FutureNow
Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council

Racing, Farriery and Equine

The future workforce in horse and dog racing activities will require traditional occupations along with skills in animal welfare, racing integrity, leadership, digital literacy, and customer service.

Current industry environment

The racing, farriery and equine industries provide direct and indirect employment in both metropolitan and regional areas in racing and wagering activities, horse training, horse farming, farriery, supply and service businesses, hospitality and tourism. Jobs in horse and dog racing activities centre around the breeding, training, care and welfare of dogs and horses participating in the racing industry. The sector has been a contributor to social vibrancy, ranging from elite participation and breeding through to riding schools and hobbyists.

Based on the 2016 Census, the Australian racing industry includes horse farms and racing businesses employing 13,061 people in Australia. About 58% of these people were employed full-time. 67% of the industry is concentrated in Victoria and New South Wales, and 8.8% (1,159) of this workforce is located in Western Australia. Horse and dog racing activities provide just under three quarters (73%) of this industry's employment with the remainder being farming activity.

In addition, Australia-wide, there were 79,631 racehorse owners, 18,502 trainers, jockeys and trackwork riders and 30,000 registered greyhound racing participants.[1] In 2017-2018 in Western Australia, there were 37 horse racing clubs associated with the same number of racing tracks across the state. There are three greyhound racing tracks, one metropolitan and two in regional areas. Racing and gambling activity provided $73,918,283 total return and work for 59 jockeys, 20 apprentices and 36 amateur jockeys.[2]

Farriers are a critical support service for racing and equine activity, farms, equestrian centres, riding schools, horse farms and hobbyists providing foot care services to horses. They inspect, trim and shape the hooves of horses, make and fit horse shoes, respond to emergencies and apply first aid in the equine industries. There are about 1000 farriers working in Australia with 10.6% in Western Australia.[3]

The Australian racing industry is governed by national rules (Australian Rules of Racing and Australasian Rules of Greyhound Racing) as well as those set by the Principal Racing Authority in WA, Racing and Wagering WA.[4] Almost all occupations in racing require licensing, including trainers, jockeys stable employees, float drivers, farriers, syndicate promoters and rider agents, while breeding also requires registration for a number of roles.[5]

Technology is being applied in racing, farriery and equine activity at all stages, from breeding through to training, racing and animal retirement. The expansion of illegal offshore wagering applications and digital access to race information has led to increased focus on cyber-security and a greater recognition given to the roles of racing stewards and integrity officers who oversee the integrity of racing and wagering. These industries are also being impacted by technologies and processes that capture data relevant to animal and athlete performance, and event attendance data that can improve marketing to prospective audiences.

in 2019, the Western Australian government passed legislation to allow the sale of the TAB, the organisation responsible for racing and sports betting in WA. Should the sale occur, the racing industry will receive 35% of the sale proceeds, which will be set aside for a dedicated racing infrastructure fund, and 30 per cent of total revenue collected from a wagering point of consumption tax. This is an important change for racing in WA which aims to ensure the sustainability and prosperity of the industry.[6]

A snapshot of
Racing, Farriery & Equine

Horse and Dog Racing | Sports and Physical Recreation
Amusement and Other Recreational Activity | Gambling

In 2016 in Australia, horse farms and racing businesses employed 13,061 workers

And there were:
79,631 racehorse owners
18,502 trainers, jockeys & trackwork riders
30,000 registered greyhound racing participants

Jobs: Breeding, training, care and welfare of dogs and horses, racing integrity, administration & hospitality.

In 2018 Horse and Dog Racing contributed

$73,918,283

to the WA economy

The sector contributes to social vibrancy with activities ranging from elite participation and breeding to riding schools and hobbyists.

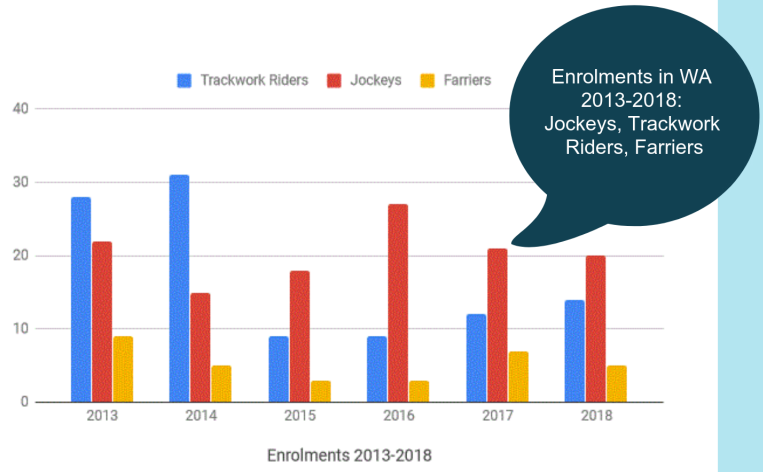
The future workforce

Workforce growth forecast 2018-2023:

Horse and dog racing activities:
+6.3%

Animal attendants and trainers:
+13%

Gambling Activities:
-2.1%



References:
- Racing Industry Sector IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work, Skills Impact, 2019, p, 3
- Racing Australia Fact Book 2017/2018 – A guide to the thoroughbred industry in Australia, p. 7.
- Australian Government Job Outlook, https://joboutlook.gov.au/Occupation?search=Career&code=322113.
- Labour Market Information Portal, Department of Jobs and Small Business, Industry employment projections – Five Years to May 2023, http://lmip.gov.au/

Industry developments

Labour shortages can be expected to continue unless more entrants are attracted to these occupations. Strategies to attract entrants to the industry like restructuring qualifications, the codification of skills needs, and opening up entry from non-traditional sources of workers are underway but have still to show any increase in workforce numbers.

Supply through vocational education and training completions is not currently meeting the employment demands of the racing industry simply because entry numbers are too low although a recent drop in the numbers of horses racing has helped alleviate a jockey shortage. The industry responds to skills shortages by accessing migrant workers, particularly trackwork riders.

Industry has made considerable effort to ensure it has the right course content and qualification structures and clear training and employment pathways. Skills sets have been developed to address previously identified gaps in industry skills. The indications are that should enrolment numbers increase and students complete their qualifications, they would be well placed to access employment.

Current and future opportunities

The Australian Government Department of Jobs and Small Business industry employment projections for Horse and dog Racing Activities for the five years from 2018 to 2023, show a national employment increase from 10,800 to 11,500, up 6.3% although employment in Gambling Activity is projected to decrease during the same period, from 29,700 to 29,100, down or 2.1%.[7] Jobs for Animal Attendants and Trainers are projected to increase 13% from 15,100 to 17,100 between 2018 and 2023.[8]

Farriers are in high demand in the racing industry and are well remunerated. Farriers are included in Metal Casting, Forging and Finishing Trades where future employment is projected to remain stable to 2023. This workforce has an average age of 42, higher than that of the general working population age of 40.

In Western Australia, the industry experiences labour shortages in three occupations, jockeys, trackwork riders, and farriers. There is strong and ongoing demand for these occupations and careers in racing can be financially lucrative but industry has found it increasingly difficult to attract applicants. To address current and anticipated skills shortages, these three occupations have been added to the State Priority Occupation List (SPOL), receiving State Priority Level 2.

Overall the industry workforce is ageing. The proportion of employees in each age group category over 50 years increased by 2% in 2016 although horse and greyhound racing employ a higher proportion of people in the age groups 20–29 years and 30–39 years, and a lower proportion in the older age groups.[9] Jockeys are tending to retire earlier, leaving a younger working group.

The future workforce in horse and dog racing activities will require traditional occupations and some new skills in animal welfare, with racing integrity, compliance with racing practices and workplace obligations, leadership, digital literacy including working with data, data analysis, digital marketing and digital commercialisation approaches, specific product and brand knowledge, negotiation, and customer service being recognised as necessary for the future of the industry.[10]

Skills and training strategies

Jockey and trackwork rider shortages are occurring because these occupations have strict size, weight, and medical requirements. The work is physically demanding, high risk and working hours are often outside the norm. Size and weight changes can be barriers to completing a qualification as young entrants grow over the course of training. Size and weight restrictions mean more females are undertaking the jockey apprenticeship and they tend to retire earlier than their male counterparts. Racing is an international business and it is common for talented jockeys to migrate to more lucrative interstate and overseas racing businesses, reducing an already small pool of workers.

The shortage of farriers in Western Australia is in part exacerbated by there being no local training provider to deliver the apprenticeship although the current interstate training provider has good industry support. Training enrolments have been declining in WA with only five commencements in 2018 in the Certificate III in Farriery and industry advises many working farriers are unqualified. A recent review and restructure of the training package products for this qualification has set up a clearer training pathway to the apprenticeship which has been changed to a Certificate IV qualification.

A base level of skills and knowledge about horse handling and safety is necessary for those considering a career in racing even before they can commence work. Racing and Wagering WA (RWWA) plans to develop a short course that could serve as an induction so prospective entrants can assess racing as a career and gain the basic skills to get started.

RWWA has submitted a proposal to the State Training Board to vary the Racing Trackrider traineeship to allow it as a school-based traineeship, to broaden the field of potential entrants to the industry.

Please get in touch

FutureNow is seeking regular input from stakeholders about workforce matters in the Western Australian Racing, Farriery and Equine industries. If you are interested in providing further information about the workforce in these sectors, the Industry Manager would like to hear from you.

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References

1. Racing Industry Sector IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work, Skills Impact, 2019, p, 3
2. Racing Australia Fact Book 2017/2018 – A guide to the thoroughbred industry in Australia, p. 7.
3. Australian Government Job Outlook, https://joboutlook.gov.au/Occupation?search=Career&code=322113, viewed 9 July 2019.
4. Racing Industry Sector IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work, Skills Impact, 2019, p, 15
5. Racing Industry Sector IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work, Skills Impact, 2019, p, 7
6. Media Statement: Historic racing reforms one step closer, 15 May 2019.
7. Labour Market Information Portal, Department of Jobs and Small Business, Industry employment projections – Five Years to May 2023, http://lmip.gov.au/, viewed 11 June 2019
8. Australian Government JobOutlook, https://joboutlook.gov.au/Occupation?search=Career&code=3611,
9. Racing Industry Sector IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work, Skills Impact, 2019, p, 22
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