



## SUBMISSION ON JOCKEY NUMBERS IN NSW

30<sup>th</sup> May 2024

### Introduction

The question of whether Australia has an adequate number of jockeys to meet the demands of its horse racing industry involves both quantitative and qualitative analyses. This submission aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation based on available data, industry reports, and expert opinions.

Currently the “Jockey Occupation” (ANZCO 452413) sits on the Confident OFF List, yet international jockeys continue to enter Australia.

### QUANTITATIVE DATA

#### NUMBER OF REGISTERED JOCKEYS

According to Racing Australia Fact Book, as of 2023, there are approximately 243 jockeys registered in NSW, with 852 registered in Australia. This number includes: apprentice jockeys, senior jockeys, and approved/picnic riders.

Of the 243 jockeys there are 187 active licenced jockeys (includes apprentice jockeys) in NSW, (note that we have not included approved/picnic riders & licenced jockeys who have not ridden during the year)

Of the 187 NSW jockeys, 33% are female jockeys, however, of the 92 jockeys aged over 30yo, only 13% are female.

There are approximately 67 licenced apprenticed jockeys in NSW, of these 70% are female. The high number of apprentices ensures a steady flow of new talent entering the industry.

### **RACING EVENTS AND JOCKEY DEMAND**

The 2022/2023 Racing NSW Annual Report shows that NSW had 51,576 starters held over 5,299 races across numerous racecourses. On average, each race requires about 10 jockeys. Given the number of registered jockeys, this averages to about 275 races per jockey annually. (we have not included the 22 picnic race meetings)

With the number of “active” jockeys closer to 160, (due to jockeys being on workers compensation) and with then incursion of interstate jockeys, the average races per jockey would be closer to 200 races annually, or four races per week. Considering jockeys typically ride in multiple races per race day, this workload is manageable and suggests a sufficient number of jockeys to meet current demands.

### **APPRENTICE JOCKEY PROGRAMS**

There are robust apprentice jockey programs across various states, ensuring a continuous influx of new talent. For instance, Racing NSW Apprentice Jockey Training Program enrolls about 25-30 new apprentices annually. These programs are designed to maintain a balance between retiring jockeys and new entrants.

## **QUALITATIVE DATA**

### **INDUSTRY EXPERT OPINIONS**

Interviews with industry experts, including racing managers, trainers and former jockeys, indicate a consensus that the number of jockeys is adequate for the current level of racing activity in NSW. However, trainers do highlight the need for more trackwork jockeys.

With not one horse being scratched in NSW due to a lack of jockeys, this clearly indicates that supply exceeds the demand.

### **REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION**

The demographics in NSW are definingly dissimilar to other states. The Sydney metropolitan area, which hosts all the Group 1 races, only has 15% of the jockeys reside in Sydney.

The remaining 85% of jockeys reside in regional NSW, and these jockeys travel up to 110,000 kms per year to attend race meetings in this state.

### **JOCKEY vs TRACKWORK JOCKEY**

It's important and crucial to relay the clear difference between the two occupations.

A professional jockey rides in races which are organised by the Principal Racing Authority, such as Racing NSW, Racing QLD etc. They earn a riding fee and a percentage of prizemoney.

A trackwork jockey rides these horses in the mornings to gain and maintain fitness. Most are employed by a trainer(s) and are remunerated by the trainer. They are not permitted to ride in races unless they are a licenced jockey.

Professional jockeys also ride trackwork, with some riding gratis, hoping the trainer may engage them to ride in a race, and only a few jockeys are paid for trackwork duties.

The NSWJA and trainers acknowledge there can be a shortage of "trackwork jockeys" but there is never a shortage of professional jockeys. This point must be made clearly.

The NSWJA would ask Jobs and Skills Australia to consider introducing a new Core Skills Occupation category for "Trackwork Riders"

### **APPRENTICE JOCKEYS**

An apprentice jockey has a four year apprenticeship with either one trainer or various trainers.

The apprentice jockey would work trackwork six mornings a week, commencing between 4.00am & 5.30am. They are paid a wage by their employer (trainer)

They also ride in race meetings and in NSW travel vast distances. Fatigue is an issue and this matter has been raised with Racing NSW on numerous occasions.

It is these brave young (generally) apprentices who work hard, and develop into senior jockeys.

The intake is between 25-30 first apprentices each year in NSW.

Once they become senior jockeys, many will only last a few years because of the competition. To see an international senior jockey begin riding in their regional area is disheartening and unneeded, as the number of jockeys is not an issue.

We do not have a shortage of apprentices, in fact we currently have the most in many years, Yet we have seen an influx of international apprentices in NSW over the past 7 years. This adds to the lack of opportunities for local apprentice jockeys.

## INTERNATIONAL JOCKEYS

Once an international jockey arrives in NSW the NSW Jockeys Association quickly welcomes them as a member and as part of the jockey family.

We are all doing the same job in a very dangerous sport.

There are regular conversations with jockeys that we have another international arriving, and the last thing we need is another jockey riding at the meetings.

We have now reached a point where even international jockeys who arrived here over the past 6 years, are saying that we have “too many jockeys in NSW”

The NSWJA can provide the names of twelve jockeys who have arrived since 2015 from the UK; Ireland; New Zealand & South Africa, who are saying we have “too many”

They are now Australian citizens and trying to earn a living as a jockey.

The conundrum is the international jockeys who fly in for a working holiday and stay indefinitely, or stay for a couple of months, are not adding any value to the racing product. All that happens is that the fly-in/fly-outs take away work and opportunities from local jockeys.

A study by the NSWJA in 2020 found that international riders (who had arrived in the previous 5 years) earned \$874,390.45 in NSW alone, in one season.

## NUMBER OF JOCKEYS

There are currently 187 jockeys licenced in NSW (this figure is ever evolving as jockeys move interstate, retire, apprentices begin riding etc)

Of these approximately 67 are apprentice jockeys (120 senior riders)

These figures do not include approved riders (picnic jockeys)

NSW has many interstate jockeys who ride in NSW, with a strong representation from Queensland

## NUMBER OF RIDES

The attached form on the number of rides shows that regional NSW has an average of 26 jockeys attending a race meeting. Of the 65 jockeys, 16 jockeys will have three rides or less. Of the 16 jockeys, 11 will have only one or two rides. There are 10 jockeys having more than 3 rides per race meeting. This demonstrates that NSW has more jockeys having 2 rides or less, compared to jockeys having more than three rides. All these jockeys prepare through wasting (losing weight) and travelling long distances for their rides. The reason for the low number of average rides per meeting is the excessive number of jockeys we have in NSW

## **RIDING FEE & PRIZEMONEY**

When a jockey rides in a race they will receive a set riding fee (currently \$250) plus a percentage of prizemoney (5%)

## **JOCKEY DEMOGRAPHICS**

NSW is somewhat different to other states in that the Sydney metropolitan racing (where all the Group 1 racing and big prizemoney is held) is dominated by 25-30 jockeys.

These top jockeys rarely venture to country racetracks.

With 187 jockeys and 30 riding in Sydney, this leaves 157 jockeys who are regional based who very rarely ride in Sydney.

The 157 regional based jockeys would derive most of their income from the riding fee

The 25-30 top Sydney jockeys would derive the majority of their income from the percentage of prizemoney.

Of the 157 regional based NSW jockeys, approximately 57 are apprentices. The regional based jockeys are the group most affected by international jockeys, though the top Sydney jockeys are also impacted when top international jockeys arrive.

THE NSWJA can understand that a top international jockey can add to turnover and the product during our carnival season, but conversely there is little or no financial benefit to the racing industry when an international jockey arrives and rides in regional NSW.

Hypothetically, we encounter twenty international jockeys arriving in NSW in 2025.

This would result in many NSW jockeys moving interstate (hence the flow on impact for all Australian jockeys) as they can no longer earn a liveable wage working as a jockey in NSW. It follows, that some jockeys and apprentices would leave the industry altogether, or the jockeys may decide to acquire a second job, which is obviously taking away someone else's ability to work.

## **FEMALE JOCKEYS**

Of NSW 187 jockeys 33% are female jockeys

Of the 57 apprentice jockeys 65% are female

The first year apprentices are 75% - 80% female

However, we have 92 jockeys who are aged 30yo or older. Only 13% are female.

The average prizemoney for the females aged over 30yo in 2023 was \$61,384

The average for the male jockeys aged over 30yo was \$257,037

We have had five female apprentices in NSW arriving from NZ, UK & Ireland over recent years.

We have had only one international female senior rider come to Australia in the last 7 years (Alysha Collett from NZ)

## CONSIDERATIONS

THE NSW Jockeys Association request that Jobs & Skills Australia please consider the following:

- i. That jockeys remain on the CSOL Confident OFF List
- ii. That a new category be added for "Trackwork Riders"
- iii. International Jockeys wanting to work in Australia are sponsored by a trainer and can only work for that one trainer
- iv. That no international apprentice jockeys arrive to work in Australia until they have already completed 50% of their apprenticeship (2 years) at home.
- v. That international female senior riders be given priority given the lopsided number of international male senior jockeys arriving here
- vi. That the visa allowing jockey working holidays be reviewed and tightened.
- vii. That the visa allowing jockeys to arrive on their partners visa be reviewed.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data, it is evident that New South Wales currently has enough jockeys to meet the demands of its horse racing industry. The steady number of registered jockeys, balanced apprentice programs, and industry feedback support the conclusion that the supply of jockeys is sufficient. Continuous monitoring ensure that any emerging imbalances are promptly addressed, maintaining the overall health and efficiency of the industry

The NSW Jockeys Association, on behalf of its members, has been advocating a reduction in the number of international jockeys since 2017.

The reason international jockeys aim to move to NSW is because of the very generous prizemoney available here compared to other countries. NSW becomes a destination for these overseas jockeys.

Kind Regards,

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