



STAND to deliver patronage ... Kevin Seymour in front of the stands to be replaced. Picture: Rob Maccoll

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Raceway plan right on track

Bart Sinclair

History at stake SPORT »P93

ALBION Park officials have revised the raceway's development plans in the face of tough economic times but remain buoyant a new boutique grandstand will offer first-class facilities.

While there is no firm timetable there is genuine confidence the building program will be completed "within a couple of years".

Harness Racing Queensland deputy chairman Kevin Seymour said the latest proposal for the inner-city course was for a stand costing \$15 million to \$20 million, compared with the earlier plan to spend up to \$80 million.

The original concept was to move the track about 100m to free up a large area for commercial and residential development.

"Now, we need less than \$20 million to build what

we think can be a very attractive stand with high-class facilities we won't be selling off as much of the 'farm'," Mr Seymour said.

"We are prepared to sell small parcels of land for residential development which will provide more potential for capital growth in our remaining assets.

"Our vision is to retain the track and build a stand hard against the outside rail, so the people can almost touch the horses," he said. "They certainly will be able to hear the crack of the whip and the yells of encouragement from the drivers."

"We are planning to have total seating for about 2500 people.

"That would include about 550 people sitting in a dining area on the

second level. There will be space to build further modules as the demand increases.

"The first level will include the public and also corporate entertaining facilities. There are a lot of people out there prepared to pay a premium for better facilities."

The existing grandstand has been closed for some months and the delay in starting demolition work has been a source of frustration.

The track is jointly owned by the harness racing and greyhound codes and in the past there has been some bad blood between the respective administrations.

But Mr Seymour stressed the two parties were working in a spirit of

co-operation and significant progress had been made.

"The first stage is to organise the \$4 million required for demolition work on the current grandstand which has serious public safety issues," Mr Seymour said.

He said work could start as early as next month.

Mr Seymour has no doubt the new-look raceway will be completed long before Albion Park is ready to stage an Inter Dominion series in 2016.

Queensland will host the 2009 Inter Dominion but it will be run at the Gold Coast in March because the problems with the Albion Park grandstand forced a transfer.

The Watpac-sponsored Inter Dominion will attract some top class northern hemisphere pacers to the Gold Coast on March 14-21-28.

