Media Release

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VBA’s key safety role behind the scenes at Victoria’s big events

As the horse racing fans and VIPs take their places in the glamorous marquees at this year’s Melbourne racing carnival it is unlikely they will be aware of the behind-the-scenes work that has gone into ensuring the safety of the temporary structures that are hosting them.

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) has a regular presence at the big venues in the months leading up to the Spring Racing Carnival, the Tennis Open, and the Formula One Grand Prix. VBA staff also play an important role with the temporary staging at major concerts, with their regulatory oversight likely to be required for the staging at February’s Hanging Rock concert by rock star Bruce Springsteen.

Yet VBA staff are not there when the hooves are thundering, the serves are booming down, the engines are roaring and the massive speakers are pumping – their work is done by this stage. Behind the scenes of Victoria’s event industry the VBA conducts inspections to ensure the compliance of marquees, seating stands, stages, and other temporary structures, and as such, the safety of those using them.

The VBA assesses applications for occupancy permits for what are known as ‘prescribed temporary structures’ for the whole of Victoria. Their job is to ensure that temporary structures built for the events are designed by a registered engineer and erected as specified in the occupancy permit, ensuring they are structurally sound and are safe.

The VBA, which is the regulator of the Victorian building and plumbing industries, is the relevant authority under the Building Act 1993 for issuing occupancy permits for prescribed temporary structures. Victoria’s Building Regulations 2006 define prescribed temporary structures as:

- Tents, marquees or booths with a floor area greater than 100m²
- Seating stands for more than 20 people
- Stages or platforms exceeding 150m²
- Prefabricated buildings exceeding 100m² other than ones placed directly on the ground surface

Jarrod Edwards, VBA Director Technical and Regulation, said the VBA plays an important role in Victoria’s event industry: “The VBA is responsible for assessing applications against the requirements in the Australian Building Codes Board’s Temporary Structure Standard (introduced in August 2015), along with relevant referenced standards and sections in the National Construction Code.

“An occupancy permit signifies that the VBA is satisfied the design of the structure has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of legislation and constructed in accordance with the occupancy permit issued by the VBA is suitable for occupation.

“Being the relevant authority gives the VBA the power to inspect any place of public entertainment for which it has issued an occupancy permit under section 63 (2) of the Act,” Mr Edwards said.

The VBA can issue two types of occupancy permit: a statewide permit and an event-specific permit. Either way, an occupancy permit comes with conditions on:

- Maximum number of occupants
- Location
- Maximum wind speed for occupation
- Minimum hold down/weighting requirements
- Fire safety equipment
- Exits
- Public toilet facilities

For more information, visit the VBA website www.vba.vic.gov.au

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