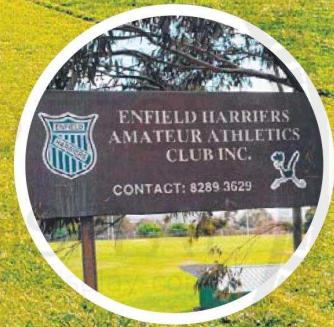


# Back to grassroots for athletes



**ON TRACK:** Athletics SA's temporary home at Clearview, above, and work under way at Santos Stadium, left.

ATHLETICS SA is to explore the possibility of a second synthetic running track being built in Adelaide.

The major concerns of South Australia having only one facility have been exposed this summer with Santos Stadium unavailable for at least four months while a new Rekotan track is installed. In an embarrassment for the sport, the state's leading athletes must compete on grass at Clearview - the home of Enfield Harriers - until February when the much-needed \$1.7 million Santos Stadium overhaul will be completed.

ASA chief executive Adam Bishop said two synthetic tracks in Adelaide was high on his agenda and he would be investigating the issue.

The need for another track is exemplified by the fact Tasmania has



**WARREN PARTLAND**

three synthetic tracks while Victoria can boast 17.

Bishop's ambition is to have a track built in the growth areas either north or south of the city.

The 12-year impatient wait for athletes to have a quality track is almost over after work started at Mile End last week. The Santos surface, a headache since the stadium was opened in 1998, has already been removed and the asphalt base will be dug up and replaced before being allowed to settle for a month before

the new track is laid. "This has been a long time coming and it is fantastic to see the work happening," Bishop said.

"It is not the most ideal timing but it is going to be great for the sport.

"Having a new track is important for the sport in this state. We will be able to go to Athletics Australia and seek big meets and get elite athletes back here."

Adelaide has not hosted a major track and field meet since 2005 when a round of the national grand prix series was contested at Santos Stadium. Interstate athletes have avoided running at the venue because of its poor reputation.

The new track will have an additional two lanes on the main straight.

If work on the track goes to plan,

athletes will have two months to compete on the synthetic surface in preparation for the national championships in Melbourne in April. There are problems with the Olympic Park track but they are expected to be rectified before the titles.

"There are no other options than to program our competitions for St Albans," Bishop said.

"We will try and keep the season as normal as possible and we are doing what we can for our athletes."

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