

Shaping the Future of Hockey Geelong

Stakeholder Briefing Note

This briefing outlines the key strategic considerations and operational options being presented for the future structure of the Geelong Hockey Association (GHA). The goal is to build consensus around a governance and delivery model that supports:

- Long-term sustainability of the association,
- Participation growth across all ages and regions, and
- A stronger, more consistent presence for Geelong in Victoria's elite hockey competitions.

Key Challenges Facing GHA

The current landscape presents a number of structural and strategic challenges that must be addressed to ensure future success:

Instability in Senior Representative Hockey

GHA's senior representative teams (Sharks) have fluctuated between Premier League and Vic League 1, creating inconsistency in competition level, player retention, and strategic planning. We acknowledge that the Men are competing in the Premier League for season 2025.

Loss of Local Elite Talent

The region continues to lose high-performing players to well-resourced Melbourne clubs, particularly during Premier League relegation periods.

Limited Financial Resources

Sustaining a Premier League program requires approximately \$200,000 annually – current funding mechanisms do not consistently meet this need.

Club Gaps and Reactivation Needs

Hockey activity is limited or absent in areas such as Lara, Bellarine, and Golden Plains. Reactivating or re-establishing clubs in these areas is critical for regional representation.

Growth Corridor Opportunity

Armstrong Creek and other urban growth areas offer significant opportunity for new club development and junior programs.

Facilities Planning and Activation

Recent and upcoming infrastructure developments, including the new synthetic pitch in Torquay, require coordinated facility activation strategies and equitable access planning.

Project Objective

To identify and build consensus around a governance and operational model for GHA that balances:

- Grassroots and club development
- Elite player development and representative hockey
- Long-term financial viability
- Geographic growth and inclusion

Governance & Operational Model Options

We are presenting four primary models for community consideration. Each has distinct benefits, risks, and implications.

Model A – Community Development First

- GHA would remain focused on Vic League 1 as its top-tier competition. We acknowledge that the Men are competing in the Premier League for season 2025.
- Resources would be directed toward rebuilding local clubs, growing junior participation, and ensuring strong regional engagement.
- This model has low financial risk and is more readily achievable, but it may result in continued loss of elite players to other associations.

Best fit for: Grassroots consolidation, club development, and regional equity.

Model B – Premier League Club Model

- GHA would commit to maintaining a permanent Premier League presence for both men and women.
- Would require doubling current funding, including increased sponsorships and potential player levies.
- High-performance systems would be prioritised, with professional coaching and athlete support services.

Best fit for: High performance ambitions, but carries significant financial and operational risk.

Model C – Split Entity Model

- GHA and the representative program (Sharks) would be governed separately.
- GHA would focus on club and community development; the Sharks would become a distinct high-performance entity, potentially with its own funding sources and governance.
- Requires clear brand management and oversight to ensure alignment and avoid community confusion.

Best fit for: Structural clarity and independent elite development, but depends on governance maturity.

Model D – Hybrid Growth Model

- A phased approach that aims to re-enter Premier League over a 2–3 year period, based on defined milestones. We acknowledge that the Men are competing in the Premier League for season 2025.
- Establishes a “readiness scorecard” with targets for funding, player depth, coaching, and facilities.
- Allows for strategic investment in both grassroots and elite, with the option to scale up responsibly.

Best fit for: Balanced and sustainable progression, with flexibility to adjust as needed.

Next Steps

You are invited to review these models and share your thoughts through the attached Feedback Form. Your insights will help shape the next phase of planning for Hockey Geelong.

Please clearly indicate whether your response is:

- On behalf of a club
- Provided in your personal capacity
- Or both

Responses can be emailed to: chris.thompson@hockeygeelong.asn.au

Deadline for submissions: 5th June 2025