

# Queensland Racing Review 2025

## A Submission by Australian Racing Christian Chaplaincy

7 April 2025

### Recommendations

The Australian Racing Christian Chaplaincy recommends that:

- 1. The Queensland Racing Review encourage the adoption of the strategic objective that for everyone involved in any of the three codes of racing across Queensland, go home safely at the end of each day.**
- 2. The Queensland Racing Review recommend, in recognition of the sustainability dependence of all three racing codes on dedicated participants, substantially increases its financial support to organisations and groups addressing the welfare needs of all human participants in the racing industry.**
- 3. The Queensland Racing Review recommend that State and Territory Racing Ministers establish a National Taskforce to develop and implement a national strategy to addressing the welfare needs of all human participants in the racing industry.**

These recommendations will directly assist in selling the attractiveness of a career in any of the racing codes by improving the wellbeing of all workers in the racing industry, leading to higher retention rates and easier recruitment.

### Submission

The Australian Racing Christian Chaplaincy (ARCC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Queensland Government's review into racing and we applaud the intent to ensure Queensland has the best and most viable racing industry in the country.

This submission will focus on the one area where we have experience and expertise - long-term viability by supporting the dedication of all of long-term industry participants by ensuring that their safety is a priority and if they should unfortunately suffer harm, they and their families are supported to recover and return to the industry. The Review must recommend that it should be an objective of all that no worker, contractor, volunteer, owner, or member of the public should suffer harm from participating in racing.

## Long Term Viability

All endeavours that experience long term viability have one common factor – the dedication and commitment of its participants.

Few participants in any of the racing codes see their work as 'just a job'. They are members of a vibrant and vital community, often to the second or third-generation. Theirs is not a Monday to Friday job in business hours. Their hours are long and inconvenient in the eyes of the world. Animals need feeding, exercise and love on Christmas Day, Ramadan and Passover.

All racing codes have dedicated and committed participants. In their stewardship of the industry, Racing Queensland and all stakeholders must be determined to retain the current participants whilst creating opportunities and motivation for the next generation.

ARCC and its chaplains have many years of experience providing welfare support and care to all racing industry participants across the country. This support has included:

- sitting in hospital waiting rooms with the families of severely injured jockeys,
- meeting with stable hands struggling with addiction,
- assisting owners suffering from family relationship breakdowns, and
- organising funerals.

The need knows no class or social level. In the past twelve months ARCC Chaplains have presided at the funerals of two jockeys and supported their families to grieve. This is especially confronting given there were nationally 549 jockeys and 226 apprentice jockeys (162 jockeys and 69 apprentice jockeys in Queensland) on 30 June 2023 (Source: [Racing Australia Factbook 2022/23](#) p.10).

**ARCC supports the voluntary chaplain Geof Vines who serves the racing community in Queensland. He is based on the Gold Coast. A priority of his chaplaincy has been suicide awareness and prevention.**

Racing is inherently dangerous but also joyous and challenging. More needs to be done to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries to human and animal participants.

### **Few workplaces have pursuit ambulances.**

ARCC firmly recommends that the Queensland Racing Review recommend to the Government that it be a strategic objective for the Racing Queensland Board, the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission and the leadership of all three racing codes that **everyone involved in racing across the state to go home safely at the end of each day**. While achieving zero harm is acknowledged as a stretch goal, other industries have not shied away

from the same challenge. For example, the Queensland mining industry's work health and safety goal is "zero harm", meaning the industry aims to ensure no harm to any worker, contractor, customer, or member of the public while at work, believing that all fatalities, injuries and diseases are preventable. The health and safety challenges mining poses are acknowledged.

The Board's commitment of financial resources (some \$3 million in 2022-23), time, and attention to animal welfare is to be applauded. It will assist in maintaining the racing industry's social licence to continue operating. Similarly, ARCC recommends that the Racing Queensland substantially increase its financial support to organisations and groups addressing the welfare needs of all human participants in the racing industry, and not just for injuries claimable under the Worker's Compensation scheme.

The welfare needs across the racing industry are broad and include the impact of the far too-common fatalities, the lifestyle demands of the industry and associated social pressures experienced by all participants, particularly stable hands and trackwork riders. Like the rest of society, the racing industry has issues with mental health and drug abuse.

**ARCC believes a level of attention and support for human participants to match that of the support for the welfare of equine and canine racing participants would be equitable.**

Whilst racing is regulated at the state and territory level, aspects of the industry are national in scope including animal breeding, animal training and participation by some classes of workers, for example jockeys and strappers, reflecting that some animals participate in races in different states or there are different racing opportunities in other states and territories. The human welfare needs do not recognise state boundaries and are common to the industry across the country.

ARCC therefore recommends that the Queensland Racing Review recommend that State and Territory Racing Ministers establish a National Taskforce to develop and implement a national strategy to addressing the welfare needs of all human participants in the racing industry. A National Taskforce would also help to ensure best practices and effective human welfare programs are recognised and replicated across the nation. It is envisaged that the Taskforce would be a coordinating body, not enforcement, which would remain with the states and territories.

The membership of a National Taskforce should include representatives of national racing organisations, participant bodies and welfare providers.

## Background

The Racing Queensland Board is established by the Racing Act 2002 (Qld) "...to manage, operate, develop and promote codes of racing in a way that ensures public confidence in the racing industry in Queensland." Clause 10(3)a of the Act sets out the Boards functions.

The Board has prioritised animal welfare as an issue critical to continued public confidence in the racing codes. Equine and canine welfare including post racing life, are pressing social license issues for the racing industry's ongoing operation. This is also recognised in the terms of reference for the Review. Racing Queensland' commitment to the care and welfare of racing animals and working closely with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission and racing clubs to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of racing animals is maintained, is commendable. The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission is an independent statutory body which oversees the welfare standards of racing animals and the integrity of racing industry participants in Queensland. The animal welfare objective is established under clause 3(1)c of the Racing Integrity Act 2016 (Qld). This is also to be commended.

Racing Queensland charges a 1% levy on prize money paid to thoroughbred, greyhound and harness participants which is withheld to fund animal welfare initiatives. If the prize money pool for a race is equal to or greater than \$250,000 the levy is 5%. In 2022-23 the Queensland Off-The-Track Program distributed more than \$2.2 million into various equine welfare measures (Source: Racing Queensland Annual Report 2022-23, p.35). In 2022-23 Greyhound Retirement Readiness Scheme and the Race Meeting Injury Scheme were funded by some \$960,000. Greyhound welfare schemes are funded by Racing Queensland direct spending and the prize money levy (Source: Racing Queensland Annual Report 2022-23 p.36). In total approximately \$3 million was spent in 2022-23 on animal welfare programs by Racing Queensland.

ARCC submits to the Racing Review that the welfare of the human participants across the racing codes is an equally important strategic issue that if not addressed systematically and with a significant and ongoing financial commitment risks undermining public confidence and the long-term viability of the industry. No one wants to be a spectator to fellow humans suffering or dying in the cause of our entertainment. Relying upon the Queensland workers compensation scheme is insufficient.

It should be a legislated strategic objective of both Racing Queensland and Queensland Racing Integrity Commission to minimise harm to any and all human participants in the racing industry.

Injuries are a national issue. More than 200 jockeys are injured yearly, and 89% experience a fall requiring medical attention. Industry experts predict that over the next decade, there will be 10 to 12 fatalities, and 50 jockeys will sustain injuries that will end their careers, including paraplegia, quadriplegia, and severe brain injuries<sup>1</sup>. Others who ride are also at risk, as are those who handle and care for thoroughbreds. Some 60% of injuries to jockeys occur outside of race day<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> National Jockeys Trust data <https://njt.org.au/pages/about-the-national-jockeys-trust>

<sup>2</sup> Beverley A. Curry, Peta L. Hitchens, Petr Otahal, Lei Si, and Andrew J. Palmer (2015) Workplace Injuries in Thoroughbred Racing: An Analysis of Insurance Payments and Injuries amongst Jockeys in

Racing Queensland manages the Jockey Injury Management Program which oversees welfare standards for jockeys. Little is publicly available about the program. Other initiatives include the Maternity Support Scheme to provide financial support for both female jockeys and harness racing drivers during their pregnancies. There is also the Racing Queensland Fatigue Management Guidance Note and Concussion Protocol for jockeys. These initiatives are all welcome.

By comparison, Racing Queensland has placed a 1% insurance levy on thoroughbred prize money for all TAB races from January 1, 2024. The levy will be directed towards subsidising up to 30% of annual WorkCover premiums for Queensland Thoroughbred trainers and supporting the funding of Professional Indemnity (PI) and Public Liability (PL) insurances currently funded by the Board and applicable to all trainers in Queensland. The funds will also assist in funding work health and safety enhancements and training to reduce the likelihood of incidents and ultimately creating a safer Queensland Racing Industry (Source: Racing Queensland Annual Report 2022-23, p.70). ARCC looks forward to more details being made available about the impact of the funds on the welfare of racing participants.

The acceptance of the application of levies to ensure animal welfare outcomes and workers compensation is affordable, demonstrates that the Queensland racing industry is prepared to fund programs that support participants keep safe, recover from harm or find a new role outside the industry.

Other initiatives and programs promoted by Racing Queensland<sup>3</sup> aimed at supporting the health, safety, and well-being of racing industry participants and employees include:

- Industry-specific information sessions, health and well-being education, activities, and support services. Topics covered include building mental fitness, nutrition, heart health, blood pressure consultations, and skin cancer checks for employees,
- Five accredited Mental Health First Aid Officers and three accredited Contact Officers to support employees,
- Employees are encouraged to access online resources and webinars on managing psychosocial risks and preventing fatigue, and
- Its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan, First Nations Strategy 2024–2028 and commitment to the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people.

But more is needed.

Support for human welfare across racing in Queensland is limited and therefore heavily reliant upon volunteers like ARCC chaplains. What limited support is available is poorly publicised, and there is limited transparency for the industry. Many services rely upon public donations

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Australia from 2002 to 2010 Animals (Basel). Sep; 5(3): 897–909. Accessed at

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4598712/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.racingqueensland.com.au/about/whs-insurance/participant-wellbeing>



and the goodwill of individuals within the industry. It is now time that the racing industry, its leaders and regulators properly support programs and organisations that care for the human participants. This should be a nationally consistent approach.

## About the Australian Racing Christian Chaplaincy

Following our Christian faith, the objects of ARCC are to serve the needs and support the well-being of people working in Australia's racing industry in both metropolitan and regional locations by identifying and relieving this community's short and long-term physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental needs.

Racing has a high incidence of serious injury and even death in the workplace. It is also a high-pressure industry, which can result in physical, mental and emotional strain for those involved. Needs may include financial distress, abuse, relationship breakdown, sickness, disability, grief, the misfortune of trackside accidents, court issues and even suicide.

Racetrack chaplains offer a holistic and non-judgmental program of services to people in racing, especially those working in the stable area. Chaplains work closely with racing clubs, management and individuals to assist with acute and long-term needs of individuals. ARCC assists people solely based on need, irrespective of religious or political beliefs and/or affiliations.

Two thirds of ARCC's funding comes from individuals and foundations outside the Racing Industry. One third comes from sources associated with racing.

ARCC is growing its work nationally and is seeking to establish networks in all racing codes – thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing. The organisation is also networked with Race Track Chaplaincy of America. ARCC is served by a voluntary Committee, most members of whom have current or prior links to horse racing.

## Contact Details

ARCC is delighted to provide this submission and is willing to provide the Queensland Racing Review with further assistance and information as required.

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