

Racing and Equine Industry Snapshot

FutureNow is an independent body that provides industry informed advice to influence skills development strategies across the Creative, Leisure and Technologies sectors. Our work assists Western Australia to be prepared with the new order skills required by the evolving economy and our changing society.

The racing and equine industry contributes close to \$1 billion to Western Australia's economy, with half of these financial benefits flowing to regional areas. This sector creates around 8500 full-time equivalent jobs,¹ though part of these roles is seasonal casual work at racetracks throughout Western Australia.

Common racing and equine occupations

The well-known occupations in the racing and equine industry are track riders, jockeys and stablehands. Stablehands often learn on the job, although there is the opportunity to complete a ACM20221 Certificate II in Horse Care with the WA College of Agriculture and Applied Vocational Training. To become a thoroughbred jockey, completion of the RGR30518 Certificate III in Racing (Trackwork Rider) and RGR40221 Certificate IV in Racing (Jockey) via an apprenticeship is required. This apprenticeship is run through Racing and Wagering WA, in conjunction with the Racing Education Centre (from January 2023).

Attracting skilled track riders back to Western Australia

Track riders are either apprentice jockeys, or visitors to Western Australia who are skilled in riding horses. These workers enter on a visa, such as the Employer Nominated visa - Temporary Skill Shortage visa (TSS, 482). The track rider shortage in Western Australia worsened when the borders closed and has worsened with the time lapse delay in visitors returning to Western Australia. This role is specialised and requires extensive experience, fitness, strength, and a certain body type, so cannot be filled with non-skilled workers with on-the-job training. As a result, Racing and Wagering WA staff have been working with the visa office to try and enhance visa processing to fill this track rider shortage.

Becoming an elite jockey in Western Australia

A small number of jockeys enrol in the jockey apprentice program each year. For aspiring jockeys however, it is a chance to become an elite athlete in a field they are passionate about and to work alongside other people that have the same driving passion. They work long hours, not just riding but being involved in most aspects of the horses, including stablehand duties. This provides an opportunity upon graduation to be their own boss, with the potential for earning a high income, though in an acknowledged high-risk sport.

High stakes investment and rewards from equine breeding and racing

There is significant money involved in the racing industry through sports broadcasting, gambling, investments and equine breeding. Equine breeding and racing are multi-million-dollar businesses. Each year a Magic Millions Perth Yearling Sale is held with the sale and purchase of these specialist breed yearlings. Over the past five years, export markets have become increasingly significant in Australia due to the reputation for breeding high-quality horses.² This industry (racing and breeding) is among the most regulated in Australia, with strict regulations, so owners in this area have strong knowledge and understanding of the regulations, business and the money for up-front investment. There are sometimes syndicates available where there are a group of people who contribute to own the horse.

Support occupation to the equine industry - farriery

Support occupations for horses, such as farriers, who look after the hoof care of horses and change their shoes is an unlicensed occupation. Nationally there is an ACM40818 Certificate IV in Farriery, which is a 4-year apprenticeship leading to become a registered Farrier. In late 2022 FutureNow worked with key stakeholders to create a survey to determine business owners' interest and barriers to taking on a farrier apprentice. Initial review of survey results show there is a disincentive for apprentices to complete the full 4-year apprenticeship, because once they have learnt the basics they can commence working in the industry on a far higher salary, due to the demand for these skills and ability to work unregistered. The industry however supports the need for skilled farriers, both from the apprenticeship program and professional development courses. Identified barriers to businesses taking on a farrier apprentice include lack of understanding of the apprenticeship process, the cost and time involved in training an apprentice, lack of understanding of how the curriculum works eg how many hours on site and how many hours with the registered training organisation and not feeling trained or supported enough to employ a farrier apprentice. FutureNow will continue to work with stakeholders in 2023 to look at reducing the barriers to farrier training.

Growth in animal welfare occupations

In 2022, 1% of prize money from Western Australian races was allocated to animal welfare.³ This was first established in 2021 and shows the cultural shift towards supporting animal welfare. Trending from this is an increasing number of employment roles in animal welfare. These are often associated with the Off the Track WA Passport program run by Racing and Wagering WA, which is similar to the welfare program for retiring racing greyhounds – Greyhounds as Pets. This growing employment trend prompted the release of the ACMSS00023 Animal Welfare Management Skill Set in 2021. It is predicted that training will continue to develop to enhance skills in animal welfare management.

In 2022, Racing and Wagering WA partnered with the Animal Hospital at Murdoch University to bring CT and MRI to the equine community, enabling imaging of previously inaccessible structures to assist in the prediction and prevention of injuries. There is also a growing trend towards equine therapy with 8 equine therapists currently practising in Western Australia and registered with The Equine Psychotherapy Institute.

Perceived shift in reduced support for racing due to animal welfare concerns

The topic of animal welfare became headlines on the 2nd January 2023 as a Western Australian jockey was suspended for 6 weeks for careless riding at the Perth Cup. The result was a racetrack collision in front of 10,000 spectators resulting in a horse being injured and dying. A 2022 Lonergan Research poll of 1036 people across Australia found 54% (or 70% of 18- to 24-year-olds) thought horses should not be raced for gambling and entertainment⁴.

Horse racing gambling statistics increased despite welfare concerns

In contrast to the cultural shift against racing, there has not been a decrease in gambling statistics. Whilst less people are now visiting racetracks, there has been an increased shift to using online and mobile betting websites. Across Australia it is predicted that horse and sports betting will rise 3.2% annually over the next five years to \$7.7 billion, of which currently \$4.2 billion comes from national wagering on Western Australia races.⁵ \$202 million of those funds were allocated back to the WA racing industry.⁶

Increased sports betting prompts Federal Government regulations around gambling advertisements

Traditional TAB outlets are predicted to struggle as people shift to the accessibility and user-friendliness of online and mobile betting platforms. Men aged 18 to 34 are increasingly making up the sports gambling market segment, some of which includes horse racing. Advertising is increasingly being directed to this group resulting in growing concern of

susceptibility of this target group to problem gambling.⁷ In November 2022 the Federal Government started rolling out new requirements for online betting companies to advertise research backed messages about gambling harms. That month also saw that State Government stop the sale of the Western Australian TAB and keep it under their ownership with operations by Racing and Wagering WA.

Integrity roles in the racing industry

Integrity roles in the racing industry continue to play an important role in the fairness of the sport. Currently there is no Western Australian registered training organisation offering the skill set and vocational qualifications for the role of stewards, who oversee the integrity of the racing industry. Racing and Wagering WA, who employ stewards, explain on the careers section of their website more about this role, how on the job training is provided and their training contact details. Other aligned racing administrative roles such as racing administrator and licensing and registration personnel are outlined on their career website too.

What does all this mean for skill development for the racing and equine industry in 2023?

It is predicted there will be a continued shift towards animal welfare, integrity and resulting aligned employment positions and training. There will be a focus on working with stakeholders to reduce the barriers to fairer apprenticeships and training opportunities. There will be continued focus on attracting migrants with relevant track riding skills to attain visas to work in Western Australia filling the track rider shortage gaps. There will be continued scanning of opportunities for regional and indigenous community training to source potential employees in regional areas and to break down the barriers to their employment participation.

Industry Initiative Reports 2022

[Racing and Breeding Industry Skills report 2022](#) – this report provides in-depth information about racing and equine industry specific skills and issues. Prepared by Skills Impact at the request of the Racing and Breeding Industry Reference Committee.

[Racing and Wagering Western Australian Annual report 2021-2022](#) – this annual report highlights the organisations vision and results of creating a sustainable future for the racing industry in Western Australia.

[FutureNow Racing and Equine Career Resources](#) – case study interview of an apprentice jockey and an overview of key racing and equine staff interests, skills, working environment and career pathways accessible via the FutureNow website.

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We would like to hear from you

FutureNow continually seeks feedback from the outdoor recreation sector to facilitate workforce development, and the development and delivery of responsive training and skills sets to meet emerging sector needs. If you can contribute to this in any way or require further information, please contact

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