



RACING AUSTRALIA LIMITED

26 September 2025

Jobs and Skills Australia

Department of Employment and Workplace relations

GPO 9892

CANBERRA ACT 2601

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Submission to Consultation on the 2025 Core Skills Occupations List

Introduction

Racing Australia is the national body tasked with the responsibility for delivery of technical infrastructure to operate the Australian Stud Book, Register of Racehorses, licensing, thoroughbred racing operations, traceability and retirement. Collectively it is also responsible for the Australian Studbook Rules and Rules of Racing and advocacy. Racing Australia operates under a federated model and is owned by the state based Principal Racing Authorities (PRAs).

Racing Australia supports the submissions of the PRAs in each state and territory in relation to the Draft Core Skills Occupations List for Consultation.

The submissions of the PRAs and other industry participants present a common focus on core skilled occupations that enable the thoroughbred horse racing industry to function on a daily basis and which are in demand, some of which have a critical shortage of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Size and Scope of the Industry

Thoroughbred racing in Australia is conducted across 387 racing clubs, holding over 2,500 race meetings and over 19,000 races annually. The majority of race clubs are regional where racing forms part of the fabric of the local communities. During the 2024 racing season there was a record 141,190 owners with 36,009 horses competing for over \$1 billion in prizemoney and other benefits.

The below sets out the Size and Scope of the Thoroughbred Racing Industry taken from the last study conducted in 2018.

- \$9.15 billion in economic impact with 51.2% regional
- Support for 79,100 FTE jobs 45% directly related to thoroughbred racing
- Attendances in excess of 4.2m people of which 58.7% were in regional areas
- \$4.89 billion in Household Income
- \$800m in taxes generated from racing and wagering, \$530m to the state governments (pre introduction Point of Consumption Tax) and \$269m to Federal government

In relation to the Breeding Industry, there are

- 6,770 active breeders with 67% of these based regionally
- 12,700 staff
- \$935m in expenditure

In 2018 wagering amounted to \$19.54 billion and peaked in the 2023 season at \$26.36 billion then falling in the 2025 season to \$22.04 billion whilst returns to owners rose from \$733 million peaking at \$1.131 billion in the 2024 season to slide to \$1.105 billion in the 2025 season. There is a direct connection between the overall increases in these numbers to corresponding increases in household income and taxation. The staff shortages in the key categories of Stablehand, Track Rider and Horse Trainer, if they continue, will have significant impact on the continued successful operation of the thoroughbred industry in all areas going forward.

Shortfalls in key roles

Racing Australia undertook a survey across the national industry in 2023 looking at specific shortfalls in the roles of Track Rider and Stablehand. Since that survey the situation has deteriorated.

The results of that survey outline that:

- there is a vacancy rate of 24% in metropolitan and 30% in regional areas for Trackwork Riders, and these vacancies take between 2 to 6 months to fill.
- there is a vacancy rate of 17% in metropolitan and 22% in regional areas for Stablehands, and these vacancies take a similar time of 2 to 6 months to fill.

Whilst the survey did not ask specifically about horse trainers, a comparison between the annual Racing Australia Fact Book in 2018 to 2025 indicates a national 18% reduction in the number of trainers, dealing with a 1% increase in active horses and drop of 1% in actual starters.

	2018	2025	
Trainers	3,234	2,661	-18%
Active Horses	35,107	35,625	1%
Starters	180,933	180,003	-1%

The statistical information gathered directly from the Industry, and from the regulators information systems, clearly shows a reduction in the numbers of skilled individuals available to undertake essential work to keep the industry operating successfully. Whilst we have seen the number of horses increase, the number of race starts has decreased. Shortages of skilled staff are starting to have an impact on the numbers of horses that are able to compete and thus a flow on effect to wagering and revenue flowing into the Industry.

Specific Comments

Jockeys (452413) and Track riders (361116)

There is a critical need for skilled riders with both Jockeys and Track Riders performing similar functions of riding a horse in different aspects of training and racing. All states are experiencing a shortage of jockeys and track riders. Trainers generally employ riders and the message from trainers is clear – the shortage of riders is increasing and critical. The criticality of the shortage impacts the industry due to being unable to properly train and work horses leading to equine welfare and staff safety issues. Specifically:

- An inability to exercise horses adequately, preventing maximum fitness in preparation to race, potentially leading to increased risk of injury
- Limiting growth in the number of horses by trainers
- Inability to work horses together when they are young leading to potentially reduced welfare outcomes
- Prolonged time for horses to be appropriately worked, leading to flow on delays including potentially detrimental feeding practices and potentially reduced welfare outcomes
- A reliance on pony and/or equestrian riders, with minimal or no race horse background experience

It is also clear that when riders are employed or engaged they work with multiple trainers at any given time. The restrictions of any employer sponsorship that limit riders working for multiple employers should be removed as it is contrary to the way the Industry practically operates.

Racing Australia submits that the roles of Jockeys (452413) and Track riders (361116) are in significant demand with vacancy rates of 24% Metropolitan and 30% Regional and vacancies taking up to 6 months (and in some cases longer) to fill.

In regional areas, jockeys and race day officials, may need to regularly travel long distances to fulfil commitments and allow race meetings to proceed. This impacts their work life balance, has an environmental impact and can be hazardous.

Racing Australia submits that these roles are critical to the proper welfare and training of the horse and that the shortfall is creating a potential Work Health and Safety issue for the participants.

Racing Australia requests that the roles of Jockey and Trackwork Rider:

- be retained / included on the Core Skills Occupation List currently under consultation as well as the Medium and Long Term Sponsorship List
- have employer limits removed to enable candidates to work for more than one employer
- be included for fast tracked subclass 407 visas and under subclass 494 Skilled Employer Sponsored (regional) visas

Stablehands (842318)

Stablehands do not seem to appear on any of the Core Skills Occupation List which Racing Australia sees as a clear deficiency.

The work of stablehands directly impacts equine welfare and this role must be sufficiently staffed to properly provide appropriate equine care. Animal welfare is not something that can be deferred or delayed until appropriate levels of staff are available. Thoroughbreds require a high level of skilled care and attention which is not effectively recognised in the ANZSCO or CSOL with their artificial skills requirements. The level of skill required to manage a thoroughbred required is generally obtained not just through certificate courses but more by experience.

The widespread skills required for handling horses are disappearing as regional populations shrink and urbanisation grows. Thoroughbreds weigh in excess of 500kgs and are not able to be handled by people lacking knowledge and experience in horsemanship.

Additionally, stablehands generally start work between 3.30am and 6.00am and are required to work in all types of weather which is a far cry from the 9 to 5 enclosed environments of most roles. Stablehands also frequently work 13 day fortnights and split shifts, impacting work life balance and mental well-being.

The significant vacancy levels in stablehand roles places significant stress on existing stablehands who appear to be overworked which could impact not only the welfare of the equine but also their own welfare and the welfare of riders.

Racing Australia submits that the role of Stablehands (842318) is in significant demand with vacancy rates of 17% Metropolitan and 22% Regional and vacancies taking up to 6 months (and in some cases longer) to fill.

Racing Australia submits that the role is critical to the proper welfare and training of the horse and that the shortfall is creating a potential Work Health and Safety issue for the participants.

Racing Australia requests that the role of Stablehand:

- be included on the Core Skills Occupation List currently under consultation as well as the Medium and Long Term Sponsorship List

Horse Trainer (361112)

The role of Horse Trainer covers a variety of sub-roles including:

- Assistant Trainer
- Foreperson
- Rider (to cover shortfalls)

These roles have a focus on leading (as a trainer level) in these areas and in some instances cut across both the rider and stablehand categories. Foreperson, or more usually Stable Forepersons act as the conduit between the lead trainer and the stablehands overseeing all aspects of the stable. Going forward, we will refer to Horse Trainer as encompassing all of these roles for simplicity.

Horse training is a highly skilled occupation(s) where deficiencies can lead to serious equine welfare and staff safety issues. As noted previously, thoroughbreds are large animals requiring specific care and exercise to ensure they remain healthy, in good condition, and to assist in the ongoing safety of staff. Racing Australia has significant concerns that the reduction in the number of trainers will lead to less experienced and overworked trainers which in turn will lead to poor welfare and safety outcomes. As stated earlier there has been an 18% reduction in trainers, coping with a 1% increase in competing thoroughbreds but a lower number of race starts.

As indicated in our 2024 submission we are starting to see seeing reductions in activity which are impacting revenue earning potential. Further reductions would lead to increased risks of welfare and safety along with continued reduced activity thus impacting the viability of the industry.

The Horse trainer role has historically been used to employ and sponsor international skilled workers who carry out critical tasks such as high quality training, feeding, grooming and care for thoroughbreds. The trainer is the key person in a small or in some cases large business that is responsible for employing the other workers in the Industry. They require the ancillary support to allow the Industry to thrive.

Racing Australia request that the role of Horse Trainer:

- Must remain on the Core Skills Occupation List currently under consultation as well as the Medium and Long Term Sponsorship List
- Must remain for 482 visas with a permanent visa pathway

Racing Officials (452318)

The skills required of Racing Officials in thoroughbred racing are unique and take many years to develop to a senior level. Officials must blend investigative and enforcement functions along with a detailed understanding of horse training, horse owners and jockey riding/race practices and the practical application of the integrity rules and the requirements of the highly regulated industry.

The maintenance of high standards of integrity is critical for the continued success and viability of thoroughbred racing. Any failure of integrity leads to an erosion in the public confidence level in the industry.

Australian Racing Officials are highly sought after by international racing jurisdiction due to their high levels of skill resulting from the volume of racing held. (Australia is the worlds 2nd largest racing jurisdiction) The international exodus of skilled racing officials is leaving a drain on local resources that in many cases can only be filled by the recruitment of international officials (or the return of expats).

Racing Australia request that the role of Racing Officials:

- Must remain on the Core Skills Occupation List currently under consultation as well as the Medium and Long Term Sponsorship List

National Education

Track Riders, Jockeys and Horse Trainer roles are Nationally Recognised Training Certificates and are identified as separate Qualifications under the RGR - Racing and Breeding Training Package. These roles are crucial for the sustainability of the Racing Industry and align as follows:

RGR30218 - Certificate III in Racing (Stablehand) [Advanced Stablehand-Trainer Pathway] – aligns to ANZSCO 361112 Horse Trainer

This qualification reflects the role of individuals working as a stablehand in charge of daily operations in a racing stable, coordinating staff or managing operations independently, depending on the size of the stable, and are permitted under the rules of racing to act for the employing trainer. They are required to work autonomously, use judgement, interpret information, apply solutions to various problems and take responsibility for operations and outputs.

RGR30518 - Certificate III in Racing (Trackwork Rider) – aligns to ANZSCO 361116 Track Rider

Trackwork riders require high level riding skills to exercise racehorses at various paces. They must be able to interpret and implement trainer's instructions and communicate information about racehorse fitness and performance accurately to the trainer. Trackwork riders work independently with limited supervision in a defined range of varied contexts that may be complex and non-routine.

RGR40221 - Certificate IV in Racing (Jockey) – aligns to ANZSCO 452413 Jockey

Jockeys are high performance athletes who ride racehorses at race meetings, barrier trials and trackwork. A jockey possesses the highest level of race riding skills, requiring a high degree of

decision-making skill and split-second reaction time during races, and the ability to exercise good judgement in a highly dangerous environment during racing.

Whilst the industry's preference has always been to employ suitably skilled Australians, it has increasingly faced challenges associated with finding and retaining appropriately qualified staff.


All racing jurisdictions have established their own state based Industry specific Registered Training Organisation to offer the suite of training courses under the National Training Package to provide skilled workforce for the future of the racing industry.

Whilst these programs are producing positive results, the limited pool of candidates falls significantly short of meeting demand for the roles.

In Summary

Racing Australia requests that the following occupations be retained on the Core Skills Occupations List.

1. Retain the following occupations on the Core Skills Occupations List:
 - **ANZSCO 361112 Horse Trainer**
 - **ANZSCO 452413 Jockey**
 - **ANZSCO 452318 Dog or Horse Racing Official**
2. Proceed with your draft recommendations with the addition of the following category to the Core Skills Occupations List:
 - **ANZSCO 361116 Track Rider**
 - **ANZSCO 842318 Stablehands**

Should you require any further information or have any further questions regarding this submission 

Yours Sincerely,

