

Should Australia ban horse racing?

What they said...

'If we don't make real changes, the court of public opinion will bury racing'

Lee Freedman, Hall of Fame thoroughbred trainer

'I think, without doubt, the racehorses are generally considered to receive the highest standard of care'

Jamie Stier, Racing Victoria's executive general manager of Integrity Services

The issue at a glance

On October 17, 2019, the ABC's current affairs program 7.30 televised an exposé on the mistreatment and slaughter of retired racehorses in Australia.

<https://www.news.com.au/sport/explosive-730-investigation-exposes-brutal-slaughter-of-thousands-of-healthy-racehorses/news-story/eafb209900ad1c18a38b2062ad679381>

The report has provoked a strong reaction within the racing industry, among animal activists and among the general public. The decline in numbers at the 2019 Melbourne Cup has been attributed by some to popular disgust at what the exposé revealed.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/nov/01/melbourne-cup-how-australians-fell-out-of-love-with-the-race-that-stops-the-nation>

The racing industry has indicated its support for a better system of tracking retired racehorses while animal activists and other are strengthening their calls for horse racing to be banned.

Background

(The information below has been abbreviated from a Wikipedia entry titled 'Thoroughbred racing in Australia'. The full entry can be accessed at

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thoroughbred_racing_in_Australia)

Thoroughbred racing in Australia

Thoroughbred horse racing is an important spectator sport in Australia, and gambling on horse races is a very popular pastime with A\$14.3 billion wagered in 2009/10 with bookmakers and the Totalisator Agency Board (TAB). The two forms of Thoroughbred horseracing in Australia are flat racing, and races over fences or hurdles in Victoria and South Australia. Thoroughbred racing is the third most attended spectator sport in Australia, behind Australian rules football and rugby league, with almost two million admissions to 360 registered racecourses throughout Australia in 2009/10. Horseracing commenced soon after European settlement, and is now well-appointed with automatic totalizators, starting gates and photo finish cameras on nearly all Australian racecourses.

On an international scale Australia has more racecourses than any other nation. It is second to the United States in the number of horses starting in races each year. Australia is third, after the United States and Japan for the amount of prize money that is distributed annually.

Racing industry

Racing in Australia is administered by the Australian Racing Board, with each state's Principal Racing Authority agreeing to abide by, and to enforce, the Australian Rules of Racing.

Besides being a spectator sport, horseracing is also an industry, which provides full- or part-time employment for almost 250,000 people, the equivalent of 77,000 jobs. About 300,000

people have a direct interest as individual owners of, or members of syndicates which own, the 30,000 horses in training in Australia. There are bookmakers, over 3,600 registered trainers and more than 1,000 jockeys, plus farriers and veterinarians involved at race meetings alone. Race meetings are organised by approximately 374 race clubs that conduct about 2,694 meetings on 360 racecourses around Australia for over \$427,245,000 in prize money

Important races

Public interest in Thoroughbred racing, especially during the main spring and autumn racing carnivals, has been growing in recent years with over 100,000 attracted to the running of the Melbourne Cup, the Victoria Derby and the VRC Oaks race meets. The Golden Slipper Stakes, Caulfield Cup and W S Cox Plate are also major attractions.

Early race meetings and clubs

Horsing had become well established in and around Sydney by 1810. The first official race meeting was organised by officers of Governor Macquarie's visiting 73rd Regiment and held at Hyde Park, Sydney in October 1810, starting on Monday 15th and continuing on the Wednesday and the Friday. The Australian Jockey Club (AJC) held its meetings at Homebush from 1842 to 1859, before moving to Randwick in 1860. The AJC has its headquarters at Randwick where it plays a major role in the regulation of the sport. The Sydney Turf Club (STC) was formed in 1943 and held races on the Rosehill Gardens track and at Canterbury. This club was the initiator of the world's richest race for two-year-olds, the Golden Slipper Stakes. The Australian Jockey and Sydney Turf Clubs Merger Act 2010 merged the two clubs under the name of the Australian Turf Club.

In Victoria the first official races were held in March 1838 on a specially marked out course at Batman's Hill in Melbourne. The Victorian Racing Club (VRC) was formed from the amalgamation in 1864 of the Victoria Jockey Club and Victoria Turf Club.

Queensland's first recorded race meeting was held at Cooper's Plains in 1843. The major race club, the Queensland Turf Club (QTC), was formed in 1863, followed by the Brisbane Amateur Turf Club (BATC) in 1923.

South Australia's first meeting was held at Adelaide in 1843. The principal race club, the South Australian Jockey Club (SAJC), was founded in 1856.

Organised racing was first held in Tasmania in 1814 at Newtown, near Hobart. The Tasmanian Turf Club (TTC) was formed in 1871, but the major club, the Tasmanian Racing Club (TRC), was not established until 1874.

Thoroughbred racing commenced in Western Australia in 1836. The Western Australian Turf Club (WATC) was established in 1852.

By 1883, 192 country clubs were registered to race under Australian Jockey Club rules.

In the Northern Territory, the Darwin Turf Club was established in May 1955.

Internet information

On November 25, 2019, the animal activist group Horseracing Kills published a report of a motion to be put forward by a Randwick city councillor calling on the City Council to withdraw all support of the Randwick Racecourse in response to the recent revelations of cruelty within the racing industry.

The full text can be accessed at <https://horseracingkills.com/news/>

On November 8, 2019, a comment by Paul Hornidge titled 'Why horse racing still has a future' was published in The Roar.

Hornidge argue for the importance of the Australian racing industry and defends its treatment of animals.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theroar.com.au/2019/11/09/why-horse-racing-still-has-a-future/>

On November 5, 2019, Mamamia published a comment by Liz Cantor titled "Shame won't change the racing industry." The other side of the Melbourne Cup debate.'

Cantor essentially defends the racing industry arguing that it does not usually involve cruelty and that most horses want to race.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.mamamia.com.au/horse-racing-australia-debate/>

On November 4, 2019, Mamamia published a comment and analysis by senior news writer Gemma Bath titled 'Ahead of the 2019 Melbourne Cup, here's the reality of horse racing in Australia'.

The report examines the racing industry's response to the problems exposed by the 7.30 revelations of horse mistreatment and places the scandal in the context of longer-term issues to be addressed by the industry.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.mamamia.com.au/horse-racing-australia-facts/>

On October 25, 2019, The Conversation published a comment by doctoral candidate Cathrynne Henshall titled, 'It's not just about your feelings, OK? The best end for a racehorse might be the knackery'

Henshall argues that if abattoirs were carefully monitored and humanely run, they could represent a better end for some horses than dubiously suitable later rehoming.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/its-not-just-about-your-feelings-ok-the-best-end-for-a-racehorse-might-be-the-knackery-125738>

On October 22, 2019, The Conversation published a comment by Phil McManus, Professor of Urban and Environmental Geography: Head of School of Geosciences, University of Sydney, titled 'Horse racing must change, or the court of public opinion will bury it'

McManus examines a number of shortcomings in the racing industry's management practices and suggests changes he believes are necessary if it is to survive into the future.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/horse-racing-must-change-or-the-court-of-public-opinion-will-bury-it-125637>

On October 22, 2019, The Age published a report titled 'Meat traders a sad reality for racing industry: Nicholl' which focused on the response of Australian Trainers Association chief executive Andrew Nicholl to the recent revelations of racehorses being sent to abattoirs.

Nicholl argues that the industry must determine its level of responsibility for the horses it breeds and then act accordingly.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/sport/racing/meat-traders-a-sad-reality-for-racing-industry-nicholl-20191022-p5334w.html>

On October 21, 2019, The Conversation published a comment and analysis by Kate Fenner, PhD Candidate (Equine Training and Welfare), University of Sydney and Michelle Lenore Hyde, Senior Lecturer Animal Sciences, University of Sydney, titled 'Who's responsible for the slaughtered ex-racehorses, and what can be done?'. The article examines problems around overbreeding and inadequate tracking of retired horses and raises questions regarding who should take responsibility.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/whos-responsible-for-the-slaughtered-ex-racehorses-and-what-can-be-done-125551>

On October 19, 2019, The Age published seven letters to the editor all critical of the racing industry for the treatment many retired racehorses receive.

The full text of these letters can be accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/horse-racing-too-many-horses-are-bred-and-too-many-are-killed-20191018-h1iyps.html>

On October 18, 2019, The Sydney Morning Herald published a comment by Tom Reilly, the chief executive officer of Thoroughbred Breeders Australia, titled 'We care for our racehorses, but our industry must confront this mistreatment'.

Reilly highlighted the industry's concern for horses but identified a number of areas where improvements needed to be made.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/national/we-care-for-our-racehorses-but-our-industry-must-confront-this-mistreatment-20191018-p53231.html>

On November 20, 2018, the Bellingen Shire Courier Sun published two letters to the editor criticising animal abuse perpetrated within the racing industry.

The full texts can be accessed at <https://www.bellingencourier.com.au/story/5766804/letters-horse-racing/>

On November 7, 2017, news.com.au published an analysis titled 'Are opponents of Melbourne Cup fun-hating whingers or worried animal activists with a point?'

The piece looks at arguments for and against horse racing in Australia.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.news.com.au/national/are-opponents-of-melbourne-cup-funhating-whingers-or-worried-animal-activists-with-a-point/news-story/3472d55efbc4f481220a819a5458a9be>

On November 6, 2014, The Conversation published a comment by Chris Whitton, Head of the Equine Centre, Associate Professor of Equine Medicine and Surgery, University of Melbourne, titled 'Sudden deaths are rare in racing despite the Melbourne Cup tragedy'.

The comment looks at the relative rarity of horse deaths in racing.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/sudden-deaths-are-rare-in-racing-despite-the-melbourne-cup-tragedy-33789>

On October 1, 2014, the National Museum of Australia published a comment and analysis titled 'What happens to all those racehorses?' which gives a brief history of the development of the Australian racing industry and draws on a study which suggests most retired horses are successfully rehomed.

The full text can be accessed at <https://pateblog.nma.gov.au/2014/10/01/what-happens-to-all-those-racehorses/>

In June 2010, the Australian Racing Commission made a submission to the Productivity Commission outlining the economic value of racing to the Australian community.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/rural-research/submissions/sub133.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47552637> **Arguments in favour of banning horseracing**

1. Horseracing is losing popularity in Australia

It has been claimed that demographic and cultural changes are making horseracing less appealing to many Australians.

It has been suggested that a growing aversion to risking human and animal life and an increasing number of immigrant and first-generation Australians without a cultural connection to the sport is leading to Australia losing its attachment to horseracing.

In an opinion piece published in *The Guardian* on October 31, 2014, Johnathan Horn stated, ‘The realities of horse racing contrast starkly with 21st-century life in Australia’s big cities.

Ours is an increasingly urbanised and risk-averse society. In many Australian schools, somersaults, cartwheels, swings and ropes are banned. From this, racing expects are expected to draw the next generation of fans and participants to a sport where the spectre of equine and human fatality looms large. What’s more, 25 percent of our citizens were born in countries where they don’t have public holidays for horse races and get misty eyed about champion thoroughbreds.’ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2014/oct/31/has-horse-racing-lost-its-way-in-a-changing-australia>

In a comment published in *The Guardian* on November 2, 2019, Calla Wahlquist has similarly claimed that cultural shifts in Australia are leading to a disaffection with horseracing. Wahlquist suggests there is a waning enthusiasm for The Melbourne Cup. She claims, ‘Anecdotal evidence suggests the tide may be turning among a broader public. Dozens of people *Guardian Australia* spoke to – many previously neutral or mildly positive towards the race – say they plan to boycott the office sweep this year. Others say they were already appalled by the cultural cringe of seeing dozens of well-dressed adults vomiting into port-a-loos at 2pm, describing the spectacle of horse racing as both insufferably stuffy and unbearably gauche.’ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/nov/01/melbourne-cup-how-australians-fell-out-of-love-with-the-race-that-stops-the-nation>

Calla argues that part of the apparent disillusionment stems from concerns regarding animal safety which have led to the withdrawal of some corporate sponsors. She notes, ‘Supermodel Megan Gale, a fixture of the cup carnival for the past decade and brand ambassador for the race’s major sponsor, Lexus, says she won’t attend because of animal cruelty concerns. Some companies have cancelled their annual Melbourne Cup lunch.’

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/nov/01/melbourne-cup-how-australians-fell-out-of-love-with-the-race-that-stops-the-nation>

Wahlquist argues that events like the Melbourne Cup have moved away from the egalitarian position they once occupied. She cites Professor Fiona Nicoll, who argues that The Melbourne Cup continues to embody less positive historical values that are no longer endorsed by most Australians: ‘[It was] defined in the era of the White Australia policy, Nicoll says. Racing played into both the celebration of Anglo-Saxon heritage and broader narratives around purity of blood, which were used to justify the removal of Indigenous children.’

University of Sydney history professor, Carole Cusack, has similarly stated, ‘[It was] a story about Australia that doesn’t take account of the people who were here before the whites came and also doesn’t stretch out to be particularly inclusive towards the people who came after the white story was established.’ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/nov/01/melbourne-cup-how-australians-fell-out-of-love-with-the-race-that-stops-the-nation>

On October 18, 2019, new research released by Roy Morgan shows horse racing is battling a significant decline in interest from Australians, with just over 5.2 million people, or 25 percent of the 14+ population, watching horse racing on TV — a drop of nearly 700,000 since 2015. The Roy Morgan Single Source survey, derived from in-depth face-to-face interviews with over 50,000 Australians each year in their homes has found: ‘Australians are

increasingly turning to other entertainment choices at the expense of horse racing...Only a quarter of Australians are now watching any type of horse racing on TV, down from over 30 percent just four years ago. Perhaps the biggest concern for the industry is that interest in horse racing is relatively shallow and event specific. Only 10 percent of Australians watch any type of horse racing on TV outside the Melbourne Cup.'

<http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/8169-horse-racing-caulfield-cup-the-everest-october-2019-201910170719>

2. Horseracing causes injury and death to jockeys

Among those who believe that horseracing should be banned are those who stress the risks faced by jockeys and others who work directly with the horses.

Horseracing is statistically Australia's most dangerous sport, eclipsing motor racing for number of injuries per 1000 hours of competition.

<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/melbourne-cup-one-of-the-cruellest-days-in-citys-calendar-20171106-gzjf9m.html>

In October 2018, John Payne's 'Their Last Ride - The Fallen Jockeys of Australia' was published. The book reveals that since the beginning of horseracing in Australia through to the date of publication, 950 jockeys have lost their lives while taking part in the sport.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6456503/their-last-ride-950-jockey-deaths-chronicled-in-books-second-run/?cs=14231>

In 2015, an Australian Jockeys' Association (AJA) study revealed that 873 riders had died in race falls throughout Australia. <https://www.thoroughbredracing.com/articles/facts-and-figures-jockey-fatalities-australia/>

In 2014, another national survey of jockeys by the AJA revealed that 79 percent had had at least one concussion in their career and a quarter (25 percent) had had four or more during their time in racing.

More than one in five (22 percent) indicated they had had a concussion in the past two years.

The survey also revealed that concussions were more common among females and apprentice jockeys. <https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2018/06/27/jockey-seeking-answers-pledges-brain-to-science.html>

Jockeys are considered to be at high risk of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). It is a brain disease caused by repeated head injuries that may include concussions. It mostly happens in athletes who play contact sports.

Recently retired jockey Dale Spriggs, who suffered more than 20 concussions during his racing career, has agreed to be part of a study of the incidence of the disease among Australian jockeys. Spriggs presents with symptoms of the condition. His consulting neurologist has stated, 'Dale's symptoms have worsened since his last major fall and concussion in 2013. At first, they were confusing and vague – lapses in memory, particularly short-term memory, that began affecting his daily life.

His mood, too, has declined, with features of depression, anxiety and irritability. He was previously highly easy-going, but now the slightest of life's disruptions can trigger anger and a desire to run away from the situation.' <https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2018/06/27/jockey-seeking-answers-pledges-brain-to-science.html>

Professional race riding has been determined as one of the most dangerous occupations in the country. In 2009, the Menzies Institute in Tasmania conducted a study that concluded only offshore fishing was more dangerous, and while other studies place truck driving, manufacturing, and mining work at the top of the most dangerous occupations, race riding is rarely far behind. <https://www.thoroughbredracing.com/articles/facts-and-figures-jockey-fatalities-australia/>

The Menzies Institute study found that licensed jockeys fell once in every 240 rides. Of these falls, almost a third caused injury, and one in 620 falls resulted in death. While the Menzies data was race-day focused, the AJA insists that injuries and fatalities do not just occur on race day: they occur during regular trackwork and barrier trials.

<https://www.thoroughbredracing.com/articles/facts-and-figures-jockey-fatalities-australia/>

There has recently been a spate of deaths among female jockeys. John Payne's publication stated that of the 13 deaths recorded in racing/training accidents since December 2012, 12 of them had been females. <https://www.bluemountaingazette.com.au/story/6456503/their-last-ride-950-jockey-deaths-chronicled-in-books-second-run/> In September 2019, two jockeys had died within 24 hours. Melanie Tyndall died from injuries received in a fall in a race at Fannie Bay in Darwin. Her death came a day after 22-year-old apprentice Mikaela Claridge suffered fatal injuries during routine trackwork at Cranbourne in Victoria.

<https://wwos.nine.com.au/horse-racing/simple-fall-claims-life-of-melanie-tyndall/a2f84a36-39ef-463e-9cb4-e493e0ac7520>

From all areas within the industry, there have been calls to increase safety – reduce field sizes, further improve helmets, re-educate owners and jockeys about congestion on the rails, and vet every horse pre-race. There have been suggestions that tougher suspensions be imposed on jockeys who ride dangerously, and that all riders need to be encouraged to speak up if a horse does not feel right on its way to the barriers.

<https://www.thoroughbredracing.com/articles/facts-and-figures-jockey-fatalities-australia/>

However, there are others who argue that the sport is so intrinsically dangerous that the only way of removing the unacceptable risk of injury and death to jockeys is to ban it altogether,

3. Horseracing causes injury and death to horses

Those calling for horse racing to be banned stress the number of horses who are injured or die as a direct result of their involvement in horse racing.

The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses has collated data from stewards' documents in each state and territory and found 122 horses died between August 2018 and July 2019. The most prevalent cause of death was catastrophic front limb injury, with 61 occurrences. Other causes of death included bleeds and cardiac failure.

A spokesperson for the Coalition, Kristen Leigh, has suggested that the overall mortality rate may be much higher.

Leigh has noted that the official figures work out 'to one horse on average dying on Australian racetracks every three days.' However, she went on to state, 'It's really important to highlight that this is just the deaths that we're finding on stewards' reports that we track, so there are a lot of deaths that occur if a horse is injured on the track and taken away and then killed a day or two later.

That death doesn't make it into the stewards' report and isn't required to, so there is no doubt that the incidence of death is much higher than we're aware of.'

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-28/122-horses-killed-on-australian-race-tracks-in-past-year/11456462>

From July 2016 until July 2017, 137 horses died on Australian racetracks. That was an average of more than two deaths a week. <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/melbourne-cup-one-of-the-cruellest-days-in-citys-calendar-20171106-gzjf9m.html>

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has stated, 'Racehorses are at risk of harm during races, training and trials with the main types of injuries involving muscle, bones, tendons and ligaments. Serious injuries such as fractures and ruptured ligaments or tendons which cause pain or distress and cannot be treated...result in immediate euthanasia.' <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-thoroughbred-horse-racing/>

The RSPCA has further noted, 'Racehorses may also die suddenly during or after a race, which may be due to heart failure or other causes such as the condition known as Exercise Induced Pulmonary Haemorrhage (EIPH), where bleeding into the lungs occurs. This has been related to over-exertion where horses may be pushed too hard to win.'

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-thoroughbred-horse-racing/>

When galloping, horses have a high cardiac output, pushing blood through the body and creating high pressure in the capillaries. These can rupture and release blood into the lungs. Vets at the U-Vet Werribee Equine Centre, which is funded by the University of Melbourne, Racing Victoria and the state government, have stated that EIPH is an 'inevitable consequence' of the extremely high cardiac output required by racehorses.

Just over half (55.3 per cent) of starters had some degree of EIPH on post-race examination, a University of Melbourne study of Victorian racecourses found, making it a 'serious condition in racehorses and prevention or reduction of its incidence is an important issue'.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

The RSPCA has also stated, 'Considerable pain can be experienced in relation to...acute injury as evidenced by lameness, as well as possible pain endured during the healing process and/or treatment regime. A recent study of Australian racing thoroughbreds found a very high prevalence of bone injury and fatigue, especially in older horses with a long history of racing and training. The authors concluded that this evidence suggests that horses require longer rest periods than what is currently practised in the racing industry, to allow bone healing and recovery.' <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-thoroughbred-horse-racing/>

It has also been noted that gastric ulcers are common in athletic horses due to diet, exercise, housing or stress, and horses can also suffer from muscle tear, most commonly in the rump or hamstrings of the hind limbs. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

Additionally, equipment used to encourage horses to run faster can also inflict pain or injury.

The RSPCA wants whips banned. They say whips have the 'potential to inflict pain and injury' and cannot be justified because 'performance is influenced more by genetics, preparation and rider skill'. They quote research from a 2012 study from the University of Sydney's Faculty of Veterinary Science, in which leading equine specialist Paul McGreevy found that the 'unpadded section of the whip made contact on 64 per cent of impacts, demonstrating that padding the whip does not necessarily safeguard a horse from possible pain'. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

It also found that many jockeys were breaching the whip rules and stewards were not effectively policing them. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html> A spokesperson for the RSPCA stated, 'In the Melbourne Cup last year [2018], quite a number of jockeys were fined for the overuse of the whip and the penalties were immaterial compared to what the jockeys stand to make from achieving a good result.' <https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

Two other types of equipment used on racehorses, which the RSPCA opposes due to the discomfort and pain they can cause, are tongue ties and spurs. A tongue tie is a piece of nylon or elastic that is wrapped tightly around the tongue and tied to the lower jaw to keep the tongue in place during a race. Restricting the movement of the tongue in this way causes discomfort and can lead to permanent injury. Spurs, which are made of metal and are attached to the back of riding boots, exert sharp pressure when the jockey squeezes or kicks the horse in the flank area. <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-thoroughbred-horse-racing/>

4. Large numbers of racehorses are slaughtered either before racing or after retirement. Opponents of horse racing in Australia argue that the industry results in large numbers of redundant horses, referred to as 'wastage', that either were never successful competitors or that over time must be retired. Critics state that, despite industry claims to the contrary, the process intended to ensure that these animals are humanely dealt with is not effective and many end up mistreated and sometimes cruelly slaughtered.

It is claimed that one of the entrenched problems of the racing industry is the oversupply of horses, ensuring that many animals will not be retained for track competition and will have to be disposed of. The animal rights group, Animals Australia, has noted that up to fifteen thousand foals are bred for racing every year in Australia. Only 30 percent of those bred every year ever compete in a race. Of those that do compete on the track, their average racing careers are only three years. Horses typically live for 25-30 years.

<https://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/horse-racing-industry-cruelty-will-continue.php> Reports put the 'wastage' rate for horses in training or racing at about 40 per cent. Many owners are unwilling to bear the costs incurred by horses who are not making them money, so those animals are often sent to the abattoir to be slaughtered.

<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/melbourne-cup-one-of-the-cruellest-days-in-citys-calendar-20171106-gzjf9m.html>

Each year, around 8,500 horses are retired from the track. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-18/slaughter-abuse-of-racehorses-undermines-industry-animal-welfare/11603834>

Opponents claim that the very large number of horses bred mean that large numbers will be surplus to requirements. They further argue that this overbreeding is intrinsic to the industry as it is driven by the desire to produce winning racehorses in a sport that is financed by gambling revenue.

Animals Australia has claimed, 'the breeding process is ruthless — in pursuit of finding the rare "champion", thousands upon thousands of horses will be born into an industry only to "disappear" if they don't win enough races to turn a profit for their owners.

It's a huge problem — a systemic one in fact, and it's not one the racing industry wants to talk about because it knows that addressing overbreeding will mean cutting significantly into its hefty gambling profits.' <https://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/horse-racing-industry-cruelty-will-continue.php>

Animals Australia has concluded, 'Unless the number of horses being bred by the industry drastically reduces, healthy horses and foals will continue to die.'

<https://www.animalsaustralia.org/features/horse-racing-industry-cruelty-will-continue.php>

This position was supported by an editorial published in The Age on October 18, 2019, which stated, 'The numbers tell the story. In the eternal quest by owners and trainers to find a "champion" racehorse that will deliver prizemoney, about 14,000 foals are bred each year.

Most horses race for only a few years at most but live for up to 30. That is a very large number of horses needing a new life after racing for more than 20 years, and way beyond any demand for "pleasure riding or therapy" horses.' <https://www.theage.com.au/sport/spotlight-on-horse-racing-s-dark-side-is-well-overdue-20191018-p5321y.html>

It is claimed that the large numbers of unsuccessful and retired racehorses have led to their being routinely slaughtered at some point after their leaving their breeders' hands.

In October 2019, the ABC current affairs program, 7.30, reported on the results of an investigation carried out by ABC investigators and the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses. For two years they have observed practices at the Meramist Abattoir, north of Brisbane. The abattoir slaughters some 500 a month for human consumption. The meat is exported primarily to Europe, Japan and Russia. It was revealed that at one point around 300 racehorses went through Meramist Abattoir in just 22 days. On one day alone, covert cameras

record more than 40 racehorses being slaughtered. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-18/slaughter-abuse-of-racehorses-undermines-industry-animal-welfare/11603834>

The investigation also recorded that before death the animals were cruelly treated. The covert cameras record horses being beaten and abused, bolted to the brain repeatedly and ineffectively killed. Others are kicked and suffer electric shocks while confined in the kill box. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-18/slaughter-abuse-of-racehorses-undermines-industry-animal-welfare/11603834>

5. Horseracing promotes gambling and illegal conduct

Opponents of horseracing argue that the sport has a socially damaging dependence on gambling which in turn prompts corruption and injury to animals.

A Roy Morgan survey released on October 18, 2019 into popular attitudes to the racing industry, included a measure of popular distrust. The survey found: 'Horse racing has the fourth highest level of Distrust of the 18 key sports measured. The detailed responses we received about why people felt this way highlighted key themes revolving around the influence of gambling on the integrity of the sport.

Gambling is vitally connected with racing as it serves to fund the industry. It generates around 90 per cent of Racing Victoria's annual revenue and there was more than \$7 billion in turnover last financial year. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-04/victoria-horse-racing-betting-declining/11667338>

Gambling brings in related issues such as corruption, using doping to rig results and the harm of gambling to society more widely. In addition, time will tell whether the very disturbing footage of the fate of 'surplus' racehorses aired on ABC TVs 7.30...affects audiences for race coverage.' <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/8169-horse-racing-caulfield-cup-the-everest-october-2019-201910170719>

Critics claim that the win at all costs mentality linked with attracting gambling revenue results in illegal and cruel practices. Events such as the 10-month investigation by Victoria Police and Racing Victoria into the alleged use of jiggers (electric shock devices) by top trainer Darren Weir, who has been charged with animal cruelty and conspiracy offences, have the capacity seriously to damage the image of the industry.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

A jigger is a battery-powered device which delivers an electric shock when applied to the horse's skin, causing significant pain and long-term distress when associated with other cues. Possession or use of a jigger is a breach of the rules of racing and is an act of cruelty under animal welfare legislation. Despite their clear illegality, some trainers and jockeys still choose to use these devices to coerce horses in an attempt to win races.

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-thoroughbred-horse-racing/>

It has further been claimed that the use of illegal substances to enhance horses' performance is even more common than the use of devices such as jiggers. With so much at stake, trainers, it is claimed, will do almost anything to give their horse an advantage without considering the welfare of the animal.

Some drugs may mask pain and therefore remove an important protective mechanism to prevent further injury, whilst others may cause unexpected adverse side effects. For example, a study identified significant risks with the misuse of cobalt in racehorses, including thickening of the blood, and heart and nerve problems. Several cases of illegal cobalt use in the Australian racing industry have been reported over recent years.

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-animal-welfare-issues-with-thoroughbred-horse-racing/>

Recent investigations have revealed wide-scale, long-term use of illegal substances. In May 2018, five horse trainers and three stable hands were found guilty by Victoria's Racing Appeals and Disciplinary Board of 271 doping-related offences between 2010 and 2017. The Board concluded, 'There has been dishonest, corrupt or fraudulent, improper or dishonourable actions of the highest order.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-08/aquanita-horse-racing-doping-charges-verdict/9737788>

In addition to the negative impacts of gambling related issues on animal welfare, the gambling associated with horse racing creates major social problems. Analysis of the 2015 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey reveals that nearly one million Australians regularly gambled on horse and dog racing. Their typical monthly expenditure on race betting amounted to \$1,300 each over the year. 41 percent of all regular race bettors—403,000 adults—experienced one or more gambling-related problems. That is, their gambling behaviour caused or put them at risk of problems. This was more than double the rate among regular gamblers nationally. This further means that one third of all regular gamblers who experienced problems in Australia regularly participated in race betting. Those with severe problems spent up to four times as much on racing over the year (\$3,815 vs \$887). In 2015, close to a quarter of race bettors (22 percent; 214,000) bet more than they could afford to lose; 24 percent (237,000) tried to win back money they had lost on another day. For 10 percent (97,000) of race bettors, gambling had caused them physical or mental health problems. Gambling impeded their ability to pay their electricity, gas and telephone bills and affected their capacity to make rent or mortgage payments. <https://aifs.gov.au/agrc/publications/race-betting-australia>

Arguments against banning horse racing

1. Racing is regulated to reduce the risk of harm to horses

Supporters of horse racing in Australia stress that the sport is a highly regulated one with rules specifically designed to reduce the likelihood of injury to riders or horses.

Former Racing Australia chief executive officer, Peter McGauran, has stated, 'The claim that racing authorities are inactive on welfare issues is not supported by the facts. We are acutely aware of our responsibilities to meet community animal welfare expectations and purposely enforce the rules of racing to this end. Racing is among the most regulated and accountable industries and sports in the country.' <https://www.news.com.au/national/are-opponents-of-melbourne-cup-funhating-whingers-or-worried-animal-activists-with-a-point/news-story/3472d55efbc4f481220a819a5458a9be>

The Welfare Guidelines for Australian Thoroughbred Horse Racing include the following provisions.

The housing, feeding and training of racehorses should be consistent with good horsemanship and must not compromise their welfare. Any practices whether in stables, training or racing which are inconsistent with contemporary standards of husbandry should not be tolerated.

<https://www.racingnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Welfare-Guidelines-for-Horse-Racing.pdf>

Breaking and training methods which unreasonably influence the normal behaviour of racehorses should not be used. Horses should only be given training schedules which are suited to their physical capabilities and level of maturity. <https://www.racingnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Welfare-Guidelines-for-Horse-Racing.pdf>

Racecourses and racing surfaces should be designed and maintained to reduce risk factors which may lead to injuries. Particular attention should be paid to crossings, uneven racing surfaces and extremes of surface quality. <https://www.racingnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Welfare-Guidelines-for-Horse-Racing.pdf>

Excessive, unnecessary or improper use of the whip cannot be condoned, for example, on a beaten horse, a horse unable to respond or a horse clearly winning. Any post-race whip welts clearly indicate injury. <https://www.racingnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Welfare-Guidelines-for-Horse-Racing.pdf>

The incidence of injuries sustained in racing and training should be monitored wherever possible. Track conditions, frequency of racing, age and any other risk factors, should be carefully examined to indicate ways to minimise severe injuries.

<https://www.racingnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Welfare-Guidelines-for-Horse-Racing.pdf>

Owners should attempt to ensure that their horses are sympathetically and humanely treated when they leave racing. Racehorses should be permanently identified and registered, so that instances of mistreatment during retirement can be pursued.

<https://www.racingnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Welfare-Guidelines-for-Horse-Racing.pdf>

As evidence of the effectiveness of the guidelines governing Australian horseracing, Professor Chris Whitton, from the U-Vet Werribee Equine Centre, has noted that Australia has the lowest injury rate for racehorses in the world. The Professor further stated, 'Racing Victoria are doing a lot; they have one of the biggest research programs into injuries in the world.' <https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

It has been noted, for example, that Australia's response to Exercise Induced Pulmonary Haemorrhage (EIPH) is among the best in the world. The regulations for bleeders are strictest in Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong. In Australia and New Zealand, horses reported by officials to have blood in both nostrils (unless in the opinion of the Stewards such bleeding was caused by external trauma) may not be exercised on any racecourse for two months or start in any race for three months, and only then after a satisfactory gallop of at least 1,000m in the presence of a Steward. If the horse bleeds on a second occasion, it is banned for life.

<https://www.racingvictoria.com.au/the-horse/veterinary-care/~media/eb7a9d978aee49b08317d1e3fdff300f.ashx>

Racing Victoria has highlighted its low horse fatality statistics as evidence of the care it takes of the horses that compete on the track. It states, 'The total number of flat starts in Victorian racing has averaged 42,614 per year since 2005. During that same period, the horse safety record has averaged 99.95 percent with fatal racing accidents occurring in just 0.05percent of starts.'

<https://www.racingvictoria.com.au/the-horse/equine-welfare/equine-welfare-the-facts>

Referring to the measures it has put in place to ensure animal safety, Racing Victoria has noted, 'Investment is being made to provide the safest possible racing environment with more than \$25 million invested in plastic running rails and building safer racetracks over the past five years. Tracks are inspected daily by officials to ensure they are safe for racing.

The industry is not resting on its laurels. Racing Victoria is embarking on a \$5.25 million research project with the University of Melbourne, the Victorian Government and Racing Australia aimed at the prevention of equine limb injuries. Over the past 20 years, it has also funded countless research projects by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation to assist the health and wellbeing of Australia's entire horse population, not just thoroughbred racehorses.'

<https://www.racingvictoria.com.au/the-horse/equine-welfare/equine-welfare-the-facts>

2. Most trainers and owners care for their horses well

Supporters of horse racing stress the care that trainers and owners give their horses. It is argued that owners and trainers generally have a strong commitment to horseracing and to the horses with which they deal and that they act responsibly to provide the best care possible for the animals involved.

Jamie Stier, Racing Victoria's executive general manager of Integrity Services, has stated, 'I think, without doubt, the racehorses are generally considered to receive the highest standard of care... Any evidence or indication of inappropriate behaviour is addressed swiftly and firmly.' <https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

Owners generally must make a large financial commitment to each of the horses they own. They spend an average of \$35,000 annually on training alone for a racehorse. In addition to this there is stabling and other care fees. <https://www.news.com.au/national/are-opponents-of-melbourne-cup-funhating-whingers-or-worried-animal-activists-with-a-point/news-story/3472d55efbc4f481220a819a5458a9be>

Anyone wishing to train thoroughbreds needs both formal training and generally years of experience through which they develop an understanding of horses. Thoroughbred trainers have first to acquire a Certificate IV in Racing (Racehorse Trainer). The training is designed to allow 'the trainee to learn how to be responsible for the care, maintenance and racing performance of the animals. The trainee also acquires the skills required to solve unpredictable problems by the analysis and evaluation of available information and demonstrate broad knowledge in a variety of contexts including industry rules and legal procedures.' <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/course/-/c/c/RGR40118-02/Certificate-IV-in-Racing-Racehorse-Trainer>

Almost all occupations in racing require relevant industry licences, which are coordinated through the industry's peak bodies. Occupations which have licensing requirements include: trainers, jockeys, stable hands, float drivers, farriers, syndicate promoters and rider agents. Potential applicants for any of these training programs are advised that the top priority industry and occupational skills required are concern for animal welfare and integrity and ethical conduct. <https://nationalindustryinsights.aisc.net.au/industries/racing>

It has further been claimed that to train and ride an effective racehorse requires significant sensitivity to the unique requirements of the particular animal and that strong bonds are usually formed between jockeys and trainers and the horses they race.

On May 5, 2018, The Conversation published an article by Keri Brandt Off, Professor of Sociology and Gender and Sexuality Studies, Fort Lewis College, Colorado, in the United States, in which she attempts to explain the bond which forms between human beings and horses. The professor states, 'Synchronicity between humans and horses doesn't come easy. It can take years to achieve. Starting at the most rudimentary level of communication – through a system of applying pressure to parts of the horse's body – it builds slowly. Only after countless hours of working together do humans and horses attune their bodies to each other.' <https://theconversation.com/touch-forms-the-foundation-of-the-powerful-human-horse-relationship-95284> The closeness which underpins a successful relationship between horse and human being is said to be seen in the relationships between jockeys and trainers and the horses with which they work.

Many successful trainers have been noted for the closeness of the connection between them and the horses they train. In an obituary written by Wayne Peake for champion Australian racehorse trainer Bart Cummings, published in The Conversation on September 1, 2015, it was noted of Cummings, '[His] interest in racehorses extended to their psychologies. He was convinced that they understand love and affection shown them by humans and, what is more, that they respond to it with improved performances on the racecourse.'

<https://theconversation.com/horse-trainer-bart-cummings-reaches-the-finishing-post-for-the-last-time-46868>

It has further been claimed that the racing industry provides horses with a better life than they would have in the wild.

Professor Phil McManus, a Professor of Urban and Environmental Geography at the University of Sydney, specialising in human-animal relations, has stated, 'Compared to life in

the wild, some of the horses and particularly the best racehorses do have a longer life, and the reason being, in the wild they don't get medical care, they possibly could be attacked by another animal, they can fight amongst each other.'

Professor McManus further noted, 'It's tough, say in the Snowy Mountains, and it's not as comfortable as a clean stable with fresh hay. Successful horses in terms of a racing career or potential breeding are very well looked after and it's in an owner and trainer's interests to do that, generally.' <https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

3. Horse racing contributes significantly to the Australian economy

Supports of horse racing stress the major contribution the industry makes to the Australian economy.

There are 371 race clubs in Australia, which is more than any other country in the world. On a per capita, basis Australia has arguably the strongest racing industry in the world. Even in aggregate terms the Thoroughbred Racing Industry in Australia ranks in the top three racing industries in the world on all industry indicators notwithstanding its much smaller population and economy in comparison to competitors such as the United States, Japan, Great Britain and France. <https://tinyurl.com/rwrghnw>

In 2017–18, horse and greyhound racing contributed approximately \$1.4 billion to the Australian Gross Domestic Product. Further value-added income for the economy is generated by breeding, horse sales, prize money and wagering.

<https://nationalindustryinsights.aisc.net.au/industries/racing>

Figures from Racing Australia suggest there are approximately 159,000 individuals involved in thoroughbred racing nationally, including over 82,600 racehorse owners, as well as various other participants, volunteers and employees.

<https://nationalindustryinsights.aisc.net.au/industries/racing>

An economic impact study of the nation's thoroughbred racing industry commissioned by Racing Australia and released in November 2018, revealed it is worth \$9 billion and provides more than 70,000 full-time jobs. Racing Australia chair Ms Frances Nelson QC stated with regard to the study's report, 'Thoroughbred racing is one of Australia's oldest sports but, as this report makes clear, it is also a major economic activity contributing to national economic growth, jobs and government revenues.' <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/horse-racing/nine-billion-reasons-why-racing-matters/news-story/16d381f391e1f02092c48510b8ce89f6>

Almost 80,000 full-time equivalent jobs were either directly related or created within industries that support racing. There were almost 160,000 participants, including breeders, owners, trainers, jockeys and volunteers. More than half of the direct spending generated was in regional Australia. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/horse-racing/nine-billion-reasons-why-racing-matters/news-story/16d381f391e1f02092c48510b8ce89f6>

An Institute for Employment Research study has found that racing and breeding also help to sustain employment in other areas of the economy, such as feed merchants, veterinarians, farriers, transport companies, caterers, hoteliers, and the fashion industry.

<https://tinyurl.com/rwrghnw>

Almost \$6.3bn of direct spending was generated in the 2016-17 season, relating to the breeding of foals, the preparation of horses for racing, net wagering revenues and product fees and other race day revenues. The thoroughbred racing industry was responsible for more than \$9.15bn in value-added contribution to the economy. This was driven by wagering revenues (for the racing industry, wagering and governments) as well as the breeders and trainers. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/horse-racing/nine-billion-reasons-why-racing-matters/news-story/16d381f391e1f02092c48510b8ce89f6>

The industry also generated upward of \$800m in taxes — more than \$530m to state governments by way of stamp duty, gaming, wagering employee and land taxes. The federal government received almost \$20m through income tax and the GST.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/horse-racing/nine-billion-reasons-why-racing-matters/news-story/16d381f391e1f02092c48510b8ce89f6>

It has also been noted the thoroughbred racing extends Australia's international economic reach. Each year there is an audience of more than 700 million worldwide for the Melbourne Cup. This has major implications for the Australian tourist industry. 22 countries import Australian racehorses. More than 20 northern hemisphere international horses compete in the Melbourne Spring and Sydney Autumn Carnivals combined contributing significantly to the Australian economy. Thoroughbred racing is responsible for more than \$750 million of international exports. <https://tinyurl.com/rwrghnw>

Focusing only on the Melbourne Cup, the four days of the Victoria Racing Club's (VRC) 2018 Melbourne Cup Carnival delivered a record economic contribution to Victoria of \$447.6 million in gross economic benefit, a boost of almost 20 percent since 2014, which the VRC claimed highlights the significance of the event to all Australians.

<https://www.flemington.com.au/news/2019-04-18/2018-melbourne-cup-carnival-delivers-record-economic-benefit>

VRC Chairman, Amanda Elliott, stated, 'The Melbourne Cup Carnival is a resounding success story. The four days of Cup Week are the four most attended race days in Australia, as well as being a major draw card for interstate and international visitors. The business of Cup Week sees a sizable dollar amount filter right through the economy to sectors such as tourism, retail and fashion, hospitality and accommodation, with many jobs created and supported state-wide.' <https://www.flemington.com.au/news/2019-04-18/2018-melbourne-cup-carnival-delivers-record-economic-benefit>

4. Horse racing remains a very popular and culturally significant sport

Supporters of the continuation of horseracing in Australia argue that it is one of the country's most popular sports and is deeply entrenched in Australian history and culture.

Thoroughbred horseracing is the third most patronised sport in Australia after AFL and rugby league. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-03/melbourne-cup-history-of-australian-horseracing/6908252>

University of Sydney history Professor Emeritus Richard Waterhouse has noted how deeply entrenched the sport is in Australia's colonial history. The professor has stated, 'It was part of the cultural baggage which was brought over from England. The first horse races conducted in Australia took place in Sydney in the 1790s, not long after the colony was settled.

Initially there were no thoroughbreds in Australia, they just used work horses for racing, but by about 1800 there were sufficiently wealthy colonists that they began to import thoroughbreds.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-03/melbourne-cup-history-of-australian-horseracing/6908252>

Professor Waterhouse has noted that the first official race meeting was held at Hyde Park in Sydney in 1810. The professor observed, 'It was sanctioned by Governor Lachlan Macquarie on the condition that there was no gaming, drunkenness, quarrelling, fighting or boxing... Of course, it turned out that many of the convicts couldn't go back to work the following day as they were hungover.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-03/melbourne-cup-history-of-australian-horseracing/6908252>

From that point, race meetings became a regular feature of public entertainment in the colony and soon spread to other colonies before becoming a tradition in the young country after Federation in 1901.

The attraction of betting is one of the pillars of horse racing. In the early days of racing, the thrill of putting a bet on a race is what drove the popularity of the sport. The continuation of bookmakers – more commonly known as ‘bookies’ – at the racetrack, offers a taste of what it was like to bet in the past. <https://hatch.macleay.net/horse-racing-and-millennials-social-frenzy-vs-sporting-tradition/>

Horseracing saw a dramatic decline in popularity after World War II. Professor Waterhouse has suggested, ‘After the war, all other kinds of other entertainment and gambling became available, such as poker machines and greyhound racing. The crowds went into a very long-term decline.

The introduction of the TAB (the Totalisator Agency Board which allowed legal off-course betting) and television coverage of races has led to a renewal in popularity.’

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-03/melbourne-cup-history-of-australian-horseracing/6908252>

The Melbourne Cup stands out as an embodiment of horse racing’s popularity and place in the national culture. Professor Waterhouse has stated, ‘In terms of prize money, the Melbourne Cup is worth more than the Grand National or any race in America, and it is far more popular in terms of national identity.’ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-03/melbourne-cup-history-of-australian-horseracing/6908252>

Melbourne Cup sweeps are a well-established tradition in Australian workplaces and prominent public figures have demonstrated their enthusiasm for the Cup. Former prime minister Bob Hawke interrupted a press conference, wheeling a television onto the stage with him to watch the race before returning to the briefing. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-03/melbourne-cup-history-of-australian-horseracing/6908252>

5. The number of horses sent to abattoirs is exaggerated

Supporters of the continuance of horse racing argue that claims regarding the number of former racehorses that end their lives at abattoirs has been exaggerated and that the racing industry has taken active steps to ensure that this is not the fate of most racehorses.

After the ABC 7.30 expose revealing the slaughter at abattoirs of retired racehorses, Racing Australia issued a statement which said, "The provision of appropriate care and attention of Thoroughbred horses is a critical priority in the administration of racing across Australia and for the people involved in the sport.

Each year State and Territory racing authorities invest tens of millions of dollars in integrity, veterinary services and equine welfare programs to try and achieve the best possible outcomes for horses. Since 2014, the sport's national body, Racing Australia, has introduced reforms to the Australian Rules of Racing (ARR) to strengthen integrity and equine welfare goals by ensuring authorities have access to the ownership and location details of horses, from birth until their retirement from racing.

Under the ARR, when a Thoroughbred retires from racing, its owners have an obligation to provide Racing Australia with the reasons for the horse's retirement, the name of the new owner and the proposed new location of the horse.

Each year Racing Australia's annual report provides information on the retirement of racehorses which, for the past three years, reveals almost 90 percent of Thoroughbreds enter the equestrian, pleasure or breeding sectors. One per cent were listed as being sent to abattoirs.’ <https://www.theland.com.au/story/6445366/racing-industry-responds-to-abc-thoroughbred-slaughter-expose/>

In 2017, Racing NSW brought in a rule that no ex-racehorses were to be sent to slaughter. Racing Australia contends that less than 1 per cent of racehorses in Australia end up at an abattoir after retirement from racing. <https://www.theland.com.au/story/6445366/racing-industry-responds-to-abc-thoroughbred-slaughter-expose/>

Racing NSW has claimed that it has rehomed almost every one of 10,000 ex-racehorses and that it is operating a rehoming facility near Lithgow, at Capertee, managed by an ex-trainer, as part of its rehoming commitment. Racing NSW has over 300 ex-racehorses in its own care. It has several programs including taking veterans through Kosciuszko National Park on a trek with retired racehorses. <https://www.theland.com.au/story/6445366/racing-industry-responds-to-abc-thoroughbred-slaughter-expose/>

Racing NSW has a specific equine welfare fund which requires 1 percent of all prizemoney to be assigned to horse welfare, which was over \$2.5 million last year. Racing NSW was the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce this initiative, doing so in 2016.

<https://www.theland.com.au/story/6445366/racing-industry-responds-to-abc-thoroughbred-slaughter-expose/>

Racing Victoria has similarly claimed that most horses born as a result of breeding programs are used in a responsible way throughout their association with the racing industry and beyond. It claims a recent study of foals born in Victoria in 2005 by Dr Meredith Flash found that 74 percent of them entered training. Of these, 93 percent progressed to racing or an official trial. Of those that did not make it to racing some were retained in breeding, some died by natural causes or accident and others were rehomed directly to pleasure and equestrian pursuits. Identical research projects have been commissioned for the 2010 and 2015 foal crops. Preliminary results from 2010 born foals are consistent with the 2005 born foals. <https://www.racingvictoria.com.au/the-horse/equine-welfare/equine-welfare-the-facts>

Further implications

There seems to be no immediate likelihood that thoroughbred horseracing will be banned in any Australian state or territory. The popularity of the sport and, more importantly, the economic significance of the industry make such a ban a virtual impossibility in contemporary Australia.

When New South Wales premier Mike Baird banned greyhound racing in his state in 2016 after a similar exposé revealing mistreatment and killing of dogs and the use of live animals as lures during greyhound training the backlash he received meant that he rescinded his government's decision soon after. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-11/greyhound-ban-baird-government-confirms-backflip/7921000>

When Baird resigned the following year, many political pundits suggested that it was the hostility he had engendered among both supporters and opponents of banning greyhound racing that made his position as premier and party leader untenable. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-19/mike-baird-resigns-how-mr-popular-ended-up-on-the-scrapheap/8193616> Such political lessons are likely to ensure that no state or territory leader acts against thoroughbred racing, an industry that has an even larger popular following, employs even more people, contributes more to the economy both nationally and at a state-level and is patronised by some of the country's wealthiest and most influential citizens.

What does seem likely is that the industry will be required to improve some of its practices. Pressure for this is coming from both within and outside the industry and if some effective measures are not taken then in the long term the standing of the sport among racegoers and off-course punters may well be damaged.

The area that has been most focused upon in this current discussion is the manner in which 'wastage' horses, that is, horses that are surplus to requirements, are treated. Racing NSW already has a rule that no ex-racehorses should be sent to a slaughter yard and Racing Australia as a whole actively discourages racehorses being sent to abattoirs. However, good intentions are very difficult to translate into practice.

One of the key problems is that there is currently no mechanism for tracing a horse's owner beyond whoever first purchases the horse when it leaves racing. Horses can live for between 20 and 30 years and this first post-racing owner is unlikely to be the horse's last; however, no records are required to be kept beyond this.

Professor Phil McManus, a professor of Urban and Environmental Geography specialising in human-animal relations and author of *The Global Horseracing Industry*, has stated, "That's why the wastage issue is really complex, there is a lack of reliable information ... A horse could be out in a paddock in Cranbourne or Pakenham and then a truck pulls up in middle of night and it's taken to a slaughterhouse. We have to go beyond that first destination, microchip every horse, identify it."

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-is-horse-racing-cruel-20191018-p5325q.html>

Racing Australia has proposed a National Traceability Register which would keep track of all thoroughbreds from birth to death, across all their owners.

Racing Australia has stated, "One of the reasons Racing Australia supports the proposal for a National Traceability Register for All Horses is that it would provide federal and state animal welfare authorities access to ownership and location information for these Thoroughbreds.

This matter is currently being considered by a Senate committee."

Racing Australia has further suggested that such a register could be extended to include all horses, not merely thoroughbreds. Racing Australia has stated, "Thoroughbred horses represent approximately 10 percent of the national equine population (estimated at 1 million horses nationally). While racing authorities keep track of the owners and locations of Thoroughbreds during their careers, that is not true for most horses across Australia.

A National Horse Register would fill this gap, allow federal and state authorities access to ownership and location information and help improve equine welfare outcomes nationally."

<https://www.theland.com.au/story/6445366/racing-industry-responds-to-abc-thoroughbred-slaughter-expose/>

The need for this register to be national has been emphasised. Racing Australia has noted, "Currently, welfare laws for animals are maintained at a state government level and the scope of protection for horses varies between states. Following reports of animals being moved across state boundaries for slaughter, the AVA believes that a national animal welfare standard is required to maintain welfare standards. In addition, the AVA calls for a 'national horse register' to be established for greater oversight of the country's equine population. The AVA will lobby the Federal Government to implement both as soon as possible."

<https://www.theland.com.au/story/6445366/racing-industry-responds-to-abc-thoroughbred-slaughter-expose/>

Such a register would not however completely address the problem of an oversupply of horses. Critics of Racing Australia argue that despite a decline in the number of thoroughbreds bred annually, there are still too many coming into the industry to be taken up elsewhere if the horse proves unsuitable or comes to retirement.

Racing Victoria seems to be attempting to sidestep this issue by making it easier to have horses humanely euthanised.

Eleven days after the ABC program on horse mistreatment and slaughter it was reported, "Veterinarians will be sent to Victorian farms to euthanise retired racehorses to save them from being killed in abattoirs and knackeries, as part of the Victorian racing industry's response to an ABC investigation that exposed cruel treatment of thoroughbreds.

The on-farm euthanasia scheme, which would be administered by Racing Victoria, is part of a \$25 million plan announced by the organisation today to improve the welfare of horses after they finish racing." <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-28/racing-victoria-racing-club-racehorse-welfare-plan/11644776>

It remains to be seen whether the public will accept this partial solution to the problem.

