m Open
	All junior & restricted events

TABLE 9. TRACK ALLOWANCES

TRACK	DISTANCE	ALLOWANCE
Lancefield	120m	.1
Seymour	70m & 120m	.1
Rye	120m	.1
Wangaratta	70m & 120m	.1
Ballarat	70m & 120m	.1
Castlemaine	70m & 120m	.1
Bendigo	70m & 120m	.1
Bendigo	300m	.75
Bendigo	400m+	1 sec per lap