

# **THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THOROUGHBRED HORSE TRAINERS AND STABLE EMPLOYEES**



Harriet D. Speed & Mark B. Andersen

**THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF  
THOROUGHBRED HORSE  
TRAINERS AND STABLE  
EMPLOYEES**

Harriet D. Speed & Mark B. Andersen

**Centre for Ageing, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport,  
Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, 2008**



Perhaps Smith spoke so infrequently because he was listening so hard. Horses speak with the smallest of motions; Smith saw and heard everything. ... Sometimes he would become so absorbed in watching a horse that he wouldn't move for hours. ... For Smith, training was a long, quiet conversation. He was baffled by other people's inability to grasp what he was doing. "It's easy to talk to a horse if you understand his language," he once said. ... He lived by a single maxim: "Learn your horse. Each one is an individual, and once you penetrate his mind and heart, you can often work wonders with an otherwise intractable beast." ... He knew their minds and how to sway them. ... He approached each horse as a distinct individual and followed his own lights and experience to care for it. Horses blossomed in his care.

Description of Tom Smith, trainer of Seabiscuit

Laura Hillenbrand (2001). *Seabiscuit, Three Men and a Racehorse* (pp. 9-10)

© Centre for Ageing, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, 2008.

ISBN: 978-1-86272-678-9

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Terms of Reference	2
1.2.1 Scope of Study	2
1.2.2 Methodology	3
1.2.3 Reference Group	3
1.2.4 The Research Team	4
<b>2. METHODOLOGY</b>	
Overview	5
2.1 Study 1: Horse Trainers	5
2.1.1 Trainers' Survey	6
2.1.2 Trainers' Open-Ended Questions	7
2.1.3 Procedures	7
2.1.4 Data Analysis	8
2.2 Study 2: Stable Employees	8
2.2.1 Stable Employees' Survey	8
2.2.2 Stable Employees' Open-Ended Questions	9
2.2.3 Procedures	10
2.2.4 Data Analysis	10
2.3 Ethical Approval	10
<b>3. RESULTS: HORSE TRAINERS</b>	
3.1 Profile of Survey Respondents	11
3.2 Work Hours	14
3.3 Time Off and Leave Arrangements	16
3.4 Financial Details	18
3.5 Other Employment	20

3.6	Education and Workplace Training	21
3.7	Workplace / Business Issues	23
3.8	Harassment and Bullying	28
3.9	Workplace Injuries	30
3.10	Psychological Health	33
3.11	Gambling and Substance Use	37
3.12	Trainers' Future Plans	37
3.13	Trainers' Recommendations	40
<b>4.</b>	<b>RESULTS: STABLE EMPLOYEES</b>	
4.1	Profile of Survey Respondents	44
4.2	Work Hours	48
4.3	Time Off & Leave Arrangements	51
4.4	Financial Aspects	52
4.5	Other Employment	55
4.6	Education & Workplace Training	55
4.7	Workplace Issues	57
4.8	Harassment & Bullying	60
4.9	Workplace Injuries	63
4.10	Psychological Health	66
4.11	Gambling & Substance Use	68
4.12	Future Plans	69
4.13	Stable Employees' Recommendations	72
<b>5.</b>	<b>DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: HORSE TRAINERS</b>	
	Overview	76
5.1	Profile of Participants	77
5.2	Financial Issues	78
5.2.1	Debt recovery	78
5.2.2	Income accrual difficulties	82
5.2.3	Fee structure	86
5.2.4	Superannuation	87
5.3	Work Commitments & Leave Arrangements	89
5.4	Training & Education	94
5.5	Occupational Health & Safety	98
5.5.1	Regulations & documentation	98
5.5.2	Staff training	99
5.5.3	Facilities at racetracks	100
5.5.4	Harassment & bullying	101
5.6	Physical & Mental Health	103
5.6.1	Workplace injuries	103

5.6.2	Mental health	104
5.7	Recognition	106
5.8	Staffing Issues	107
5.9	Training Tracks	108
5.10	The Future Plans of Trainers	109
5.11	Future Research	110
<b>6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>		
<b>STABLE EMPLOYEES</b>		
	Overview	111
6.1	Profile of Participants	112
6.2	Financial Issues	114
6.2.1	Remuneration	114
6.2.2	Documentation	117
6.2.3	Superannuation	117
6.3	Work Commitments and Leave Arrangements	118
6.4	Training and Education	123
6.5	Occupational Health and Safety	128
6.5.1	Safety at stables and training/race tracks	128
6.5.2	Facilities at racetracks	130
6.5.3	Harassment and bullying	131
6.6	Physical and Mental Health	136
6.6.1	Workplace injuries	137
6.6.2	Mental Health	138
6.7	Recognition	140
6.8	Formal Representation	142
6.9	The Future Plans of Stable Employees	145
6.10	Future Research	146
<b>7. REFERENCES</b>		147
APPENDIX 1:	Background and Summary	149
APPENDIX 2:	Summary of Recommendations: Horse Trainers	172
APPENDIX 3:	Summary of Recommendations: Stable Employees	175

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
3.1	Percentage of survey respondents in each of the horse trainer licence categories	12
3.2	Distribution of male and female trainers across licence categories	13
3.3	The hours worked per week by Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers	15
3.4	Hours worked per week for male and female Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers	17
3.5	Total income derived from horse training for part-time and full-time trainers	19
3.6	The different types of harassment or bullying experienced by male and female trainers in the workplace	30
3.7	The common sites of injuries and significant pain experienced by trainers as a result of their horse training work.	32
3.8	The psychological health of trainers.	34
3.9	The extent to which horse training interferes with the family and social lives of trainers.	35
3.10	The overall levels of satisfaction with horse training work or business activities experienced by Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers, and male and female trainers.	38
4.1	Percentage of survey respondents in each of the stable employee categories	45
4.2	Distribution of males and females across stable positions	46
4.3	The employment status of workers in the different stable positions	49
4.4	Distribution of hours worked per week for full-time, part-time, and casual stable employees.	50
4.5	The total annual income (%) derived from stable employment for full-time workers	53
4.6	The total annual income (%) derived from stable employment for part-time and casual workers	54
4.7	The types of harassment / bullying experienced by male and female stable employees	62
4.8	The common sites of injuries and significant pain experienced by stable employees as a result of their stable work.	64

4.9	The psychological health of stable employees.	67
4.10	The extent to which stable work interferes with the family and social lives of stable employees	68
4.11	The overall level of satisfaction with stable work experienced by forepersons, stablehands and track riders	70
4.12	The overall level of satisfaction with stable work experienced male and female stable employees	71

---

## LIST OF TABLES

---

<b>TABLE</b>		<b>PAGE</b>
3.1	Highest levels of education (non-equine) attained by horse trainers	21
3.2	The frequency of responses ( <i>n</i> ) and ranking of workplace and business issues that had been significant problems for trainers in, or as a result of, their work / business as horse trainers.	24
3.3	Male and female trainers who 'often' or 'very often' experienced the psychological symptoms listed, during, or as a consequence of, their work as horse trainers.	36
4.1	Percentage of stable employees who often or very often had at least one day off per week.	51
4.2	Highest level of education (non-equine) attained by stable employees	56
4.3	The frequency of responses ( <i>n</i> ) and ranking of workplace issues that had been significant problems for stable employees in, or as a result of, their stable work	59
4.4	The number of female and male stable employees who had experienced harassment in the workplace	61

---

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

This investigation into the health and welfare of thoroughbred horse trainers and stable employees in Victoria represents the outcome of a collaborative research effort between Victoria University and key personnel and organisations either directly or indirectly related to thoroughbred horse racing in Victoria. The research team extends sincere appreciation to Chris Watson and members of the Reference Group for their sustained support throughout the duration of the research process. Their enthusiasm and assistance in providing sound advice and connection pathways in the racing industry was significant and in no small measure helped the research to its ultimate completion. The involvement from Racing Victoria Limited and the Australian Trainers' Association was given freely and generously and for this help the research team is most grateful.

The research team also wishes to acknowledge the willingness of the research participants, namely, the horse trainers and stable employees, to give so generously of their time. Their insights, reflections and participation in the research say much about their sincere interest in enhancing the lives of horse trainers and stable employees, and contributing to the success of the Victorian thoroughbred racing industry.

Finally, thanks must go to Tony Noonan, Sharyn Collins, Corinna Chapman and Debbie Jimmieson for providing the research team with many fine photographic examples of the working lives of horse trainers and stable employees which will be included in other publications related to this investigation.

---

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 OVERVIEW

There are approximately 1,200 thoroughbred horse trainers and 3,000 stable employees in Victoria. Aside from basic demographic details (age, gender, stable location), very little is known about the personal characteristics of the people who make up these populations or of their employment conditions and/or business operations. Apart from anecdotal reports, even less is known about the ways in which trainers and stable employees cope with the demands of their jobs, or of the impact that their involvement in the horse racing industry has on their personal health and welfare, and on their family and social relationships.

The research described in this report was commissioned by Racing Victoria Limited (RVL), in response to a need to identify ways in which the racing industry can better support trainers and stable employees, and enhance the overall quality of their day-to-day lives in the horse racing industry. The project was supported by the Victorian Government by way of funding from the Racing Industry Development Program.

The methodological framework used to gather this information was similar to that used for 'The Welfare of Retired Jockeys' investigation (Speed, Seedsman & Morris, 2001), employing a quantitative survey approach to yield a broad range of data across a large sample of horse trainers and stable staff, and a qualitative approach to gain more in-depth insights into key issues relating to their work and personal well-being. Data was collected from a variety of sources, including: survey responses, written submissions from trainers and stable employees, and interviews with representatives of different stakeholder groups within the racing industry (trainers, RVL, ATA), and the Australian Workers' Union. Formulation of the recommendations listed in this report was undertaken by members of the Victoria University research team, following an extensive analysis and synthesis of all the data and information obtained.

## 1.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

This study was commissioned Racing Victoria Limited, and was required to fulfil the following Terms of Reference.

### 1.2.1 Scope of Study

The research comprised a series of studies designed to provide detailed and personal accounts of the working lives of thoroughbred horse trainers and stable employees in Victoria, and of the ways in which their work in the Victorian racing industry affects the quality of their lives. The primary outcome focus of the research was the formulation of recommendations to be presented to RVL concerning strategies for improving the working conditions and experiences of horse trainers and stable employees, and the available support services. The specific aims of the project were:

- to determine the working conditions, practices, support services, and educational/training opportunities available to horse trainers/stable employees from information provided by key stakeholders within the Victorian racing industry and relevant external agencies;
- to provide a comprehensive and direct account of current trends and issues surrounding the workplace conditions and experiences of stable employees in Victoria, and of ways in which the Victorian racing industry could better support stable employees in the future; and
- to provide a comprehensive and direct account of current trends and issues surrounding the business operations, workplace conditions, and day-to-day experiences of horse trainers in Victoria, and of ways in which the Victorian racing industry could better support horse trainers in the future.

## 1.2.2 Methodology

To achieve these objectives, the following activities were undertaken:

1. an extensive and representative survey of thoroughbred horse trainers and stable employees in Victoria;
2. in-depth written statements (to open-ended questions) from a small sample of Victorian thoroughbred horse trainers and stable employees;
3. consultation with key industry bodies including: RVL, the Australian Trainers' Association, and the Australian Workers' Union; and
4. an examination of support programs and strategies for horse trainers and stable employees in key national and international jurisdictions.

## 1.2.3 Reference Group

The study was conducted under the supervision and guidance of a Reference Group, comprising the following members:

Chairperson	Chris Watson	RVL, Education & Training Centre
Members	Bernard Saundry	RVL, Commercial
	David Charles	National Jockeys Safety Committee
	John Alducci	Australian Trainers' Association
	Claire Bird	RVL
	Mark Close	RVL, Government Relations
	John-Paul Blandthorn	The Australian Workers' Union, Victorian Branch
	Lisa Stevens	RVL, Jockey Welfare Program
	Gaye Gauci	TAFE
	Sharni Officer	RVL, Licensing
	Lucy Graydon	Office of Gaming and Racing, Victorian Government

## 1.2.4 Research Team

Principal Investigator	Dr Harriet Speed	Centre for Aging, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport (CARES), and School of Human Movement Recreation & Performance, Victoria University
Associate Investigator	Professor Mark Andersen	Centre for Aging, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport (CARES), and School of Human Movement Recreation & Performance, Victoria University
Research Assistant	Ms Michelle Cranston	Centre for Aging, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport (CARES), Victoria University

**Dr Harriet Speed** is a senior lecturer and researcher at Victoria University. She also has a history of personal involvement in the horse racing industry in Western Australia. Over the past five years, she has conducted a number of research investigations on behalf of the Victorian racing industry, including The Welfare of Retired Jockeys project in 2001. She also supervises doctoral and master's students undertaking research in the Australian horse racing industry, including two candidates who are studying the psychological effects of wasting in jockeys.

**Professor Mark Andersen** is an internationally recognised sport and exercise psychology scholar at Victoria University. He has written and edited four books in his field and has over 125 published journal articles and book chapters. His main research areas related to this project include the mental health of athletes and sport personnel, injury risk and prevention in sport, and injury rehabilitation and return to work and competition. He also supervises doctoral and master's degree students undertaking research in the Australia horse racing industry.

**Ms Michelle Cranston** is a postgraduate student enrolled in a Doctor of Applied Psychology (Sport Psychology) at Victoria University. Since her involvement in the research project, Michelle has developed a genuine interest in riding horses and horse racing. She recently completed RVL's Trackriding Course and is sure to be a fixture around racing stables in the future.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Overview

The two studies described here were designed to provide a detailed and personal account of the working lives of thoroughbred horse trainers and stable employees in Victoria, and of the ways in which their work in the racing industry affects their personal health and welfare and the overall quality of their lives. The specific aims of the investigation were:

- 1) to describe the employment conditions, workplace practices, support services, and educational / training opportunities of horse trainers and stable employees in Victoria from information provided by key stakeholders within the Victorian racing industry (including the trainers and stable employees themselves), and relevant external agencies (e.g., Australian Workers' Union);
- 2) to examine the day-to-day workplace experiences of stable employees and horse trainers in Victoria and the ways in which their employment in the horse-racing industry affects the quality of their lives; and
- 3) to examine the business operations and workplace practices of horse trainers in Victoria, from the perspective of an employer within the horse-racing industry.

### 2.1 STUDY 1: HORSE TRAINERS

A survey was sent to all Victorian licensed thoroughbred horse trainers residing in Victoria, Australia. The contact details of trainers were obtained from *Inside Racing* (April, 2006 issue), the official publication of the Victorian thoroughbred racing industry. A breakdown of trainers into licence categories resulted in surveys being sent to: 101 Fully Licensed trainers, 684 Permit Trainers, 451 Owner Trainers, and 17 Picnic Trainers.

### 2.1.1 Trainers' Survey

A Trainers' Survey was developed specifically for this research investigation, based on previous research in the Australian and international horse-racing industries, and from information provided by representatives of different stakeholder groups within the Victorian racing industry (trainers, stable employees, RVL, ATA), and the Australian Workers' Union (AWU).

The survey consisted of six sections, requesting information relating to:

Section 1: demographic details of trainers (e.g., age, gender, type and duration of training licence), and aspects of their business operations and work activities (e.g., number of horses and staff, work commitments, leave arrangements).

Section 2: employment that trainers engaged in, additional to their horse training work, both within the horse racing industry and external to the industry (e.g., type of work, hours worked, percentage of income from horse training and additional work).

Section 3: training and education undertaken by trainers, including general education, equine-related qualifications, and training in workplace practices (e.g., OH&S, equal opportunity).

Section 4: issues related to the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of trainers, including such areas as: workplace injuries, psychological symptoms, harassment and bullying in the workplace, and issues relating to gambling and substance use.

Section 5: trainers' overall level of satisfaction with their work/business as horse trainers, and their work plans for the future.

Section 6: The final section provided an opportunity for participants to comment on how they thought RVL or other industry bodies could assist them in their future horse training work or business operations.

## 2.1.2 Trainers' Open-Ended Questions

At the end of the survey, trainers were invited to record their interest in participating in a follow-up, in-depth interview with a member of the research team. Ninety-eight trainers responded positively to this request. As it was not possible to personally interview all interested trainers, and in preference to interviewing only a small sample, a series of six open-ended questions that targeted key issues identified from responses to the survey, were mailed to all 98 trainers.

Trainers were requested to provide written comments to those questions they considered relevant to them in their day-to-day work and business of being horse trainers in Victoria. The areas covered by the questions included: payment for horse training services, health and welfare, business operations, workplace OH&S, and industry support. Trainers were also provided with an opportunity to comment on any other important issues related to their work activities or business operations.

## 2.1.3 Procedures

The surveys were sent by mail to all licensed horse trainers residing in Victoria, together with a plain language statement that outlined the objectives of the study, and return addressed envelope. It was anticipated that the surveys would take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. Participants were requested to return the completed survey to the principal researcher at Victoria University. The surveys did not request any identifying information, and return of the survey was taken as consent to participate in the study.

Trainers who were interested in participating in the follow-up interview provided their contact details (name and telephone number) at the end of the survey. To maintain anonymity of survey responses, trainers were able to return their contact details in a separate envelope to that which contained the survey. In cases where the survey was returned together with contact details, all identifying information was removed from survey responses and stored separately.

## 2.1.4 Data Analysis

The survey data were analysed and statistically summarised using the computer-based statistical package SPSS<sup>X</sup>. Inferential analyses ( $t$  tests,  $\chi^2$ , ANOVAs) were used to compare the data of trainers in the different licence categories, and of full-time and part-time trainers, and male and female trainers.

Textual responses to survey questions and the written responses to the open-ended questions were examined by members of the research team to reveal common themes. A frequency analysis of common themes was undertaken to determine the prevalence of responses.

## 2.2 STUDY 2: STABLE EMPLOYEES

All Victorian licensed stable employees ( $N = 3,100$ ), including assistant trainers, stable foremen, stablehands, and track riders, residing in Victoria, Australia, were mailed the Stable Employees' Survey. The contact details of stable employees were obtained from a database held by RVL's Licensing Division.

### 2.2.1 Stable Employees' Survey

A Stable Employees' Survey was also developed specifically for this research investigation, based on previous research in the Australian and international horse-racing industries, and from information provided by representatives of different stakeholder groups within the Victorian racing industry (trainers, stable employees, RVL, ATA), and the AWU.

The survey consisted of seven sections, requesting information relating to:

Section 1: demographic details of stable employees (e.g., age, gender, stable position, employment status), and details about current and past employment at racing stables;

Section 2: employment that stable workers engaged in, additional to their stable position(s), both within the horse racing industry and external to the

industry (e.g., type of work, hours worked, reasons for undertaking additional employment);

Section 3: conditions of stable employment (e.g., workplace agreement/award, financial arrangements, leave entitlements, overtime);

Section 4: training and education undertaken by stable employees, including general education, equine-related qualifications, and training in workplace practices (e.g., OH&S, equal opportunity);

Section 5: issues related to the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of stable employees, including such areas as: workplace injuries, psychological symptoms, harassment and bullying in the workplace, and issues relating to gambling and substance use;

Section 6: stable employees' overall level of satisfaction with their stable work, and their work plans for the future;

Section 7: The final section provided participants with an opportunity to comment on how they thought RVL or other industry bodies could assist them in their future work as a stable employee.

### **2.2.2 Stable Employees' Open-Ended Questions**

At the end of the survey, participants were invited to record their interest in participating in a follow-up, in-depth interview with a member of the research team. One hundred and twenty-eight stable employees responded positively to this request. As it was not possible to personally interview all interested stable employees, and in preference to interviewing only a small sample, a series of 6 questions that targeted key issues identified from responses to the Survey were mailed to the stable employees.

Participants were requested to provide written comments to those questions they considered relevant to them in their day-to-day work as a stable employee in Victoria. The areas covered by the questions included: stable employee representation, work conditions, training and education, harassment and bullying, workplace safety, and industry support. Stable employees were also

provided with an opportunity to comment on any other important issues related to their stable work.

### 2.2.3 Procedures

The surveys were sent by mail to all licensed thoroughbred stable employees residing in Victoria, together with a plain language statement that outlined the objectives of the study, and a return addressed envelope. Return of completed surveys was the same as for horse trainers (refer Section 2.1.4). Stable employees who were interested in participating in the follow-up interview provided their contact details (name and telephone number) at the end of the survey and returned them to the principal investigator either together with the survey or in a separate return addressed envelope. Where contact details were returned with the survey, all identifying information was removed from survey responses and stored separately.

### 2.2.4 Data Analysis

The survey data were analysed and statistically summarised using the computer-based statistical package SPSS<sup>X</sup>. Inferential statistical analyses (*t* tests, ANOVAs) were used to make comparisons between the data of stable employees in different stable positions, and between the data of male and female stable employees, and part-time, casual and full-time employees. Textual responses to survey questions and the written responses to the open-ended questions were examined by members of the research team to reveal common themes. A frequency analysis of common themes was undertaken to determine the prevalence of responses.

## 2.3 Ethical Approval

Prior to commencement of the investigation, the proposed research on stablehands and trainers underwent scrutiny by the Reference Group, and was approved by Victoria University's Ethics Committee. The project was deemed to meet all current ethical standards for research using human participants as specified by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC, Australia).

### 3. RESULTS: HORSE TRAINERS

#### Overview

Surveys were mailed to 1250 thoroughbred horse trainers licensed in Victoria. Three hundred and three questionnaires were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 24%.

Ninety eight trainers indicated at the end of the survey their interest in participating in in-depth interviews with a member of the research team. As it was not possible to personally interview all interested trainers, and in preference to interviewing only a very small number, a series of six open-ended questions targeting key issues identified in the original Trainers' Questionnaire and which required written responses, were sent to trainers interested in the interview phase. Fourteen trainers returned written responses to the questions, for a response rate of 14%.

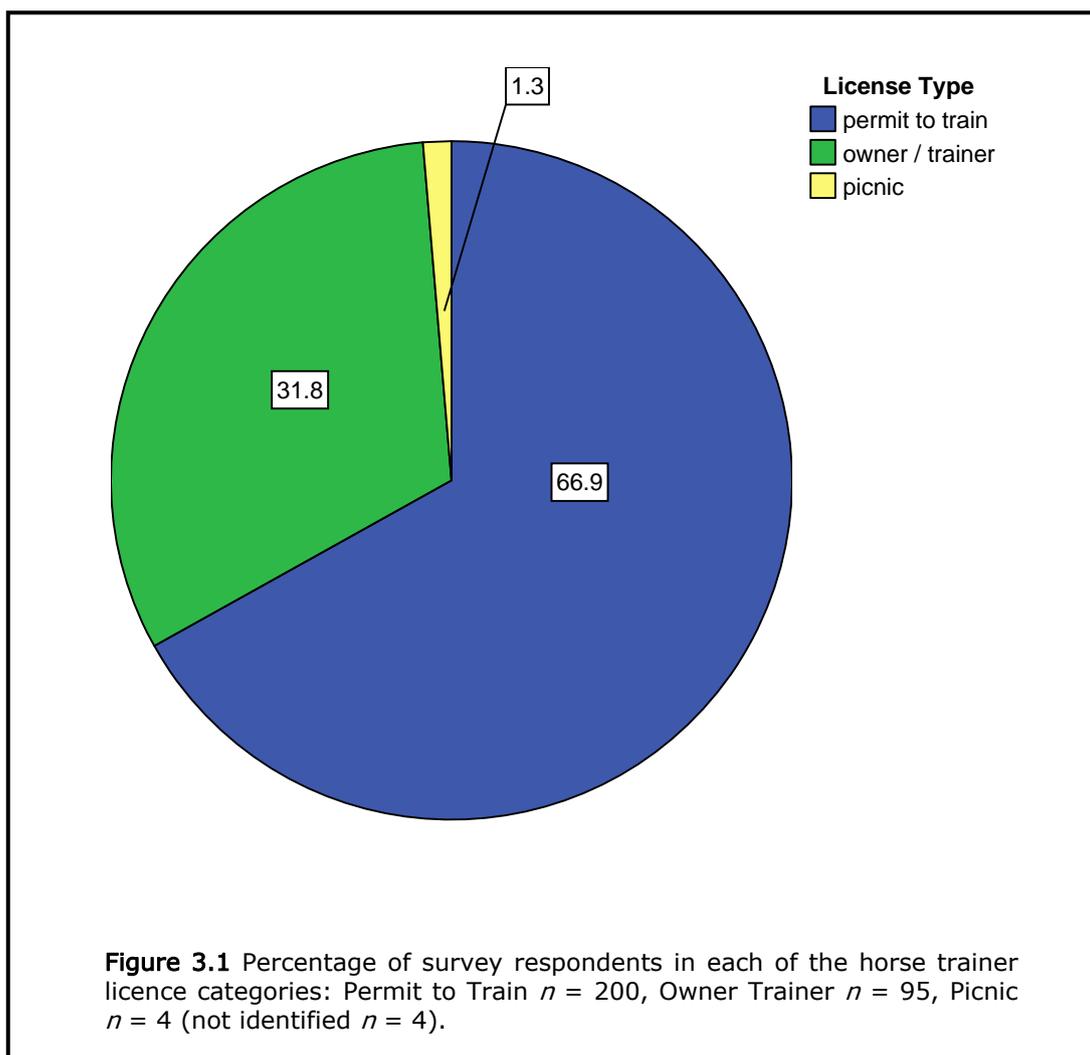
#### 3.1 PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- 303 thoroughbred horse trainers completed the survey. A breakdown of the sample into licence categories is displayed in Figure 3.1. Four respondents did not identify their licence types. Together, trainers with a Permit to Train licence ( $n = 200$ ) or Owner Trainer licence ( $n = 95$ ) made up the majority (98.7%) of survey respondents [Permit Trainers – 66.9%; Owner Trainers – 31.8%; Picnic Trainers – 1.3%].
- 72% of trainers were male ( $n = 215$ ); 28% were female ( $n = 84$ ). Four trainers did not indicate their gender. Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of male and female trainers across the three licence categories. Male trainers comprised 78% of Permit Trainers and 63% of Owner Trainers.
- The average age of trainers who responded to the survey was 50.1 years ( $SD^1 = 11.9$ ), within an age range between 23 and 84 years.

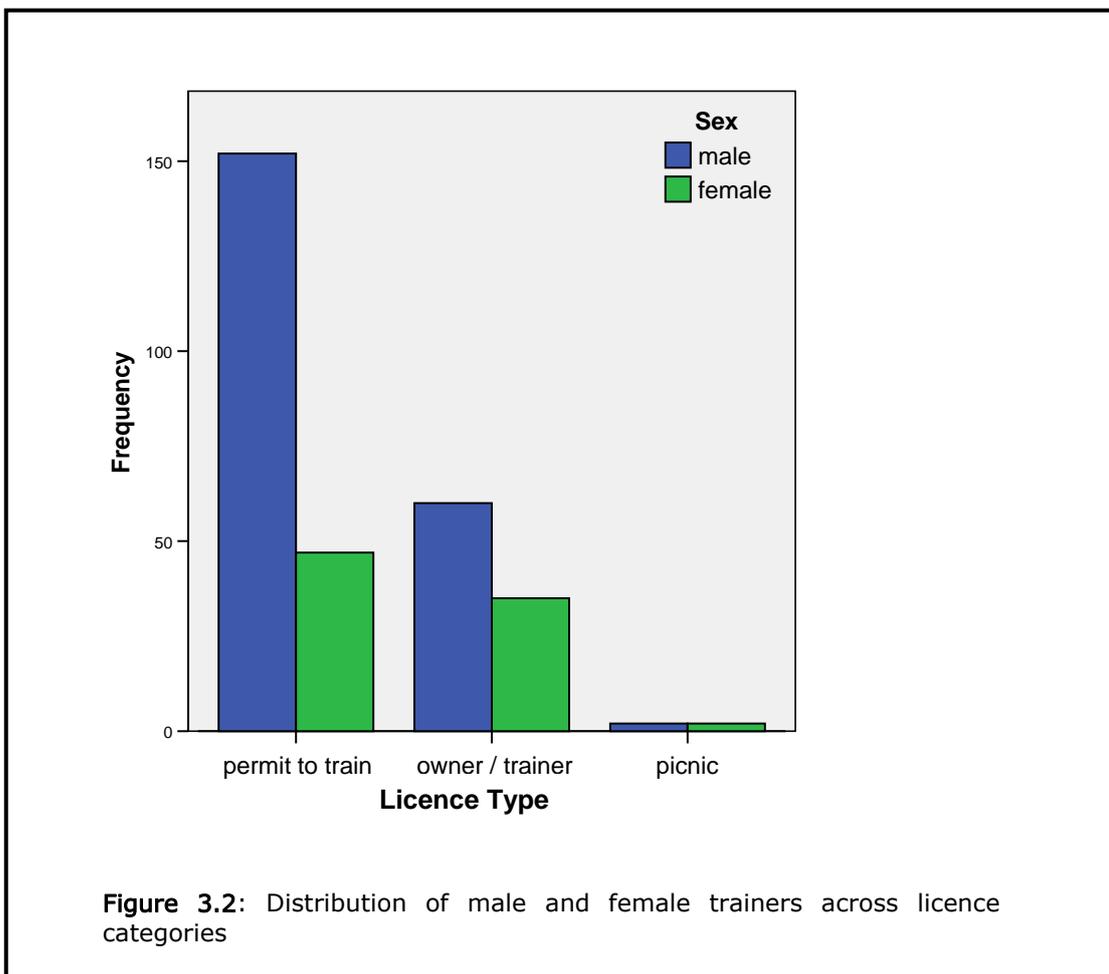
---

<sup>1</sup>  $SD$  = standard deviation, the average amount of variation in a set of data.

- The age distributions across the different licence categories were similar, however, as a group, male trainers (mean age = 52 years,  $SD = 11.4$ ) were older than female trainers (mean age = 46 years,  $SD = 12.2$ ).
- 80% of trainers were married or in de facto relationships, 10% were divorced or separated, 8% were single, and 2% were widowed.
- The average duration for which trainers had held a trainers' licence was 17 years ( $SD = 11.9$ ), within a range extending between 1 and 50 years.
- Male trainers had held a trainers' licence for an average of 19 years ( $SD = 12.2$ ), compared to 12 years ( $SD = 9.5$ ) for female trainers.



- 32% of male trainers and 59% of female trainers had held their trainers' licences for 10 years or less. 50% of male trainers and 20% of female trainers had held their licences for more than 20 years.
- The majority of Permit Trainers (62%) and Owner Trainers (96%) owned or worked at stables having less than 10 race horses. Additionally,
  - 20% of Permit Trainers & 4% of Owner Trainers had between 10-19 horses
  - 9% of Permit Trainers had between 20 and 29 horses
  - 3% of Permit Trainers had between 30 and 39 horses, and
  - 6% of Permit Trainers had 40 horses or more.



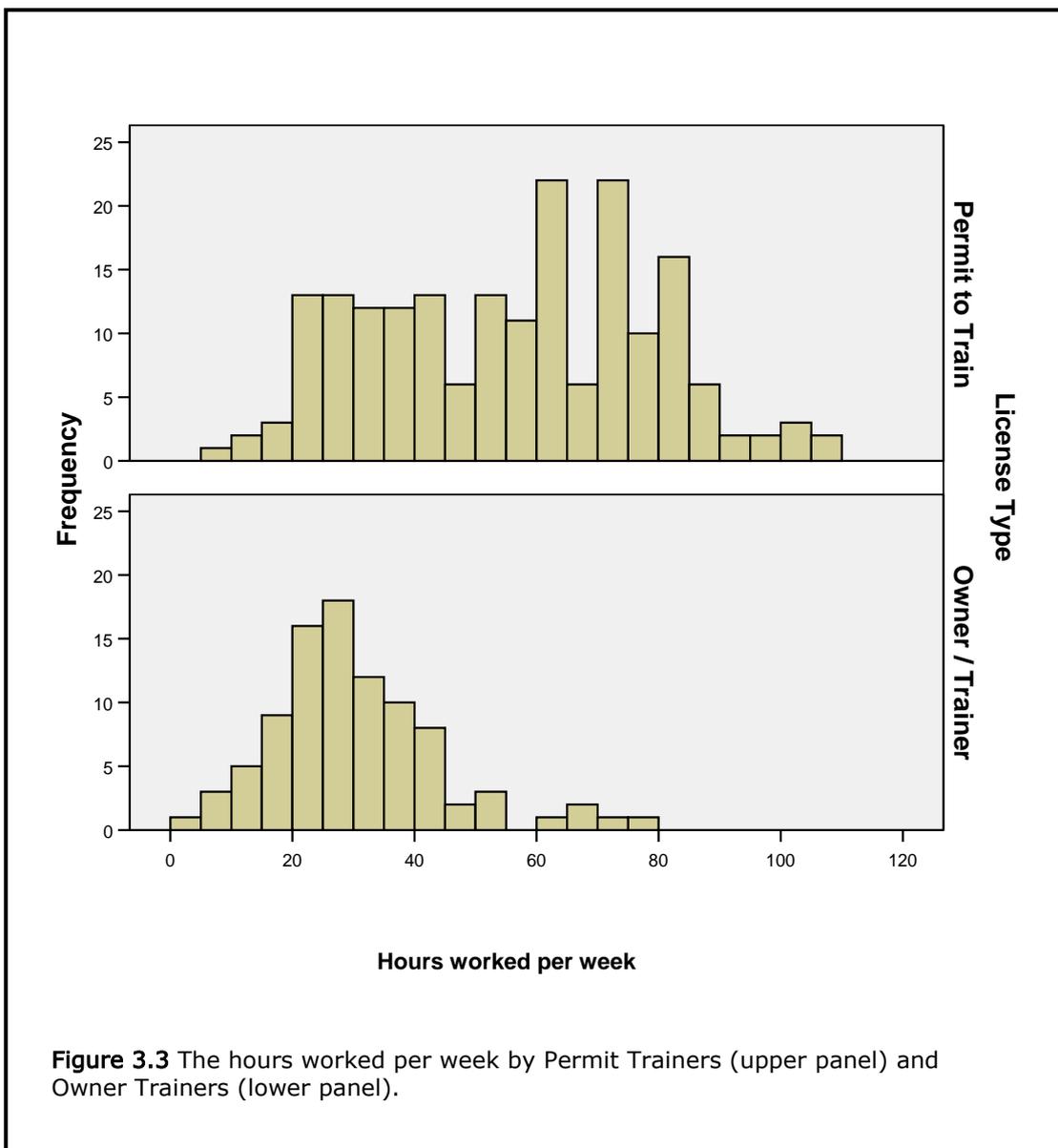
- The average number of active race horses (in training) in stables was 7.3 ( $SD = 9.3$ ), within an overall range of 0 to 70 horses. 82% of trainers had 10 or fewer active horses; 5% had 20-30 active horses, and 3% of trainers had 30 or more active horses in their stables. The majority of Owner Trainers (81%) had 3 or less active horses.

- 79% of Owner Trainers employed no staff at their stables and only one Owner Trainer employed more than 4 staff. 39% of Permit Trainers employed no staff at their stables; 50% employed between 1 and 7 staff, and 8% employed 10 or more staff.
- The majority of trainers (75% of Permit Trainers, 83% of Owner Trainers) indicated that between 1 and 3 non-employed people (volunteers) worked at their stables or contributed to their business operations. Typically, these people were family members or friends who worked on casual bases when needed. An additional 5% of Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers reported having between 4-6 non-employed workers.
- Most trainers (78%) used the internet to access information directly related to their horse training activities (e.g., RVL website). The majority of trainers who used the internet considered the available information to be useful and up-to-date. The main reasons why trainers chose not use the internet was because they lacked the computer skills ( $n = 31$ ) or were not interested ( $n = 14$ ). Other reasons included: no time, no computer, and not being able to afford an internet connection.

## 3.2 WORK HOURS

- Overall, 46% of respondents were full-time horse trainers and 54% were part-time trainers. Significantly more male (49%) than female (36%) trainers worked full time.
- The majority of Permit Trainers (64%) worked full-time in their horse training job/business (males = 67%, females = 56%), whereas almost all Owner Trainers (93%) worked part-time (males = 93%, females = 91%).
- Across all trainers, the average number of hours worked in horse training activities and/or business per week was 46 hours ( $SD = 23.5$ ), with a range of 4 to 110 hours.
- The average number of hours worked by full-time trainers was 64.6 hours per week ( $SD = 18.5$ ). 50% of full-time trainers worked 45 or more hours per week, and 23% worked 80+ hours per week.

- The average number of hours worked by part-time trainers was 30.7 hours per week ( $SD = 14.7$ ). 50% of part-time trainers worked less than 28 hours, and 10% worked 50+ hours per week.
- Figure 3.3 shows the hours worked per week separately for Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers. The median value (middle value indicated by arrows - above and below which 50% of cases fall) is 58 hours/week for Permit Trainers and 28 hours/per week for Owner Trainers.

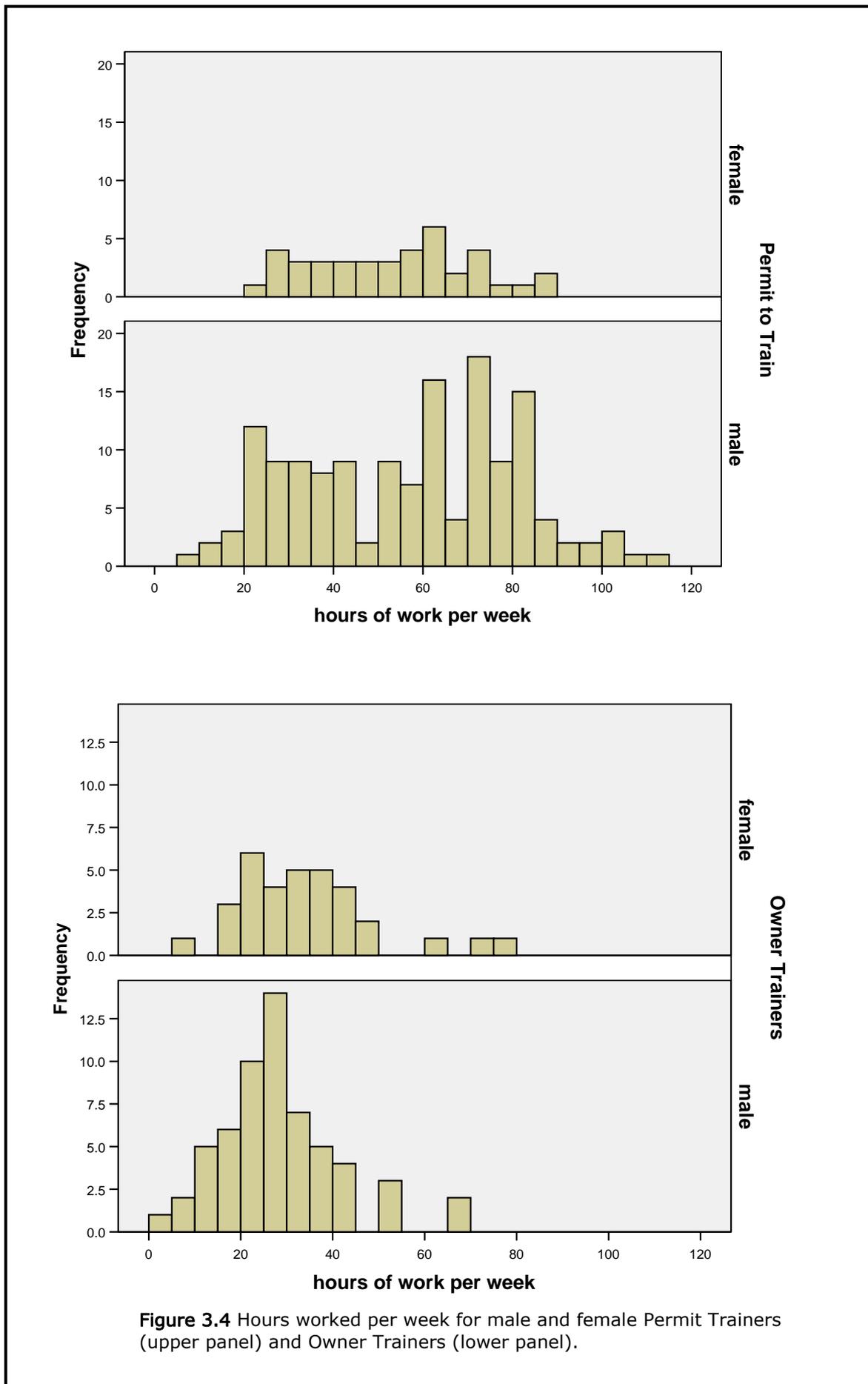


- Figure 3.4 shows the hours worked per week by male and female trainers. The average number of hours worked for each group is indicated in the top right hand corner of the boxes. Differences between hours worked by male and female trainers were not statistically significant.

- All trainers worked at least 6 days per week, and 98% of trainers worked 7 days per week. This pattern was similar across all licence categories and across male and female trainers.
- The most common type of work day for both Permit Trainers (80.7%) and Owner Trainers (91%) was a split-shift. A further 17.6% of Permit Trainers worked full-days, and 6.7% of Owner Trainers worked part-days.
- For the majority of Permit Trainers (58%), the split-shifts typically covered most of the day, and consisted of early morning, mid-day and late afternoon hours of work, with breaks in between. A smaller proportion (42%) of Permit Trainers worked split-shifts that comprised only early morning and late afternoon work hours with a significant break in between. Most Owner Trainers (85%), on the other hand, typically worked split-shifts that consisted of early morning and late afternoon hours of work only.

### 3.3 TIME OFF & LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

- The majority of trainers (66% Permit Trainers, 62% Owner Trainer) never or rarely had at least one day off per week. 21% occasionally had one day off per week, and a smaller proportion (13% Permit Trainers; 16% Owner Trainers) often or always had at least one day off per week.
- Few trainers took annual leave (2% often or always) or sick leave when needed (6% often or always). Indeed, the vast majority of both Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers never or rarely took annual leave (74% and 64%, respectively) or sick leave (91% and 80%, respectively).
- Six percent of trainers indicated that they never needed sick leave and 2% of trainers indicated that they never wanted annual leave.



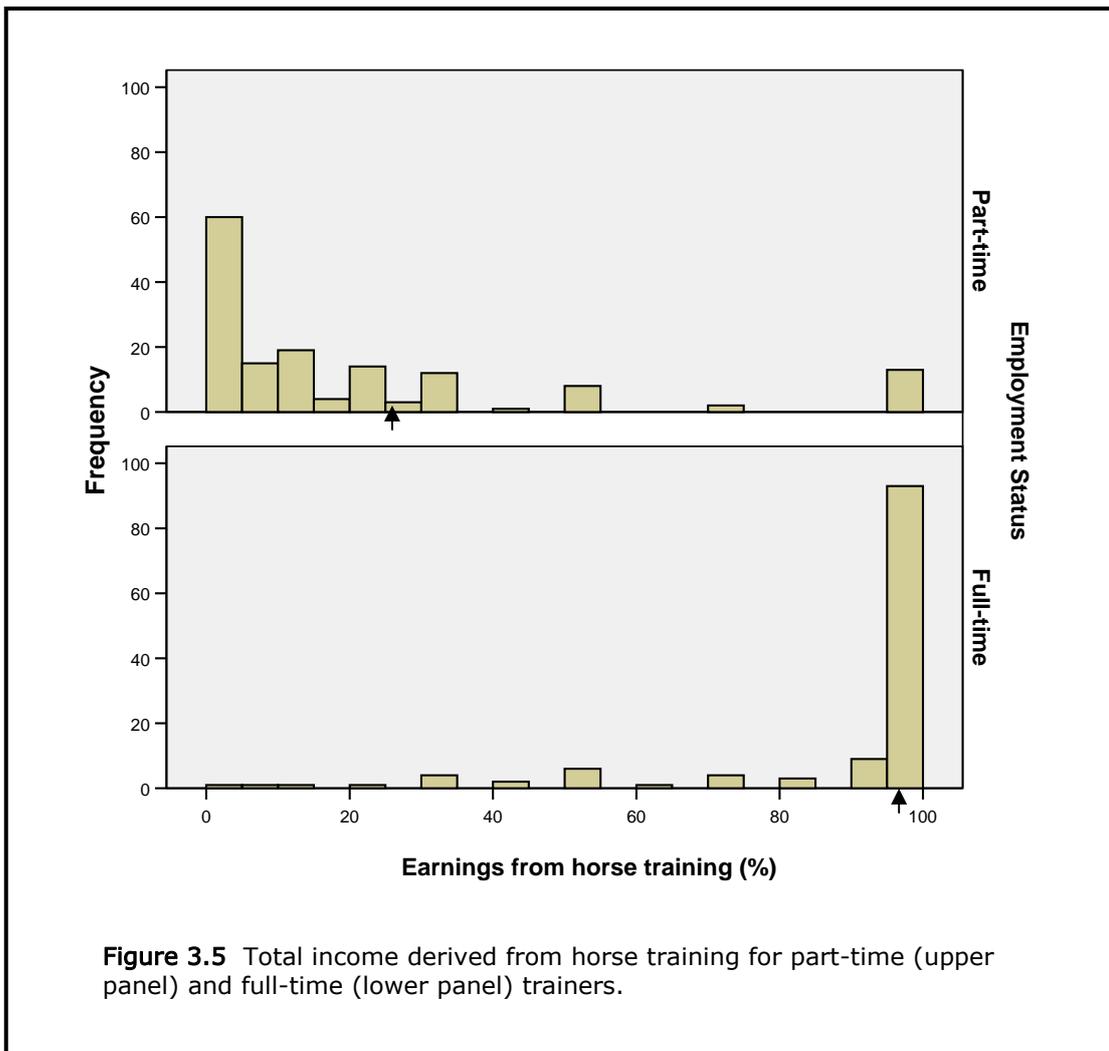
**Figure 3.4** Hours worked per week for male and female Permit Trainers (upper panel) and Owner Trainers (lower panel).

- The main reasons why trainers never or only rarely took leave were:
  - they couldn't find skilled or trustworthy replacement staff,  $n = 151$
  - they had no time,  $n = 68$
  - they couldn't afford replacement staff,  $n = 49$
  - they loved the work and lifestyle of a trainer,  $n = 15$
  - too much was at stake to take risks with other staff / the responsibility of horses rested ultimately with them,  $n = 10$
- Other reasons identified by a small number of trainers related to difficult or complicated OH&S issues or employment rules when taking on replacement staff, or the need for supervision of replacement staff.

### 3.4 FINANCIAL DETAILS

- Figure 3.5 shows the percentage of total income derived from horse training activities (employment or business), separately for full-time and part-time trainers. The average percentage of total income (indicated by arrows) for full-time trainers was 89.0% ( $SD = 23.2$ ), and for part-time trainers was 19.5% ( $SD = 28.9$ ).
- The percentage of annual income that trainers derive from their horse training activities / business was strongly and positively associated with the number of hours that they work as horse trainers.
- 72% of full-time trainers earn 100% of their annual income from their horse training employment or business. This value is similar for male and female trainers.
- 74% of part-time trainers earn 20% or less of their annual income from horse training (also the same for male and female trainers).
- 48% of all Permit Trainers derive 100% of their annual income from horse training.
- 73% of Permit Trainers who work full-time derive 100% of their annual income from horse training.

- Only 16% of Owner Trainers earn 100% of their annual income from horse training. For the majority of Owner Trainers (68%), horse training contributes 10% or less to their annual income.
- Approximately one-third of all horse trainers (34% Permit Trainers, 30% Owner Trainers; 31% full-time trainers, 34% full-time trainers) make regular contributions to superannuation funds.
- Of those trainers who do make regular superannuation contributions, 80% contribute less than \$5,000 per annum (p.a.); 12% contribute between \$5,000 and \$10,000 p.a.; 3% between \$10,000 and \$20,000 p.a., and 5% contribute \$20,000+ p.a.



### 3.5 OTHER EMPLOYMENT

- In addition to their horse training activities/businesses, 27% of Permit Trainers and 21% of Owner Trainers have other employment within the racing industry.
- The various types of other employment within the racing industry include: agistment, breeding, horse breaking, horse transport, pre-training, farrier, track rider, race club attendant, administrative officer, educator.
- 32% of Permit Trainers and 65% of Owner Trainers have other employment outside the racing industry. The vast majority (87%) of trainers who have outside employment are part-time trainers.
- The main reason that trainers have other employment (within or outside of racing industry) in addition to their horse training activities / businesses include:
  - not enough money earned from horse training,  $n = 114$
  - not enough horse training work,  $n = 30$
  - to pursue a career outside of the racing industry,  $n = 30$
  - to use their equine skills outside of the racing industry,  $n = 20$
  - there are limited career pathways in the racing industry,  $n = 16$
  - to gain a greater variety of work experience,  $n = 11$
  - Other reasons include: horse training is a family business, other lifestyle interests, to complement their horse training businesses, to gain access to new owners, horse training is only a hobby, and they choose to work as a part-time trainer only.
- Being unable to earn enough money from horse training was the number one reason that both Permit Trainers ( $n = 67$ ) and Owner Trainers ( $n = 41$ ) engaged in additional work. Difficulties in gaining enough work as a horse trainer was experienced mostly by Permit Trainers, whereas pursuing careers outside of the racing industry related mostly to Owner Trainers.

### 3.6 EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE TRAINING

- Table 3.1 reports the highest level of general (non-equine) education attained by trainers, across all groups. 70% of Permit Trainers and 85% of Owner Trainers had completed Year 10 secondary school or higher. 10% of Permit Trainers and 19% of Owner Trainers had completed university degrees.
- 21% of trainers had TAFE or University qualifications related to horse training. The two most commonly reported qualifications were a TAFE Certificate or Diploma in Racing (Thoroughbred Trainer, Owner Trainer, Jumps Trainer). Other qualifications included certificates or diplomas related to: horse husbandry, horse studies, thoroughbred horse management, horse massage, or farriery.
- The majority of trainers (62%) who had attained their training licences within the past 5 years (when formal qualifications became a compulsory licence requirement) had completed courses related to horse training, and several others were in the process of completing such courses. Only seven percent of trainers (both Permit and Owner Trainers) who had held trainers' licences for more than 5 years had undertaken any formal education related to horse training.

EDUCATION LEVEL	FREQUENCY	%
Years 5-7	6	2.0
Year 8/9	67	22.5
Year 10	52	17.4
Year 11/12	86	28.9
TAFE / Trade /College	47	15.8
University	40	13.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3.1** Highest levels of education (non-equine) attained by horse trainers

- Approximately 10% of trainers had undertaken formal training related to business management.
- Three times as many Owner Trainers (16%) had undertaken business management courses compared to Permit Trainers (5%). On the basis of the types of business management courses that Owner Trainers had undertaken (e.g., Bachelor of Taxation, Bachelor of Commerce, Masters in Sports Administration and Management, Diploma in Retail Management), it is likely that many of these courses related to the nature of the work that Owner Trainers engaged in outside of the horse-racing industry.
- A significant number of trainers (52% Permit Trainers, 71% Owner Trainers) had undertaken training in Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S). Fewer trainers (between 16% and 32%) had undertaken training in workplace practices related to equal opportunity, harassment/bullying, emergency procedures, or staff relations/management. In all workplace practices, significantly more Owner Trainers than Permit Trainers had undertaken training, possibly as part of, or as a requirement of, their work outside of horse training.
- Most training in workplace practices undertaken by horse trainers (between 65% and 83%) was presented within formal workshops or seminar settings.
- Approximately 30% of trainers reported having difficulties in undertaking training or educational courses related to their horse training work/business.
- The most common reasons for these difficulties were the same for Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers, and included:
  - having no time,  $n = 48$
  - the cost of training,  $n = 22$
  - travel distance to training/educational institutions,  $n = 7$
  - lack of self-confidence,  $n = 4$
- Trainers were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how valuable, or important, different sources of learning / training (e.g., TAFE, formal training at stables) had been for them in their overall work as horse trainers. The rating scale ranged from values of 1 (most valuable / important) to 5 (least valuable / important). Informal on-the-job training and information passed

down from other trainers or mentors were considered the most valuable or important sources of learning by the majority of trainers (81% and 84%, respectively, for the two forms of training). The more formal sources of information (i.e., formal training at stables, TAFE and RVL courses) were considered less valuable/ important by many trainers (50% - 71%); however, a smaller number of trainers (22% - 30%) did consider these sources of information to be valuable.

### 3.7 WORKPLACE / BUSINESS ISSUES

- The majority of both Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers (63%) were aware of the new *WorkChoices* national workplace relations system in Australia. 72% of trainers who employ staff at their stables were aware of the new *WorkChoices* system.
- 50% of trainers who were aware of the *WorkChoices* system understood its key principles either moderately or very well. 43% of trainers had only a little understanding of the system, and 7% had no understanding of it at all.
- 42% of trainers who employed stable staff indicated that they were interested in undertaking formal training related to the new *WorkChoices* workplace relations system.
- Trainers were asked to identify workplace and business issues that had been significant problems for them in, or as a result of, their work/business as horse trainers. Fifteen potential issues were listed in the questionnaire, based on discussions with the Research Steering Committee and other key stakeholders in the horse-racing industry. Table 3.2 summarises the separate responses of Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers.
- The top 5 problem areas identified by Permit Trainers, ranked on the basis of frequency of responses, and the specific issues that relate to those general areas, are:

***Financial issues*** - cash flow problems; training fees don't cover high staff costs (superannuation, WorkCover, wages); being continually in debt; not being able to get enough work to cover financial outlays; financial returns are low and don't keep up with increasing costs; poor prize monies, particularly at

the lower end of scale and country races; difficulties in obtaining finance to build business; inconsistent fee schedules across trainers, and some trainers under-charging.

WORKPLACE ISSUE	PERMIT TRAINER		OWNER TRAINER	
	<i>n</i>	Rank	<i>n</i>	Rank
Financial aspects	<i>n</i> = 107	1	<i>n</i> = 34	1
Receiving payments for service	<i>n</i> = 106	2	<i>n</i> = 6	12
Balancing work and family life	<i>n</i> = 97	3	<i>n</i> = 29	3
Staff issues	<i>n</i> = 96	4	<i>n</i> = 28	5
Work hours	<i>n</i> = 91	5	<i>n</i> = 30	2
Developing social networks outside industry	<i>n</i> = 72	6	<i>n</i> = 12	7
Physical health	<i>n</i> = 63	7	<i>n</i> = 16	6
Developing interests outside industry	<i>n</i> = 62	8	<i>n</i> = 9	9
Mental health	<i>n</i> = 50	9	<i>n</i> = 9	9
Recognition of work	<i>n</i> = 32	10	<i>n</i> = 10	8
Racehorse syndication	<i>n</i> = 31	11	<i>n</i> = 3	14
Managing and coordinating tasks	<i>n</i> = 27	12	<i>n</i> = 29	3
Self-education and professional development	<i>n</i> = 14	13	<i>n</i> = 7	11
Industry info and communications	<i>n</i> = 14	13	<i>n</i> = 4	13
Networking within industry	<i>n</i> = 13	15	<i>n</i> = 2	15

**Table 3.2** The frequency of responses (*n*) and ranking of workplace and business issues that had been significant problems for trainers in, or as a result of, their work / business as horse trainers.

***Receiving payment for services*** - poor paying clients (typically racehorse owners); cash-flow problems because of poor paying clients; can't pay staff and bills because they don't get paid by owners; no financial assistance from industry; no process for chasing up non-payers; wasting time chasing bad debts; unable to afford solicitors or debt collection companies; non-paying owners just change trainers; no database of bad debtors; lack of payment causes bad blood between trainers and owners, and with staff when they don't get paid; non-payment is common if horses break down or are no good.

***Balancing work and family life*** - no time for life outside training; little time for doing things with family; families having to always provide support to trainers; being exhausted and stressed when finished with work for the day (no quality family time); long hours causes relationship problems in families; marriage breakdowns because of the demands of the job; families have to set important dates around racing calendars; families have to fit in to training schedules.

***Staffing Issues*** - difficulty accessing track riders, particularly in country areas; difficulty getting reliable and experienced track riders; difficulty getting reliable and skilled staff generally; staff complain about long hours; too much administration relating to employees; many employment and OH&S regulations are restrictive – not suitable for industry; have to pay high wages to retain good staff; lose skilled staff to big stables; lack of staff generally, particularly for casual work; staff not motivated in their work; many employees are transient – move around a lot; too many staff lack “horse sense” – not from horse backgrounds; staff entering stables have poor skills.

***Work hours*** - long hours, particularly on race days, 7 days/week; too much racing, no day off; track times too early; need more time off; can't find staff to work casual hours when needed and have to do most of the work themselves; family time minimal; always tired from physical work.

- Other common problem areas identified by Permit Trainers include:

***Developing social networks outside of the industry*** - too tired, exhausted; no time; too difficult to commit and plan ahead because of work hours; no interest – social life is in the racing industry and training work.

***Physical health*** – often very tired, fatigued from work, no recovery time; very labour intensive work – body always aching; injuries – often a problem, past injuries causing on-going problems, no replacement staff when injured; body

can't cope with physical demands of the job; not enough hours for sleep; no time for day off if sick or injured.

***Mental health*** – constant pressure and high stress levels – trainers' performance related to horses' performance; financial worries – getting owners to pay, paying staff, poor cash flow, conflicts due to non-payment; general mental fatigue and stress – no recovery time; stress on relationships – particularly families; owners often have unrealistic expectations and put pressure on trainers; depression.

***Developing interests outside of the industry*** – issues are the same as for developing social networks.

***Recognition of Work*** - no recognition within industry except if horses win; many people in the Victorian racing industry (RVL, owners, administrators) don't understand time and work commitments of trainers; industry and media focus on horses and trainers of big stables.

***Racehorse syndication*** - difficulties finding new owners – particularly those willing to outlay for good horses; existing barriers to selling shares; disputes within syndicates; getting licences is a laborious and costly process; small trainers find it hard to get syndicates – they go to big trainers; difficult to advertise horses for syndicates because of regulations; trainers should be able to syndicate their own horses; syndicators often give clients false expectations – owners get burnt.

***Managing and coordinating tasks*** - no time; too much admin / paper work; trainers have to be good at everything, multi-skilled; no assistance from industry; trainers need to be available to staff and owners 24/7 – some things just don't get done.

***Industry information and communications*** – lack of awareness as to how and where to access information; industry primarily caters to large stables; country trainers are forgotten; no assistance from industry.

***Self-education and professional development*** – no time, too tired when not working, high costs of training courses; need opportunities for training in business-related areas such as accounting and taxation; few professional development opportunities available.

- 4 of the top 5 problem areas identified by Owner Trainers are the same as those identified by Permit Trainers, although their rankings differ slightly to

those of Permit Trainers (see Table 3.2). The nature of some of the Owner Trainers' issues related to those problem areas are also similar to the issues identified by Permit Trainers (e.g., high costs, poor financial returns, staffing difficulties, lack of free time or days off). In addition, there are issues that are unique to the workplace or business operations of Owner Trainers (see below).

- Unlike Permit Trainers, and for obvious reasons, payment for services is not a problem commonly experienced by Owner Trainers. Managing and coordinating tasks, however, are major problems for many Owner Trainers, and is ranked 3rd in terms of frequency of responses. The most common issue relates to difficulties in finding time to carry out the variety of training and administrative duties required of an Owner Trainer when, for many trainers, a significant amount of their time is directed towards employment or business operations other than horse training. Several Owner Trainers commented that family members were often required to undertake administrative or other tasks related to horse training for those tasks to be done.
- Other issues identified by Owner Trainers include:

***Financial Issues*** - limited licence restricts ability to make a living from training (no income accrual); cant afford quality horses – resulting in few opportunities for prize monies; all costs have to be met by the trainer.

***Work hours*** - track closes too early in the morning, hard to coordinate track work hours with outside job.

***Staff*** – difficult to engage track riders for only a small number of horses, and recruit casual stablehands for the odd day's work to help out.

***Self-education and professional development*** - difficult to keep track of rule changes, poor access to industry information.

- A number of trainers made comments about workplace and business issues that did not fall under the categories listed in the survey. These comments addressed issues related to:

***Race Tracks*** – the need for dedicated space at race tracks (e.g., lounge area) for trainers to conduct their business and relax; the provision of food and

drink facilities that are accessible to strappers, some of whom are unable to leave the stable areas.

***Occupational Health & Safety*** – regulations are “over the top” and inconsistently applied; regulations are barriers to involving families in horse training activities; too much OH&S paperwork; lack of OH&S enforcement; need industry-specific regulations that are developed for horse training activities and stable situations; safety at some training tracks needs attention; time off – will reduce accidents and injuries caused by fatigue and tiredness.

***Training tracks*** – open hours are too early; hours are too limited causing congestion at times; poor lighting at some tracks for early morning track work; poor condition of some country training tracks.

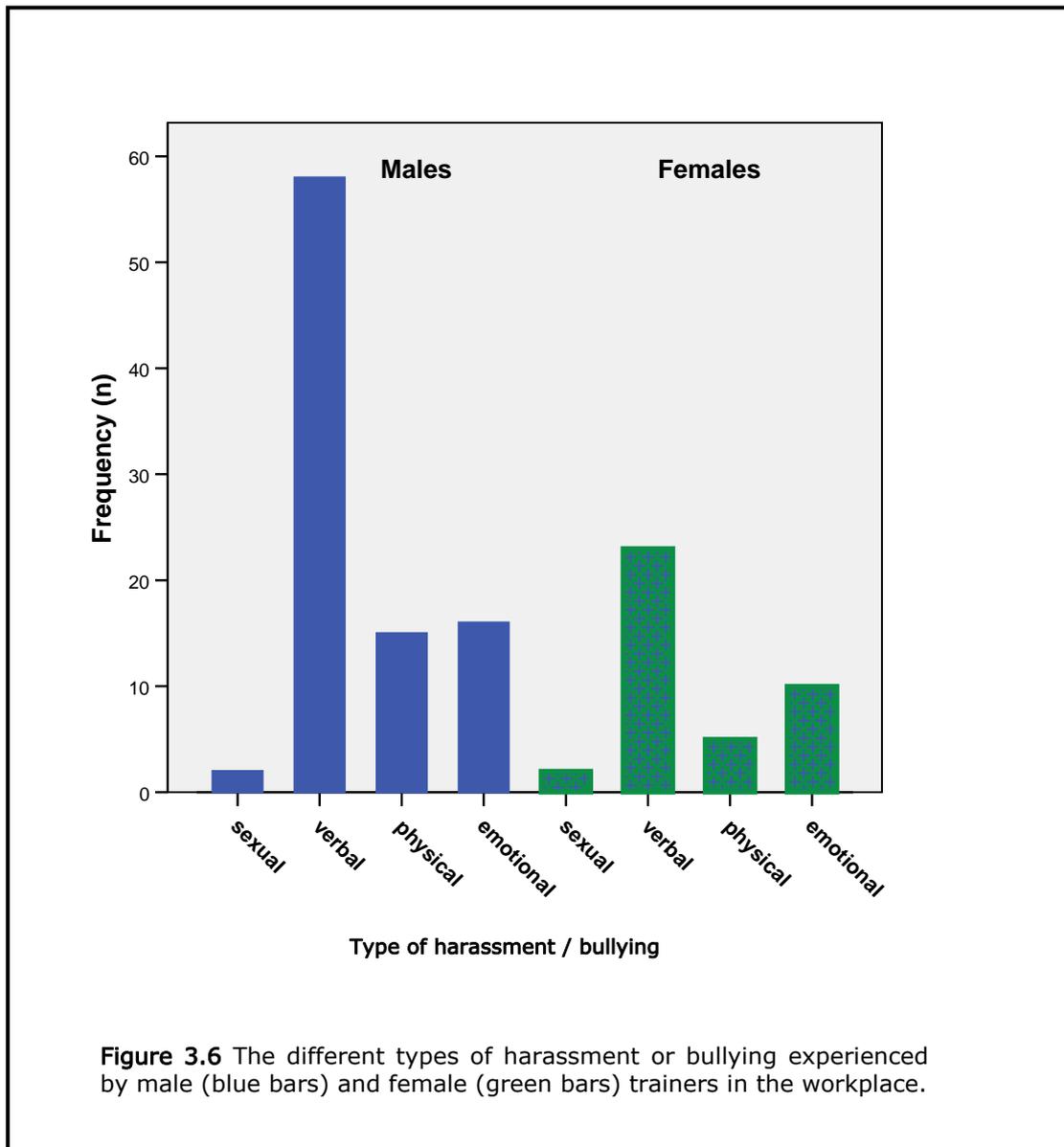
***Small training businesses*** – find it hard to compete with large stables; reduced racing opportunities compared to large stables; becoming increasingly difficult for small stables to attain good quality horses; media focuses on big stables so owners go to them; difficult to get good track riders as most prefer to work for large stables.

***Racing industry management and administration*** – industry is overregulated; concerns about transparency of management activities; focus on large stables; lacking future directions; minimal support for trainers.

## 3.8 HARRASSMENT & BULLYING

- A significant number of trainers, both male (21%) and female (24%), indicated that they had at some time directly experienced harassment or bullying in the workplace.
- In terms of actual numbers, 66 trainers reported a total of 109 cases of harassment or bullying. In most cases, the harassment came from the horse owners ( $n = 33$ ) or other persons in the racing industry who were not employed at their stables ( $n = 44$ ). To a lesser extent, the harassment came from stable employees ( $n = 21$ ) or persons outside of the racing industry ( $n = 11$ ). This pattern was similar across both male and female trainers.

- In many cases, the harassment was not an isolated incident but occurred repeatedly (in some cases, daily) over periods ranging from weeks to years.
- The number of cases reported here is probably an underestimation of the full extent of harassment and bullying experienced by the trainers who participated in the study. The survey used in this investigation permitted only yes / no responses when indicating the source of the harassment and did not allow for data relating to multiple occurrences of harassment coming from different people within a given source category (e.g., owner or stable employees). A trainer may, for example, have experienced several occasions of harassment by different owners of horses, which would have resulted in a single case being recorded under the 'Horse Owner' category.
- When considered across the different licence categories, 24% of Permit Trainers and 19% of Owner Trainers reported cases of harassment or bullying in the workplace. For Owner Trainers, the harassment most commonly (12 out of 17 cases) came from persons in the racing industry who were not employed at their stables.
- Figure 3.6 shows the types of harassment and bullying experienced by male (blue bars) and female (green bars) trainers, separately. The bars represent the number of cases of each form of harassment experienced by trainers. Note that, in many cases of reported harassment, two or more types of harassment occurred together.
- For both male and female trainers, verbal harassment was by far the most commonly experienced form of harassment.
- 23% of trainers (males 21%; females 30%) took some form of action in response to being harassed or bullied in the workplace. The most common forms of action included: official complaints to RVL or racing club officials; complaints to stable owner/senior personnel; legal or police interventions; and direct confrontations with the harassing persons. Few trainers reported the outcomes of these actions taken against harassment. Where details were provided, there were approximately equal numbers of cases in which: (a) trainers reported that the persons involved were disciplined, and (b) no action was taken by industry personnel.



### 3.9 WORKPLACE INJURIES

- Many trainers (64% Permit Trainers, 55% Owner Trainers) had sustained injuries or experienced significant pain or physical symptoms that related to their work as horse trainers over the past 5 years.
- Proportionally more full-time trainers (71%) compared to part-time trainers (52%), and female trainers (65%) compared to male trainers (59%), had incurred injuries or physical symptoms resulting their horse training work.

- Figure 3.7 shows the common sites of injures/pain sustained by trainers during the course of their work. As the types and causes of injuries were similar for Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers, their data are pooled.
- A total of 362 injuries or cases of significant pain/physical symptoms resulting from horse training work were reported by 180 trainers. It should be noted, however, that the statistic reported here is really an underestimation of the true number of injuries sustained by those trainers. In many cases, trainers reported multiple injury/pain occurrences as single cases (e.g., broken ankles, several shoulder dislocations, broken teeth). Although it is not possible to provide an accurate account of the extent of injuries sustained through the course of their work as horse trainers, an analysis of trainers' responses here provides important insights into a significant workplace problem identified by the majority of trainers.
- The two most common sites of injury/pain were to the back and lower limbs. Together, these sites accounted for nearly 45% of all reported injuries.

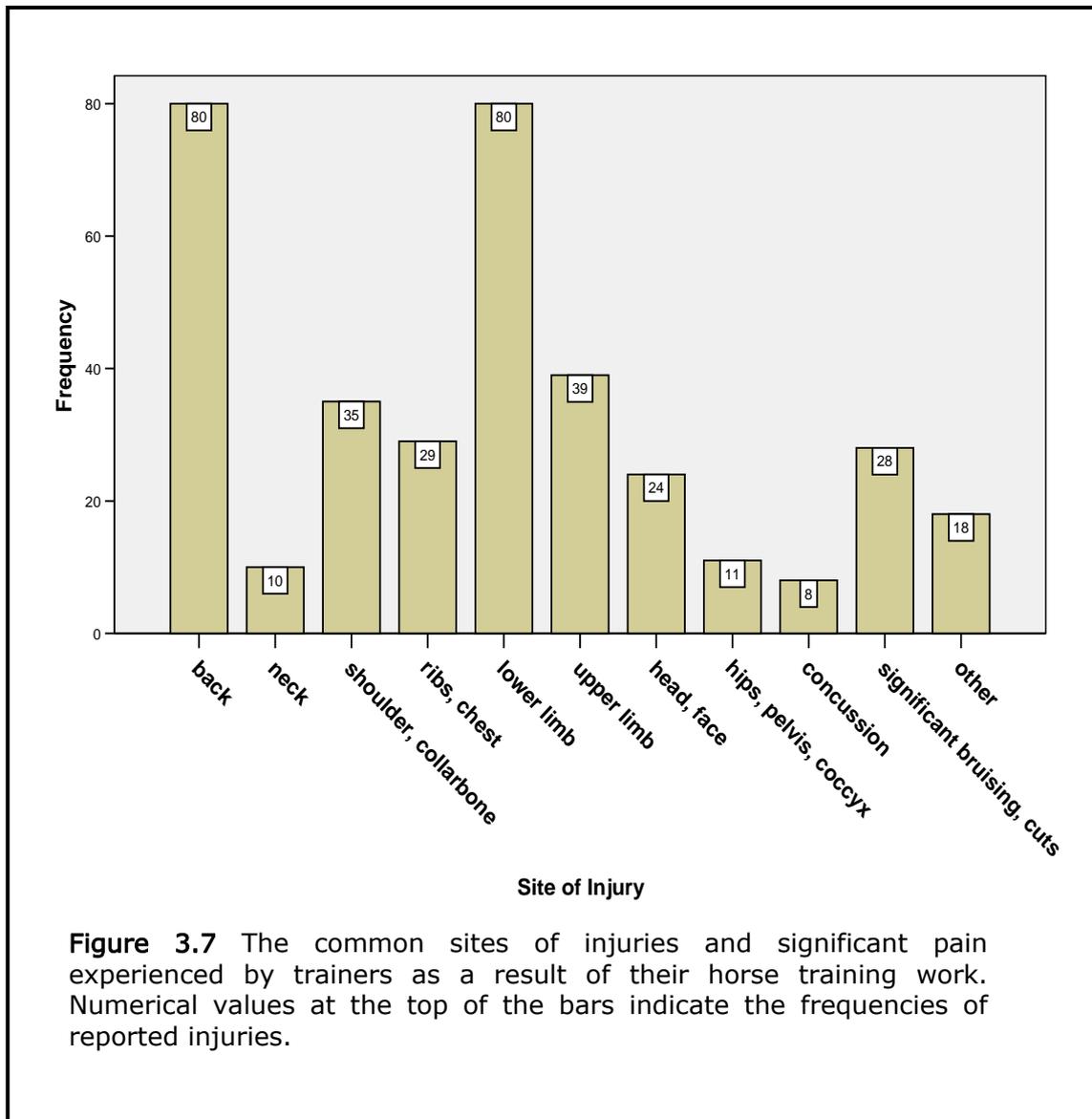
***Back*** ( $n = 80$ ): For the most part, injuries to the back were minor or moderate in severity. The most commonly reported problem was back pain or soreness, due to overuse from heavy lifting around the stables and riding horses, or from riding falls. Three trainers reported severe injuries to the back (fractured vertebrae), all of which were caused by falls from horses.

***Lower limbs*** ( $n = 80$ ): Injuries to the lower limbs included mostly broken bones in the feet and ankles from being stepped on by horses. Broken legs, knee damage and bruising to the lower legs were also common, usually resulting from riding falls or being kicked by horses. Many of the injuries to the lower limbs were rated as severe by trainers.

***Upper limbs*** ( $n = 39$ ): Broken and dislocated fingers, significant cuts to the hands and/or fingers, and broken bones in the arms, wrists and hands were also common injuries sustained by trainers, mostly from riding falls or being kicked by horses. Arthritis and pain in the hands and fingers were less common and usually related to overuse.

Three trainers reported severe cuts to the hands from workplace accidents (involving the use of ropes or knives) resulting in nerves or fingers being severed. With the exception of broken arms and severed fingers, which were

typically rated by trainers as severe injuries, most injuries to the upper limbs were considered by trainers to be only mildly or moderately severe.



**Shoulders & Collarbones** ( $n = 35$ ): A significant number of trainers had sustained broken or dislocated shoulders or broken collarbones as a result of falls from horses. Shoulder pain was also common and was usually attributed to overuse, particularly from riding work involving horses that pull.

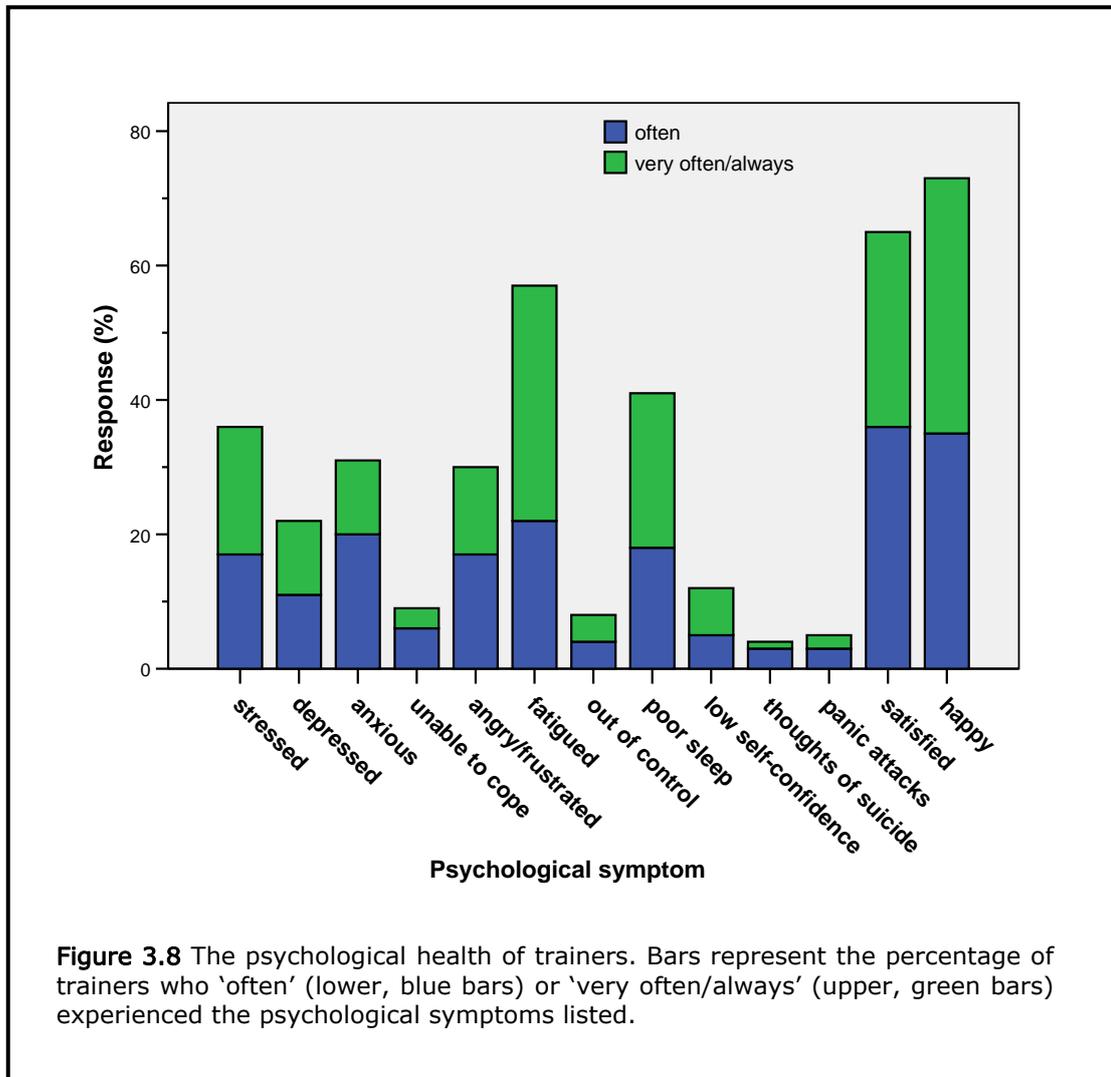
- Other common injuries sustained by trainers as consequences of their horse training work include:

- broken or bruised ribs – from riding falls, or being kicked or crushed by horses;
  - neck pain – from riding work, riding falls, or overuse;
  - broken noses - from being head-butted by horses or riding falls;
  - concussions – from riding falls;
  - fractures, lacerations and bruising to the head and face – from riding falls or being kicked or head-butted by horses;
  - broken hips/pelvis and bruised hips – from riding falls;
  - significant bruising, lacerations, fractures and sprains to unspecified body regions – from riding falls, being kicked or bitten by horses, or from overuse.
- Several less common injuries or physical symptoms reported by trainers include: burns, punctured lungs, ruptured pancreas, stomach pain, haemorrhoids, and RSI (repetitive strain injury).

### 3.10 PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

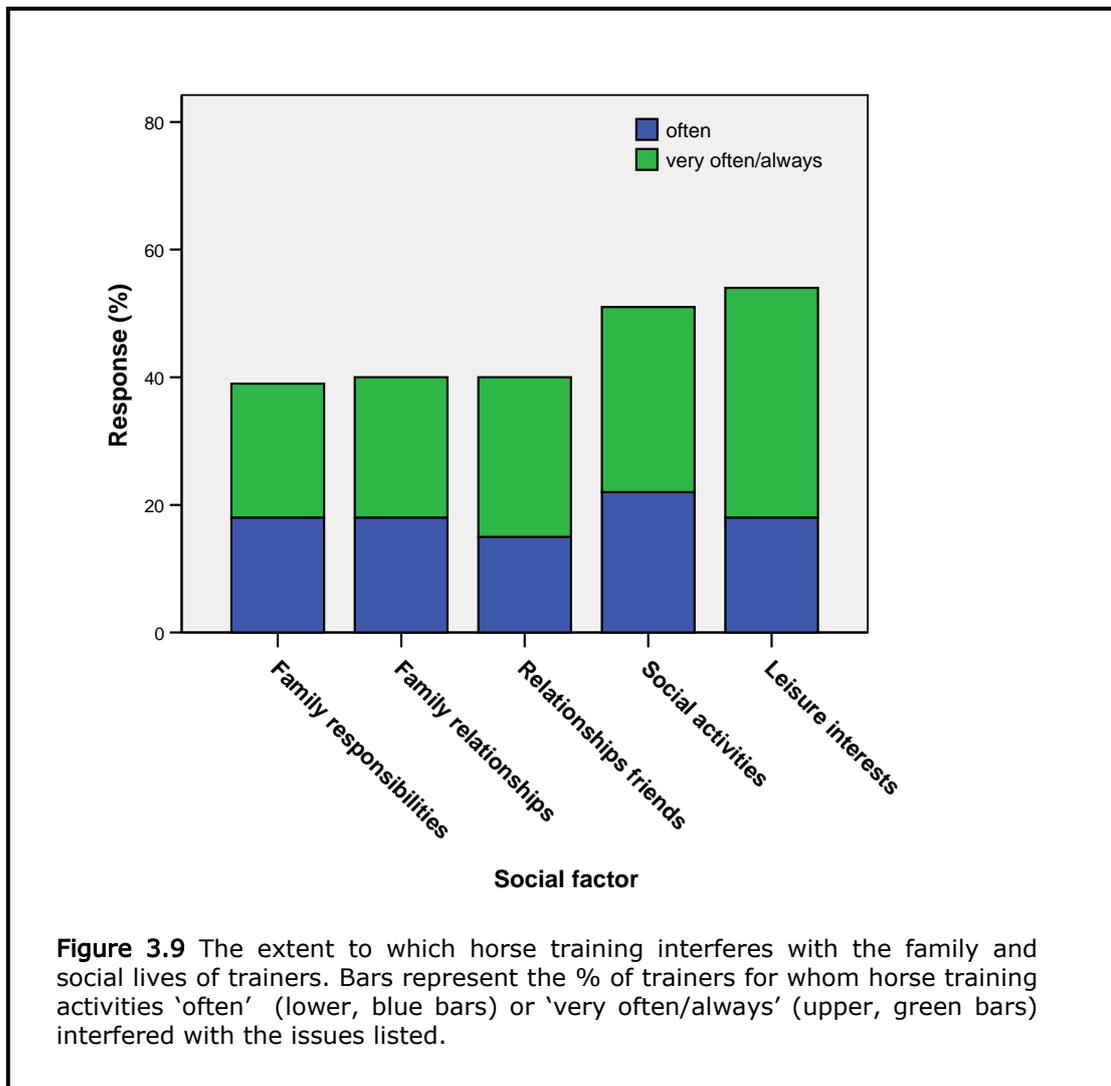
- Figures 3.8 and 3.9 show the extent to which the horse-training work or business activities of trainers influences their psychological health and well-being (Fig. 3.8), or interferes with their families and social/leisure lives (Fig. 3.9). The response categories available to trainers were: 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often', 'very often', and 'always'. The frequency data (%) presented in the figures are for the 'often', and 'very often/always' (pooled together) response categories only, and across all groups of trainers. A comparison of the responses of male and female trainers is presented numerically in Table 3.3. Any differences between Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers, or between full-time and part-time trainers, and most differences between male and female trainers, were small and did not change the overall pattern of results.
- The two bars on the right side of Figure 3.8 show that the majority of trainers (approximately 70-75%) are, for the most part, happy and satisfied in their work/business as horse trainers. This finding is in contrast to the fact that a significant number of trainers frequently feel fatigued (57%) and/or stressed

(36%), and have poor sleep habits (41%; mostly related to lack of sleep), as a result of their training activities or business.



- In addition, for many trainers, both male and female, horse training frequently interfered with their family responsibilities (39%) and family relationships (40%), their relationships with friends (40%), and their social (51%) and leisure (54%) activities.
- A significant number of trainers often feel anxious (31%) and/or depressed (22%) with regard to their training work or business operations. Written comments by several trainers suggest that, at least for some trainers, financial issues, time pressures and/or workplace conflicts are major sources contributing to these negative feelings.

- A smaller number of trainers frequently experienced low self-confidence (12%), feelings of being unable to cope (9%) and being out of control (8%) that were related to their horse training work/business. In addition, several trainers reported having frequent panic attacks (5%) or thoughts of suicide and/or self harm (4%).



- 21% of trainers indicated that they would be interested in using the services of a professional counsellor (e.g., medical doctor, psychologist), if private and confidential counselling services were provided at reduced fees or no charges.
- 19% of trainers responded that they were unsure whether they would use counselling services. Proportionally more female trainers (30%) compared to male trainers (14%) were unsure.

	ALL	MALES		FEMALES	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Stressed					
<i>often</i>	45	29	15%	15	18%
<i>very often/always</i>	50	35	18%	14	18%
Down / depressed					
	30	19	9%	11	14%
	32	24	12%	7	9%
Anxious					
	55	44	23%	11	14%
	29	18	9%	9	12%
Unable to cope					
	16	11	6%	4	5%
	9	5	3%	3	4%
Satisfied					
	102	74	37%	26	34%
	81	59	29%	22	29%
Angry / frustrated					
	48	30	15%	17	22%
	40	29	15%	9	12%
Fatigued / exhausted					
	61	41	21%	20	25%
	97	66	34%	28	35%
Out of control					
	12	8	4%	3	4%
	10	7	4%	3	4%
Poor sleep					
	52	30	15%	22	28%
	65	48	24%	15	19%
Low self-confidence					
	15	11	6%	4	5%
	20	13	7%	7	9%
Thoughts of suicide / self-harm					
	7	5	2.5%	1	1.5%
	3	3	1.5%	0	0%
Panic or anxiety attacks					
	8	7	3.2%	1	1.5%
	7	5	2.5%	2	2.5%

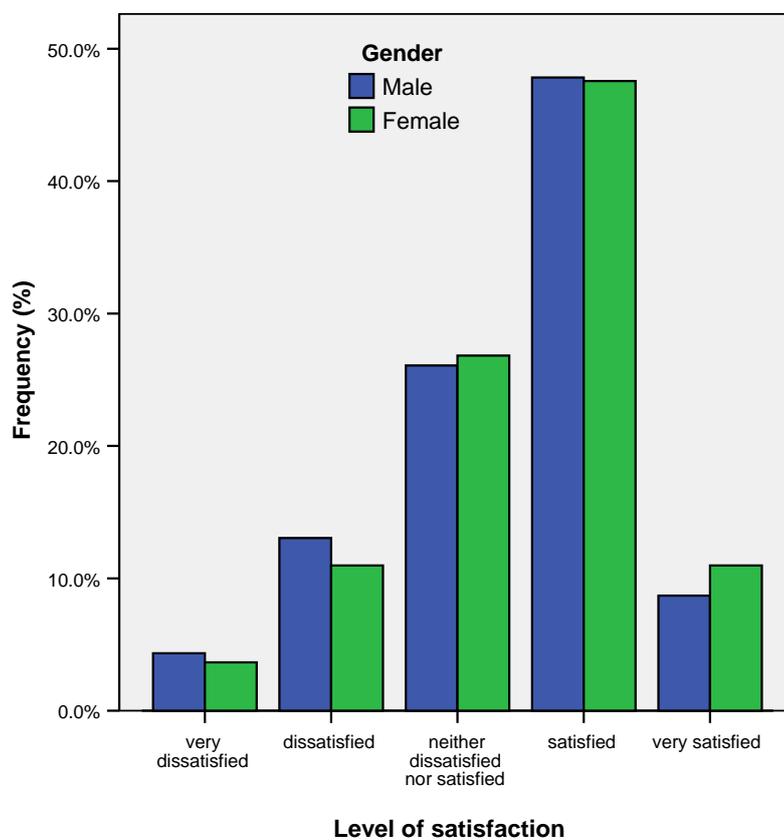
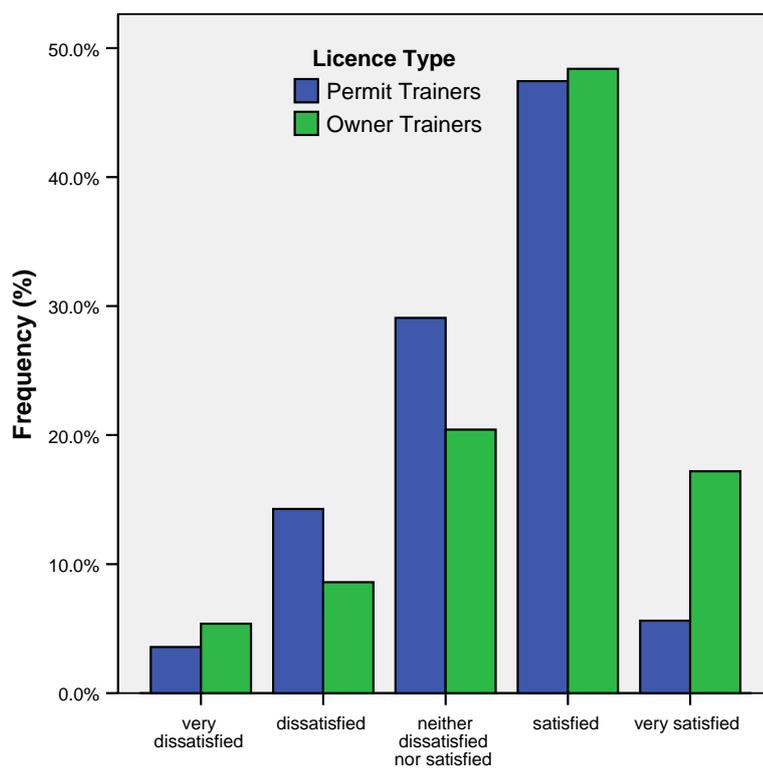
**Table 3.3** Male and female trainers who 'often' or 'very often' experienced the psychological symptoms listed, during, or as a consequence of, their work as horse trainers.

### 3.11 GAMBLING & SUBSTANCE USE

- 41% of trainers (70 male, 48 female) indicated that they do not engage in gambling (wagering or gaming) activities, and a further 51% (116 male, 28 female) indicated that they do engage in gambling activities but have not experienced any problems related to those activities.
- A small number of trainers reported having experienced gambling problems in the past ( $n = 15$ ), but no longer do, and 3% of trainers ( $n = 8$ ) indicated that they currently experience problems relating to gambling.
- In both cases (past and present gambling problems), financial difficulties and family issues have been the two most commonly cited problems related to gambling. Several trainers also reported having experienced health- and work-related problems as consequences of their gambling activities.
- Approximately 70% of trainers indicated that they consume alcohol but have not experienced any alcohol-related problems. A further 6% of trainers ( $n = 16$ ) reported that they have experienced problems related to their alcohol use, 10 of whom continue to experience problems. Typically, these problems have revolved around health and family matters.
- The vast majority of trainers (98%) reported that they do not use recreational drugs (e.g., ecstasy, marijuana). The small number of trainers ( $n = 5$ ) who indicated that they do use recreational drugs, do not consider that they have experienced any problems related to their drug-use.

### 3.12 TRAINERS' FUTURE PLANS

- Most trainers (58%) were satisfied or very satisfied overall with their work or business activities as horse trainers. Some 16% of trainers, however, indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with horse training. Figure 3.10 show the full breakdown of responses across trainer licence categories (upper graph) and gender (lower graph).



**Figure 3.10** The overall levels of satisfaction with horse training work or business activities experienced by Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers (upper graph), and male and female trainers (lower graph).

- Just over one-third of the trainers who participated in the study (34%) stated that they are considering leaving the horse training industry, including, 41% of male and 34% of female Permit Trainers and 25% of male and 33% of female Owner Trainers.
- Approximately 40% of those trainers who are considering leaving the industry are thinking about doing so within the next 1-2 years, and 52% within the next 3-5 years. A further 8% of trainers are thinking about leaving horse training within the next 12 months.
- The most commonly cited reasons underlying why trainers are considering leaving the horse training industry revolve around issues related to:
  - financial matters (high costs, low financial returns particularly in country areas, poor paying owners),  $n = 67$
  - nature of the work (e.g., long hours, little time off, considerable travel),  $n = 21$
  - age, retirement,  $n = 23$
  - the broader racing industry (e.g., over-regulation, management issues, focus on large stables, concerns about future directions, lack of support),  $n = 14$
  - small stables (lack of opportunities, difficulties competing with larger stables),  $n = 12$
  - training opportunities (difficulties obtaining owners),  $n = 7$
  - family (needing more time with family, starting family),  $n = 7$
  - staff (difficulties getting trackriders, unreliable or unskilled staff),  $n = 6$
  - lack of job satisfaction / enjoyment,  $n = 6$
  - physical health (injuries, general wear and tear on body),  $n = 6$
- Other reasons included: Owner-Trainer licence restrictions which limit business growth, OH&S regulations which limit involvement of family members in the business, difficulties in moving from Owner Trainer licence to Permit Trainer licence.

### 3.13 TRAINERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Trainers were given the opportunity to comment on how they thought RVL or other industry bodies could help them in their future horse training work or business operations. Many trainers took up this opportunity. This section summarises their comments under headings relating to the key problem areas identified by trainers.

#### **Non-paying and slow paying owners**

- RVL to provide a service for trainers to report and obtain information about non-paying owners;
- Support from RVL in the recovery of debt; RVL should have the power to collect debts on behalf of trainers;
- RVL could provide a central billing service for horse training services, collecting fees from owners and distributing payments to trainers. Trainers could pay fees to RVL for this service.
- De-registration of non-paying owners until all debts are paid;
- Rejection of nominations for horses where monies are owed to trainers – this action would be particularly helpful in cases where owners remove horses from stables where debts are owed and then move the horses to new stables.
- RVL and the ATA could work together in assisting trainers with debt recovery and inform trainers of repeat offenders;
- License owners - so there is an easy mechanism to apply penalties for non-payment to trainers;
- Non-paying owners are considered a part of the industry. RVL could undertake a promotional campaign that takes the stance that non-payment is unacceptable;
- Enable trainers to be able to access the prize monies from horses of non-paying owners to cover debts.

### **Other Financial Issues: Costs and Fees**

- Regulation of fees and set fee caps for horse training related services in the industry (i.e., vets, farriers)
- Regulation of horse training fees across all trainers;
- Establishment of a superannuation fund for trainers;
- RVL to provide trainers with access to financial planning and counselling services - to educate them on relevant business/financial matters and advise in times of difficulties;
- Provide trainers with financial assistance in times of hardship (similar to jockey assistance programs);
- Financial assistance to trainers starting out – by way of waiving of, or reducing fees, subsidised costs, grants, etc.
- Reducing costs relating to events outside of a trainer's control such as horse scratchings;
- Lowering costs of licence insurance, particularly for small scale trainers – maybe a sliding scale based on number of horses;
- Trainers should receive attendance allowances on race days (as is the case with jockeys and strappers).

### **Prize Money**

- Fairer distribution of prize monies across different tracks, particularly country events, and across different race divisions, more equitable prize monies for minor races.

### **Racing**

- Cut back racing to 6 days a week, cease Sunday racing, or have another day of the week dedicated as non-racing; the off day could vary from state to state so as to not adversely effect wagering;
- Provide restrictions on the number of horses from big stable businesses competing at country races, or provide race opportunities that are limited to small stables only;
- Program more races for class 4 and 5 horses.

### **Training and Education**

- Subsidise training/education courses for horse trainers;
- RVL to provide more training seminars / workshops for trainers;
- Provide on-going (possibly mandatory) education to trainers on new techniques related to horse training, and access to current research – possibly information to trainers via the internet;
- Compulsory basic training in horsemanship for all stable employees;
- Compulsory training in staff management for trainers who employ staff;
- Greater regulation of education/training requirements for trainers and stable employees;
- Provide seminars related to the business operations of horse trainers (e.g., taxation and accounting, GST, lodgement of BAS, payment of wages, superannuation, setting up websites, PR skills);
- Provide training opportunities at country locations.

### **Race Tracks and Training Tracks**

- ensure that 'club riders' are made available at training centres for use among trainers who can't access other track riders;
- Extend hours of training tracks, open training tracks in the afternoons to enable track access to trainers with other day jobs;
- Dedicated quality refreshment facilities that are readily accessible to trainers and strappers on race days;
- Provide trainers with lounges at race tracks to conduct necessary work – with refreshments and quiet areas; trainers could pay membership or other fees for access to the lounges.

### **Occupational Health & Safety**

- RVL to train OH&S officers so they have a practical knowledge of horses and horse training environments;

- RVL could summarise information about important and new OH&S issues and regulations that are specific to horse training and stable operations and distribute to all trainers or publish such information on the web;
- assist in OH&S policy and regulation development to ensure that it is appropriate to the needs of the industry, and is also user friendly.

#### **Other Comments / Recommendations**

- Free or low-cost personal counselling services for trainers;
  - Provide a 'hotline' service for trainers to contact when problems arise;
  - RVL to pay greater attention to the needs of small scale trainers, as they make up the greater part of the industry, but they are often forgotten by the industry.
  - Periodic awards or award ceremonies for trainers would be good public relations and appreciated by trainers.
  - Provide more encouragement and incentives for young trainers or those starting up new businesses.
- 

## 4. RESULTS: STABLE EMPLOYEES

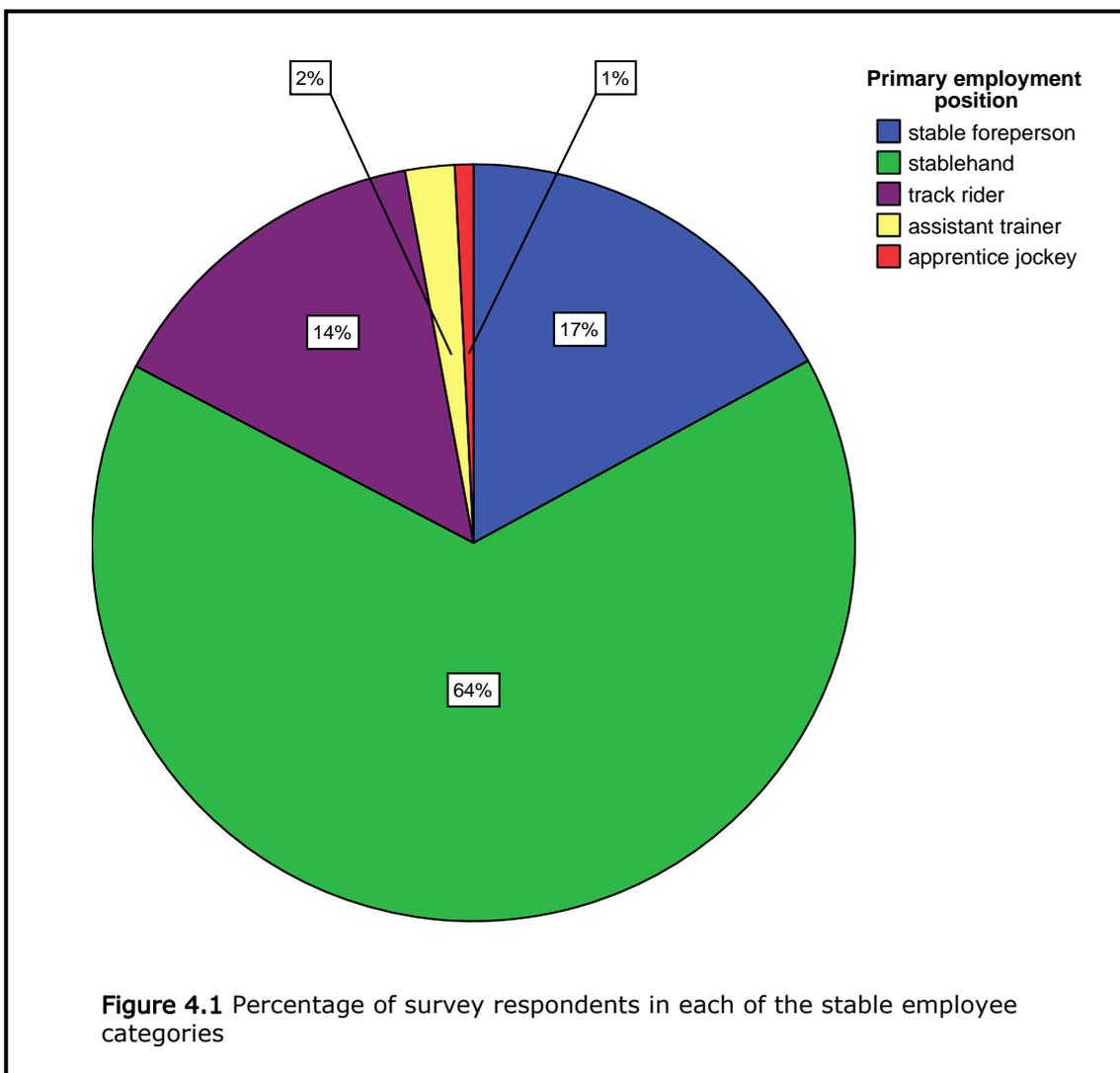
### Overview

Approximately 3,100 surveys were mailed to thoroughbred stable employees, including stable forepersons ( $n = 194$ ), stablehands ( $n = 1,702$ ), track riders ( $n = 1,180$ ), and assistant trainers ( $n = 20$ ) in Victoria. A total of 390 surveys were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 13%. One hundred and twenty-eight stable employees (33% of returns) indicated at the end of the survey their interest in participating in an in-depth interview with a member of the research team. As it was not possible to personally interview all interested stable employees, and in preference to interviewing only a very small number, a series of six open-ended questions that targeted key issues identified in the original Stable Employees' Survey, and which required written responses, were sent to stable employees interested in the interview phase. Twelve stable employees returned written responses to the questions, for a return rate of 10%.

### 4.1 PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

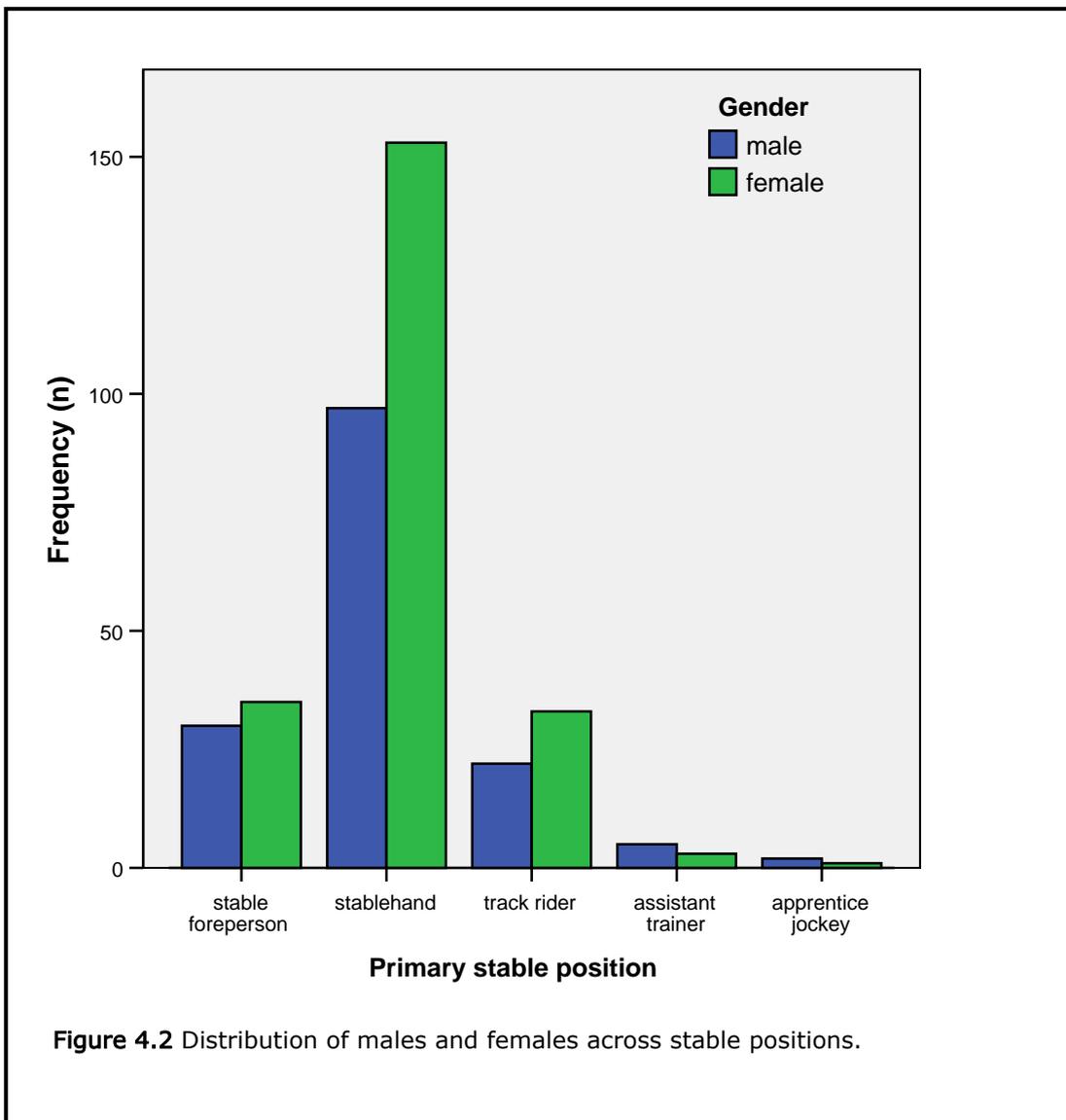
- A total of 390 stable employees completed the survey. A number of respondents ( $n = 35$ ) had employment in more than one stable position. The focus of the survey was on issues related to their primary stable position only. A breakdown of the sample into primary employment positions is displayed in Figure 4.1. The sample comprised: 255 stablehands, 66 stable foremen, 55 track riders, 8 assistant trainers and 3 apprentice jockeys. Three respondents did not identify their employment type. Because apprentice jockeys were poorly represented in the current survey, and are the focus of a future research investigation, the responses of the three apprentice jockeys are not considered here.
- 41% of stable employees were male ( $n = 158$ ); 59% were female ( $n = 230$ ). Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of male and female stable employees across the different stable positions.

- The average age of stable employees who responded to the questionnaire was 35.4 years ( $SD = 14.0$ ), within an age range between 14 and 73 years. Male stable employees (mean age = 41.7 years,  $SD = 14.8$ ) were typically older than female employees (mean age 31.2 years,  $SD = 11.6$ ). The age distributions across the different stable positions were:
  - track rider: mean = 32.8 years ( $SD = 9.5$ )
  - stablehand: mean = 35.1 years ( $SD = 15.1$ )
  - foreperson: mean = 37.6 years ( $SD = 11.8$ )
  - assistant trainer: mean = 46.0 years, ( $SD = 16.2$ )



- 49% of stable employees were married or in de facto relationships, 45% were single, 5% were divorced or separated, and 1% were widowed.

- The average duration of employment as a stable employee was 11 years ( $SD = 11.1$ ), within a range extending between 2 months and 57 years. On average, assistant trainers had worked as a stable employee for 18 years, track riders for 15 years, forepersons for 12 years, and stablehands for 9 years.
- Approximately 40% of stable employees had worked in stables for 5 years or less, and 22% for 20 years or more.



- For most stable employees (66%), their history of employment at stables had been continuous in 1 or 2 jobs only. 19% had engaged in continuous employment in 3 or more jobs, and 14% had a history of sporadic

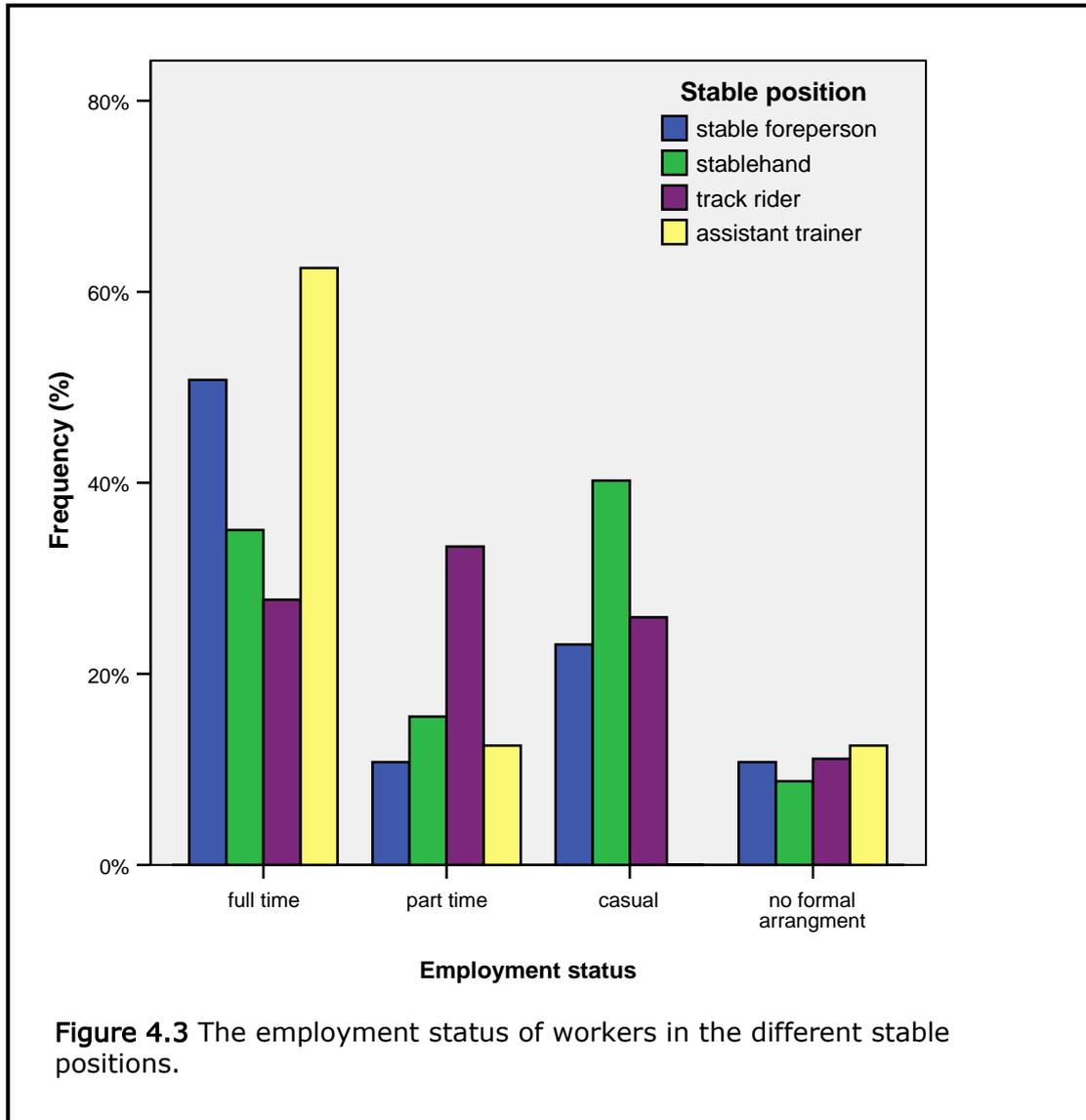
employment at stables. This pattern was similar across all stable positions, with the exception that stablehands had a higher proportion of sporadic employment history (19%) than any other group.

- In terms of current employment, the vast majority of stable employees (all positions) worked at one stable only. More track riders (13%) than any other stable position worked in more than one stable (usually 2-4).
- 73% of stable employees worked at stables located in regional or rural Victoria, and 22% worked in metropolitan stables (Flemington or Caulfield). A further 5% of stable employees did not report the location of their stable workplaces.
- The stable employees who participated in the study worked across a wide range of stable sizes, however, there were proportionally more employees from stables having either less than 10 race horses or more than 40 horses. This was the case for all stable positions except forepersons who more commonly worked at smaller stables. Overall,
  - less than 10 horses: 29% of stable employees
  - between 10 and 19 horses: 17%
  - between 20 and 29 horses: 14%
  - between 30 and 39 horses: 15%
  - 40 horses or more: 25%
- 53% of stable employees worked in stables where there were between 1 and 5 other employees. 10% worked in stables with 20 or more other employees.
- By far the most common reason for gaining work as a stable employee was love of horses (80%). Other frequently cited reasons included (note: most stable employees cited more than one reason):
  - association with the horse racing industry (50%);
  - the outdoors lifestyle (45%);
  - because of family connections (35%);
  - for exercise and fitness (24%)
  - training and career prospects (19%)
  - travel opportunities (13%)
  - flexible work hours ( 11%)

- other minor reasons – lack of other job opportunities; financial incentives; to become a jockey, horse trainer or owner; and for cross training with other horse-riding activities.
- Overall, 39% of stable employees indicated that they were employed under the Horse Training Industry Award (1998), and 24% reported having personal workplace agreements. A significant number of employees (37%), however, were unsure of their workplace award.
- The majority of employees across all stable positions reported that they did not have written contracts with their employers: full-time 68%, part-time 81%, casual 88%.
- Few stable employees (5%) had membership with a workers' union.

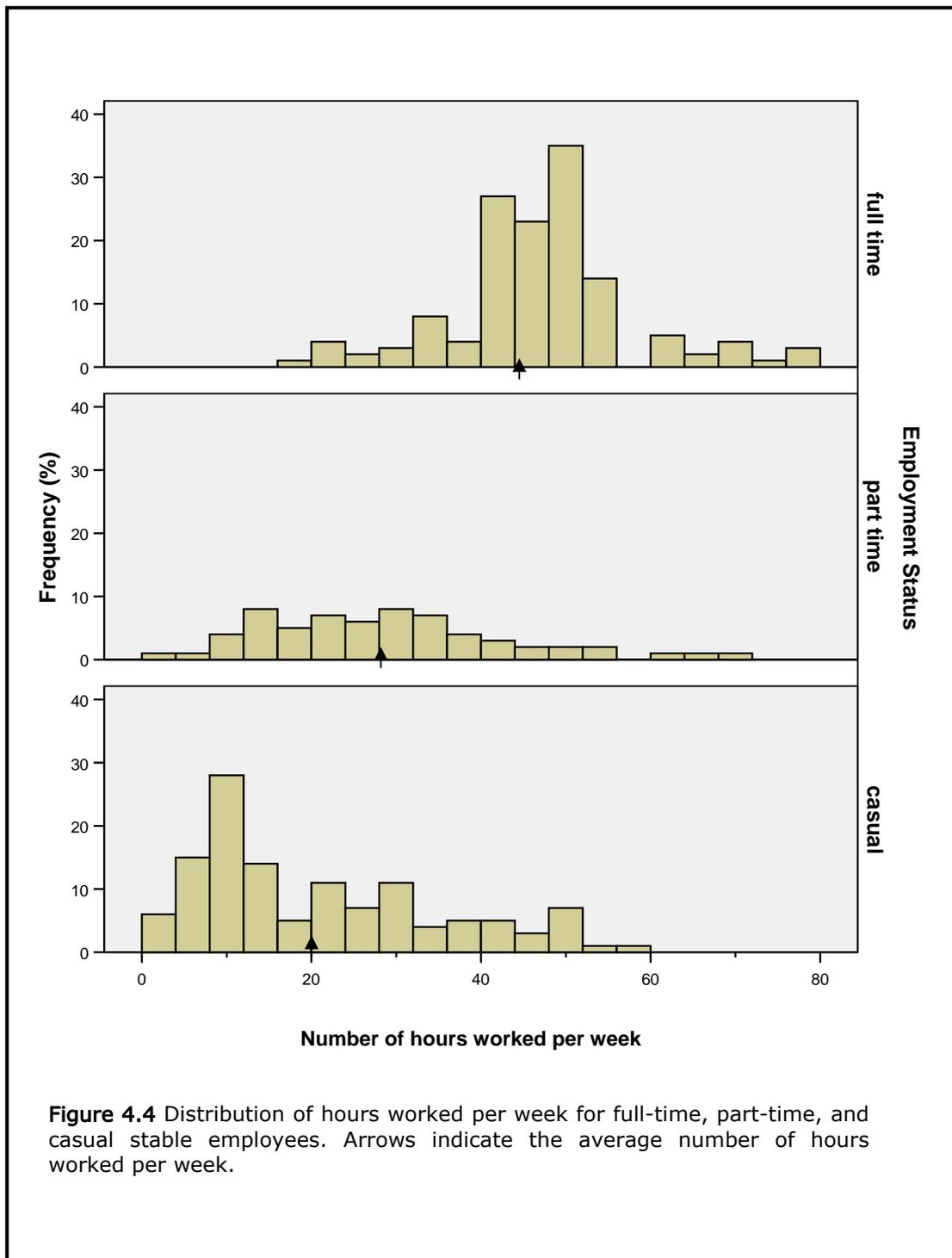
## 4.2 WORK HOURS

- Overall, 38% of stable employees worked in full-time stable positions, 34% were casual workers and 17% worked part-time. Ten percent reported having no formal employment arrangements with their employers. This distribution was similar across male and female employees. Figure 4.3 shows the employment status across different stable positions.
- Across all stable positions, full-time employees worked an average of 46 hours per week ( $SD = 11.3$ ), while part-time and casual employees averaged 28 hours ( $SD = 14.6$ ) and 20 hours ( $SD = 15.1$ ) per week, respectively. The number of weekly hours worked are shown separately for full-time, part-time and casual employees in Figure 4.4.
- 70% of full-time stable employees, 20% of part-time employees and 15% of casual employees worked 40 or more hours a week. In addition, a significant number (10%) of full-time employees worked in excess of 60 hours a week.
  - f/t stablehands: 85% worked > 40 hrs/week (40-77 hrs)
  - f/t track riders: 80% worked > 40 hrs/week (40-80 hrs)
  - f/t forepersons: 50% worked > 40 hrs/week (40-65 hrs)
  - f/t assistant trainers: all ( $n=6$ ) worked > 40 hrs/week (60-80 hrs)



- The majority of stable employees (95% full-time, 79% part-time, 55% casual) worked 6-7 days per week. This was the case across all employment positions, and for both male and female employees.
- Full-time forepersons (88%), stablehands (86%), and assistant trainers (80%) worked mostly split shifts, whereas full-time track riders worked either split shifts (50%) or part days (36%, usually early mornings).
- The majority of part-time (between 78-83%) and casual (between 70-80%) employees worked mostly part days, with the exceptions of:
  - part-time stablehands who worked either part days (50%) or split shifts (50%),

- casual forepersons who worked either part days (49%) or split shifts (50%).
- Overall, very few stable employees (4%) worked continuous hours throughout the day.



### 4.3 TIME OFF & LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

- The number of stable employees who regularly (often or very often) had at least one day off a week is shown separately for the different stable positions in Table 4.1. Although the majority of stablehands and track riders usually (often or always) had at least one day a week off, most assistant trainers and forepersons, and many stablehands and track riders, rarely did, or at the very most, had only occasional days off.
- Many full-time (83%) and part-time (52%) employees frequently (often or very often) worked over-time. This was the case across all stable positions, particularly for forepersons (full-time 97%; part-time 85%), but less so for track riders (full-time 50%; part-time 41%). Between 27-29% of casual employees (all positions) frequently worked over-time.

Employment Status	Overall	Fore-person	Assistant Trainer	Track Rider	Stable Hand
Full-time	60%	30%	2/6	80%	66%
Part-time	53%	28%	1/1	67%	50%
Casual	67%	50%	0/1	52%	67%

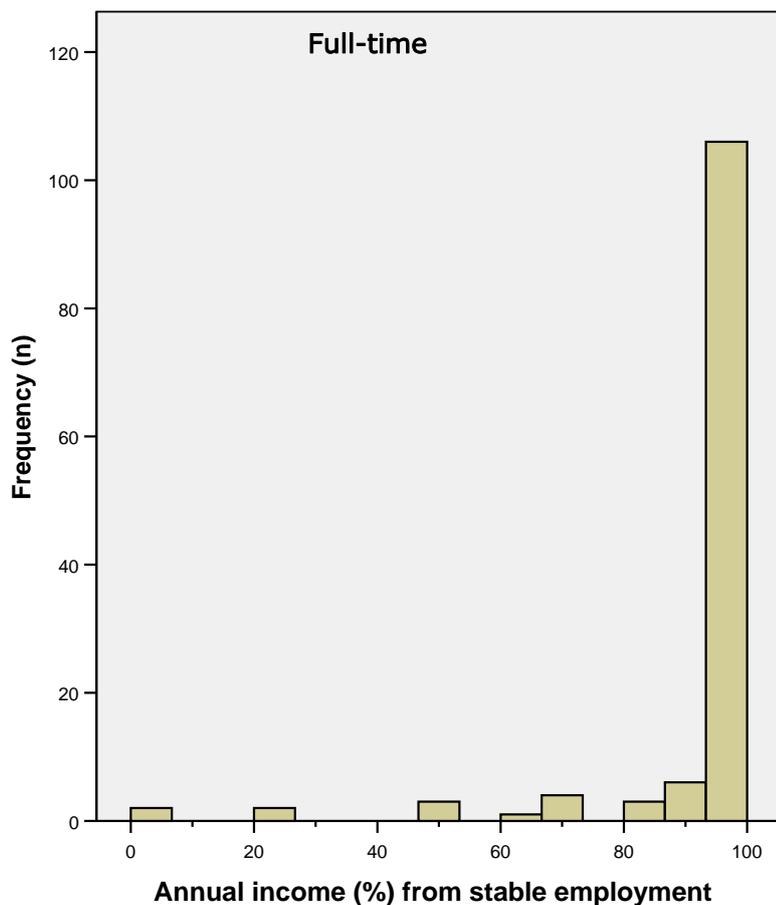
**Table 4.1** Percentage of stable employees who often or very often had at least one day off per week. Note, frequency data, and not percentages, are provided for assistant trainers due to the small sample size ( $n = 8$ ).

- The majority of employees (83% forepersons, 70% track riders, 52% stablehands, 71% assistant trainers) never or only sometimes received payment for the over-time hours worked.
- Between 18% and 34% of stable employees felt under pressure from the employers to work overtime.
- Approximately 70% of full-time stable employees (all positions) had annual leave arrangements with their employers, typically 4 weeks/year, and 52% had sick leave arrangements (5-7 days/year or when required).

- The majority (70-80%) of part-time and casual employees in all stable positions did not have annual leave or sick leave entitlements.
- Between 7-15% of stable employees were unsure as to whether they had formal annual leave or sick leave arrangements with their employers.
- Many stable employees (overall 33%), and particularly full-time workers (50%), had experienced difficulties taking leave when wanted or needed. In most cases the problem revolved around having no time or difficulties with finding replacement staff.

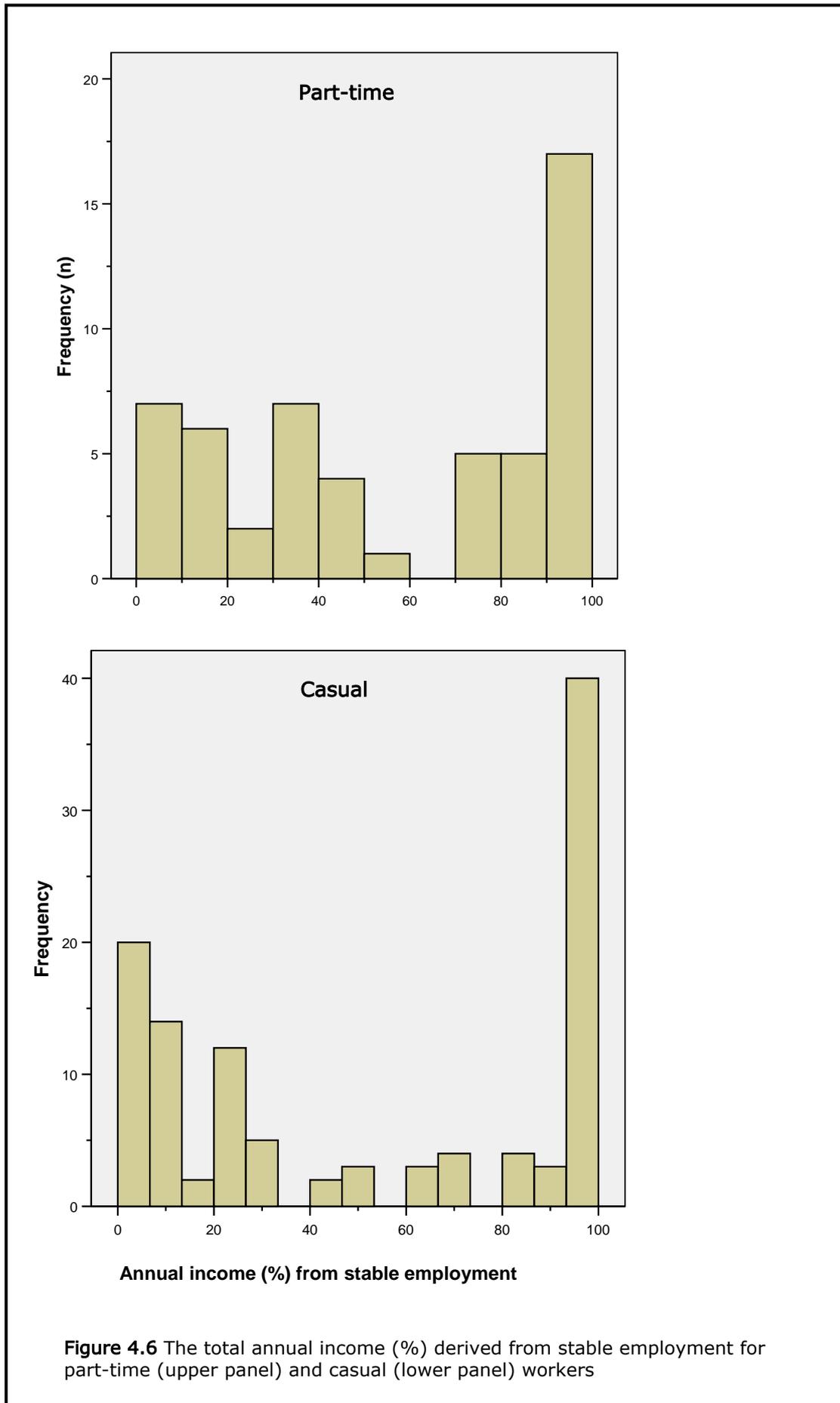
#### 4.4 FINANCIAL ASPECTS

- Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show the percentage of total annual income derived from stable employment, separately for full-time, part-time and casual workers. The vast majority (80%) of full-time stable employees (all positions) earn 100% of their annual income from their stable employment. In addition, 28% of part-time employees and 33% of casual employees earn 100% of their annual income from their stable employment. These values are similar for male and female stable employees.
- The vast majority (80%) of full-time stable employees (all positions) earn 100% of their annual income from their stable employment. In addition, 28% of part-time employees and 33% of casual employees earn 100% of their annual income from their stable employment. These values are similar for male and female stable employees.
- Approximately 50% of all casual and part-time stable employees derive less than one third of their annual income from stable work.
- 87% of stable employees who pay taxes have those taxes deducted from their pay by their employers.
- Overall, the employers of 53% of stable employees make regular contributions to superannuation fund on their employees' behalf: full-time - 79%; part-time - 58%; casual - 33%.
- The amount of superannuation contributed by employers was mostly between 9-10%, or \$100-200/month.



**Figure 4.5** The total annual income (%) derived from stable employment for full-time workers

- 20% of full-time forepersons and track riders make personal contributions to superannuation funds. Only 7-10% of stable hands, and part-time and casual employees make personal superannuation contributions. No assistant trainers contribute to superannuation funds. In the few cases ( $n = 22$ ) where the amounts of personal contributions to superannuation funds were reported, they were typically between \$50 and \$200 per month.
- The vast majority (94%) of full-time stable employees paid taxes on their stable earnings. In addition, 68% of part-time employees and 48% of casual employees paid taxes on their earnings. The most common reason for not paying taxes was because the amount earned from stable work was below the tax threshold.



## 4.5 OTHER EMPLOYMENT

- In addition to their stable employment, 12% of full-time workers, 22% of part-time workers and 16% of casual workers had other employment within the horse-racing industry.
- The various types of other employment within the racing industry include: agistment, administration, breeding, horse breaking, farrier, track rider, race club attendance or maintenance, and stud work.
- A further 21% of full-time workers, 50% of part-time workers and 55% of casual workers had other employment outside of the horse-racing industry.
- The main reason that stable employees (all stable positions) have other employment (within or outside of racing industry) in addition to their stable work include:
  - not enough money earned from stable work  $n = 104$
  - not enough stable work  $n = 20$
  - to pursue a career outside of the racing industry  $n = 45$
  - to gain a greater variety of work experience  $n = 33$
  - limited career pathways in the racing industry  $n = 29$
  - to use their equine skills outside of the racing industry  $n = 28$

## 4.6 EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE TRAINING

- Table 4.2 reports the highest level of general (non-equine) education attained by stable employees for all groups. 83% of stable employees had completed Year 10 secondary school or higher.
- 71% of stable employees had moderate or high levels of computer skills. 29% had no, or only low, levels of computer skills.
- Many stable employees had undertaken formal education related to horse racing: 28% had undertaken courses that directly related to their stable jobs (e.g. Certificate 1 or 2 in racing), and 44% had undertaken courses that related to horses generally (e.g. Bachelor of Equine Science) or other

occupations within the racing industry (e.g., apprentice farrier, jockey). In 95% of cases, 1-2 courses had been undertaken.

Education Level	Frequency	%
Years 5-7	3	1.0
Year 8/9	59	15.6
Year 10	57	15.2
Year 11/12	159	42.2
TAFE / Trade / College	40	10.6
University	58	15.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4.2** Highest level of education (non-equine) attained by stable employees

- Between 35% (track riders) and 45% (most other stable positions) of stable employees had received formal inductions from their stable employers (or senior staff members) when they joined the stables, 93% of whom rated the quality of the inductions as either average or good.
- In addition, the majority of stable employees (all stable positions) had received workplace training related to occupational health and safety (84%) and emergency procedures (72%). Many stable employees had also received training in equal opportunity (49%) and harassment/bullying (47%) in the workplace.
- Most (between 68% and 81%) of the training in workplace practices undertaken by stable employees was presented informally at the stables. The vast majority (>90%) of stable employees rated the quality of training as moderate or good.
- Stable employees were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how valuable or important different sources of learning / training (e.g. TAFE, formal training at stables) had been for them in their overall stable work. The rating scale ranged from values of 1 (most valuable / important) to 5 (least valuable /

important). Informal on-the-job training and information passed on to them from family, friends or mentors were considered the most valuable or important sources of learning by the majority of stable employees (86% and 71%, respectively). The more formal sources of information (i.e., formal training at stables, TAFE and RVL courses) were considered less valuable / important by many stable employees (56%), however, a smaller number of stable employees (18-25%) did consider these sources of information to be valuable.

## 4.7 WORKPLACE ISSUES

- Between 36% (stablehands) and 46% (forepersons) of stable employees were aware of the new *WorkChoices* national workplace relations system in Australia.
- 50% of stable employees who were aware of the *WorkChoices* system understood its key principles either moderately or very well. 36% of stable employees had only a little understanding of the system, and 14% had no understanding of it at all.
- Many stable employees (full-time 52%, part-time 43%, casual 37%) indicated that they were interested in undertaking training related to the *WorkChoices* system.
- Stable employees were asked to identify workplace issues that had been significant problems for them in, or as a result of, their stable work. Eleven potential issues were listed in the questionnaire, based on discussions with members of the Reference Group and other key stakeholders in the horse-racing industry. Table 4.3 summarises the separate responses of stablehands, track riders and forepersons.
- The two most common problem areas, identified by all stable employers, related to pay ( $n = 175$ ) and work hours ( $n = 144$ ). The specific issues included:

***Pay issues*** – Common issues: low pay rates; low pay for type of work undertaken (long hours, high risks, hard physical work, split shifts); not being paid for all work undertaken, inconsistent or incorrect pay rates.

Other issues - no formal contracts, no pay slips, no meal/travel allowances on race days, no superannuation.

**Work hours** – Common Issues: long hours and no recovery time, particularly on race days; not enough time off; early start, irregular hours, split shifts; inconsistent or unstructured work hours. Other issues: no recognition for long hours worked; too much over-time, little flexibility in work hours, pressure to work more.

- Physical health ( $n = 103$ ), and developing social networks ( $n = 108$ ) and/or leisure interests ( $n = 87$ ) outside of the horseracing industry were also common problems experienced by stable employees, particularly stablehands and forepersons. The nature of problems related to these areas include:

**Physical health** – Common issues: often/always tired, exhausted, body aches; often carrying injuries; often becoming run down and sick; working when sick or injured; chronic wear & tear injuries / pain; no recovery time; poor diet; poor sleep; risky work.

**Developing social networks and/or leisure interests** – lack of social networks and life due to long and irregular hours; being too tired; “not interested, as the industry is my life.”

- Other problem areas identified by many stable employees included:

**Recognition of work** ( $n = 95$ ) – no recognition for work undertaken; no recognition for extra effort, work, or responsibilities undertaken.

**Work relations** ( $n = 84$ ) – Common issues: harassment and bullying; unpleasant interactions (arguing, bitching, conflicts), particularly when workers are tired; lack of respect from employer, senior workers and/or peers; poor management of staff (communication, favouritism). Other issues – lack of professionalism, lazy staff.

**Workplace safety** ( $n = 80$ ) – Common issues: poor safety at stables; unclear safety procedures; safety not an issue discussed or considered. Other issues: safety issues raised by staff are ignored by management; inexperienced staff working without supervision; working when exhausted or injured; no compensation when injured; horses unpredictable – therefore doesn't matter how safe stables are, or therefore safety issues very important.

Workplace safety was particularly problematic among track riders, who identified poor safety at stables and tracks (e.g., lighting in early morning), no safety training, riding when exhausted, and no compensation when injured, as major problems.

WORKPLACE ISSUE	STABLEHANDS		TRACKRIDERS		FOREMEN	
	<i>n</i>	Rank	<i>n</i>	Rank	<i>n</i>	Rank
Pay	<i>n</i> = 112	1	<i>n</i> = 34	1	<i>n</i> = 29	1
Work hours	<i>n</i> = 89	2	<i>n</i> = 27	2	<i>n</i> = 28	2
Developing social network outside racing industry	<i>n</i> = 69	3	<i>n</i> = 18	7	<i>n</i> = 21	3
Physical health	<i>n</i> = 61	4	<i>n</i> = 22	4	<i>n</i> = 20	4
Developing interests outside racing industry	<i>n</i> = 58	5	<i>n</i> = 12	8	<i>n</i> = 17	6
Recognition of work	<i>n</i> = 57	6	<i>n</i> = 20	5	<i>n</i> = 18	5
Work relations	<i>n</i> = 52	7	<i>n</i> = 20	5	<i>n</i> = 12	8
Work safety	<i>n</i> = 46	8	<i>n</i> = 24	3	<i>n</i> = 10	9
Mental health	<i>n</i> = 38	9	<i>n</i> = 10	9	<i>n</i> = 13	7
Training and education	<i>n</i> = 35	10	<i>n</i> = 10	9	<i>n</i> = 9	10

**Table 4.3** The frequency of responses (*n*) and ranking of workplace issues that had been significant problems for stable employees in, or as a result of, their stable work.

***Mental Health*** (*n* = 61) – Stress, anxiety, frustration and/or depression related to: poor staff relations, harassment and bullying; constantly being tired; long work hours and little time away from stables; early starts; low morale, no recognition; type of work undertaken.

*Training and Education* ( $n = 54$ ) – Common issues: no or insufficient formal training available at stables; no time to undertake training; available training not suited to work hours; lack of available information for new employees

- Only two assistant trainers identified workplace problems and they related to uncertainty about pay rates, and lack of communication around the stables.

## 4.8 HARRASSMENT & BULLYING

- A significant number of both female (45%) and male (22%) stable employees indicated that they had at some time directly experienced harassment or bullying by another person in the workplace.
- In terms of actual numbers, overall, 138 stable employees reported a total of 232 cases of harassment or bullying. 104 female employees reported 173 cases, and 34 male employees reported 59 cases.
- In most cases, the harassment came from other employees at the stables ( $n = 99$ ) or from their employers ( $n = 77$ ). To a lesser extent, the harassment came from other persons in the racing industry, not employed at the stables ( $n = 47$ ) or persons outside of the racing industry ( $n = 13$ ). This pattern was similar across both male and female stable employees (refer to Table 4.4), and for stablehands and track riders. In the case of forepersons, the harassment or bullying came mostly from employers.
- In many cases, the harassment was not an isolated incident but occurred repeatedly (in some cases, daily) over periods ranging from weeks to years.
- As with the data of trainers, the number of cases reported here is probably an underestimate of the full extent of harassment and bullying experienced by the stable employees who participated in the study. The survey used in the investigation permitted only yes/no responses when indicating the source of the harassment and did not allow for data relating to multiple occurrences of harassment from different people within a given source category (e.g. employer or stable employee). A stable employee may, for example, have experienced several occasions of harassment by different workers at their

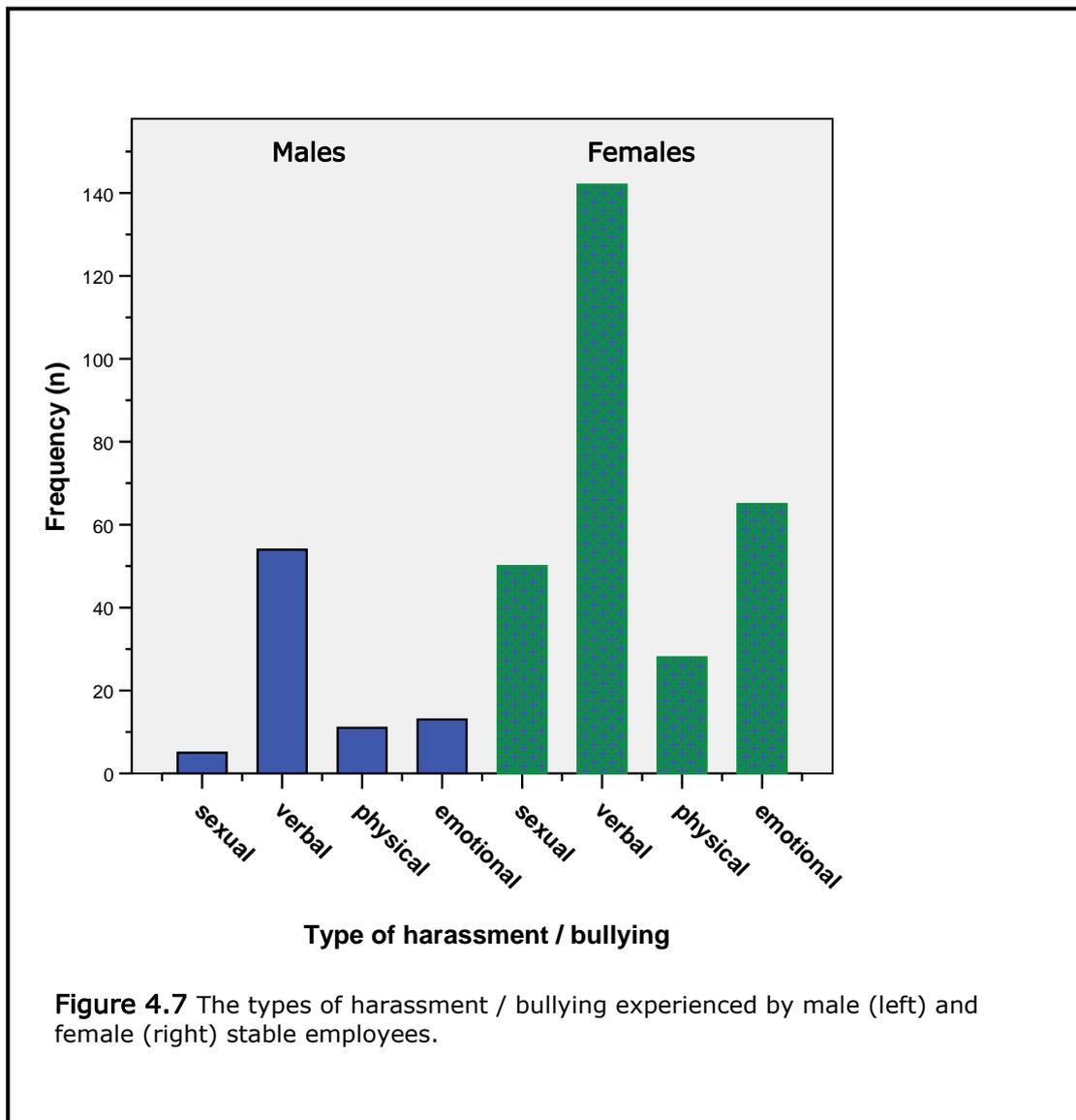
stables, which would have resulted in a single case being recorded under the 'Other Stable Employee' category.

	FEMALES	MALES
<b>Harassment by:</b>		
Employers	52	21
Stable employees	75	24
Persons in industry, not at stables	37	10
Persons outside industry	9	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>59</b>

**Table 4.4** The number of female and male stable employees who had experienced harassment in the workplace.

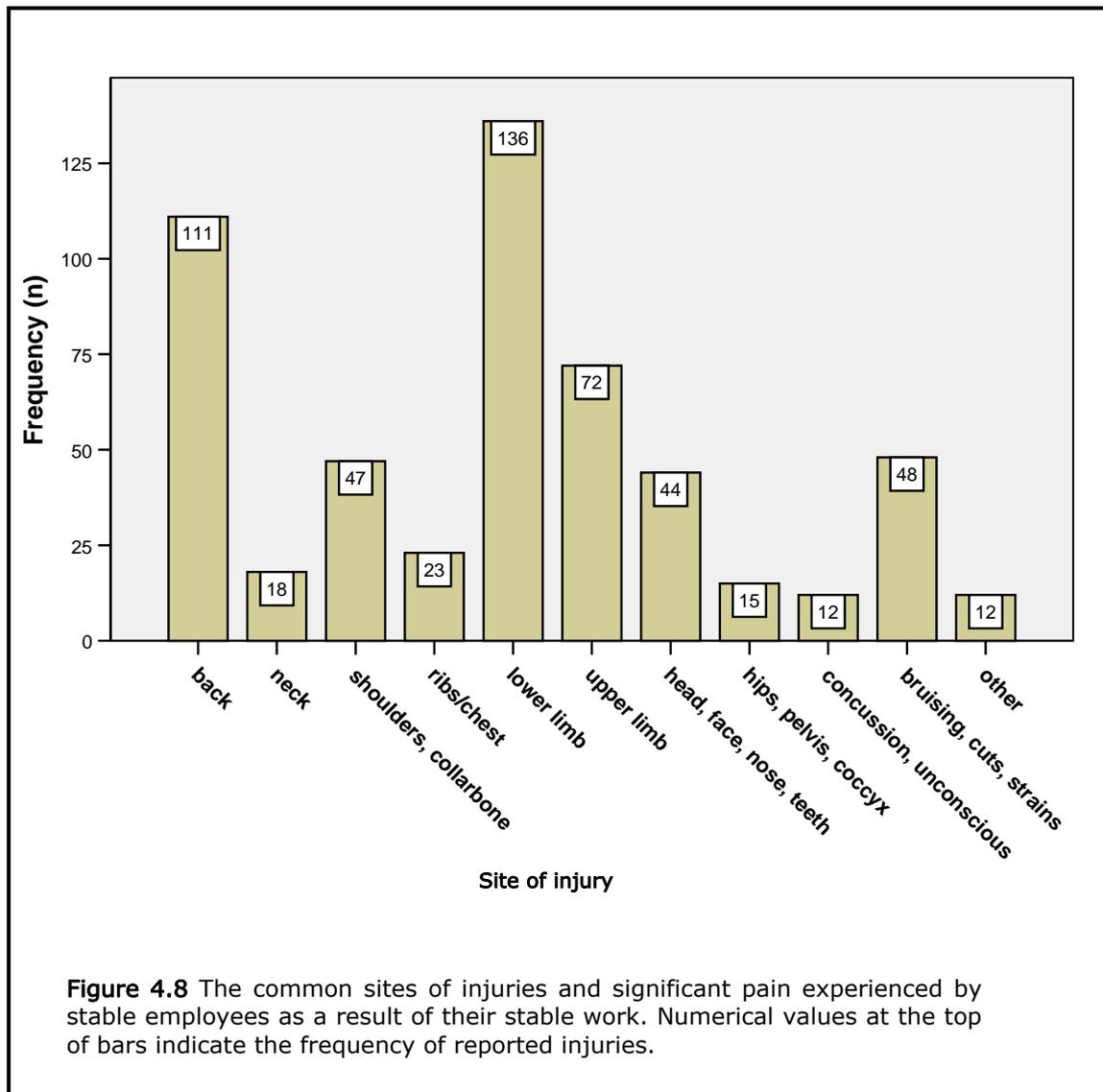
- When considered across the different stable positions, the number of stable employees who reported harassment or bullying in the workplace included:
  - 52% of track riders (females 61%, males 40%),
  - 33% of stablehands (females 44%, males 17%), and
  - 30% of forepersons (females 39%, males 20%)
  - 13% of assistant trainers (females  $n = 0$ , male  $n = 1$ )
- Figure 4.7 shows the types of harassment and bullying experienced by male (left bars) and female (right bars) stable employees, separately. The bars represent the number of cases of each form of harassment experienced by stable employees. Note that, in many cases of reported harassment, two or more types of harassment occurred together.
- For both male and female stable employees, verbal harassment was the most commonly experienced form of harassment. Emotional and sexual harassment were only commonly experienced by female stable employees.
- 38% of stable employees (males 29%; females 41%) took some form of action in response to being harassed or bullied in the workplace. The types of action taken included: informed employer or supervisor (most common), informed RVL, left job, confronted the harassing person, or sought legal or

police intervention. Only a small number of stable employees reported the outcomes of actions taken against harassment. Where details were provided, there were approximately equal numbers of cases in which (a) stable employees reported that the person involved was disciplined and (b) no action was taken by industry personnel.



## 4.9 WORKPLACE INJURIES

- Many stable employees (89% track riders, 65% foremen, 58% stablehands, 50% assistant trainers) had sustained injuries or experienced significant pain or physical symptoms over the past 5 years that related to their stable work.
- More full-time stable employees (80%) had incurred injuries or physical symptoms as a consequence of their stable work compared to part-time (52%), and casual (50%) employees.
- In addition, more male stable employees (73%) had incurred injuries or physical symptoms as a consequence of their stable work compared to female stable employees (47%).
- Figure 4.8 shows the common sites of injuries/ pain sustained by stable employees over the past 5 years during the course of their work.
- A total of 538 injuries or cases of significant pain/physical symptoms resulting from horse training work were reported by 237 stable employees. It should be noted, however, that the statistic reported here is really an underestimation of the true number of injuries sustained by those stable employees. In many cases, stable employees reported multiple injury/pain occurrences as a single case (e.g., broken ankles, several shoulder dislocations, numerous broken fingers). Although it is not possible to provide an accurate account of the extent of injuries sustained through the course of their stable work, an analysis of stable employees' responses here provides important insights into a significant workplace problem identified by the majority of these workers.
- The two most common sites of injury/pain, for all stable positions, were to the back and lower limbs. Together, these sites accounted for nearly 46% of all reported injuries.
  - trackriders: 24% of all injuries reported by track riders involved the back region, 18% involved the lower limbs.
  - forepersons & stablehands: 20% of all injuries reported by forepersons and stablehands involved the back, and between 28-31% involved the lower limbs.



**Back** ( $n = 111$ ): The most commonly reported problem was back pain, resulting mostly from riding falls or from overuse caused by heavy lifting around the stables and riding horses (particularly horses that pull). Back injuries / pain from riding falls were particularly common among track riders. Eight stable employees (mainly track riders) reported severe injuries to their backs (i.e. fractured or badly damaged vertebrae), caused mostly by falls from horses. Most back pain and injuries were rated by stable employees as moderate (52%) or severe (33%).

**Lower limbs** ( $n = 136$ ): Injuries to the lower limbs included mostly broken bones in the foot and ankle from being stepped on by horses. Broken legs, knee damage, sprained ankles and significant bruising to the lower legs were also common, usually resulting from riding falls or being kicked by horses. In

addition, a number of stable employees experienced on-going joint pain in the knees and/or ankles from the wear and tear of frequent riding. The majority of the injuries to the lower limbs were rated as moderate (54%) or severe (31%).

***Upper limbs*** ( $n = 72$ ): Broken bones in the arms, wrists and hands were also common injuries sustained by stable employees, mostly from riding falls or being kicked by horses. Many stable employees (particularly stablehands) also experienced broken or dislocated fingers and significant cuts to the hands and/or fingers as a result of being kicked by a horse or having fingers caught in stable equipment (e.g., walker machine, halter). Although less common, tendonitis in the elbows and hands was reported by a number of stable employees, usually related to frequent riding or wear and tear from stable work. With the exception of broken arms and wrists, which were typically rated by stable employees as severe injuries, most injuries to the upper limbs were considered to be moderate in severity.

***Shoulders & Collarbones*** ( $n = 47$ ): A significant number of stable employees had sustained broken or dislocated shoulders or broken collarbones as a result of falls from horses. Shoulder pain was also common and was usually attributed to overuse, particularly from riding work involving horses that pull.

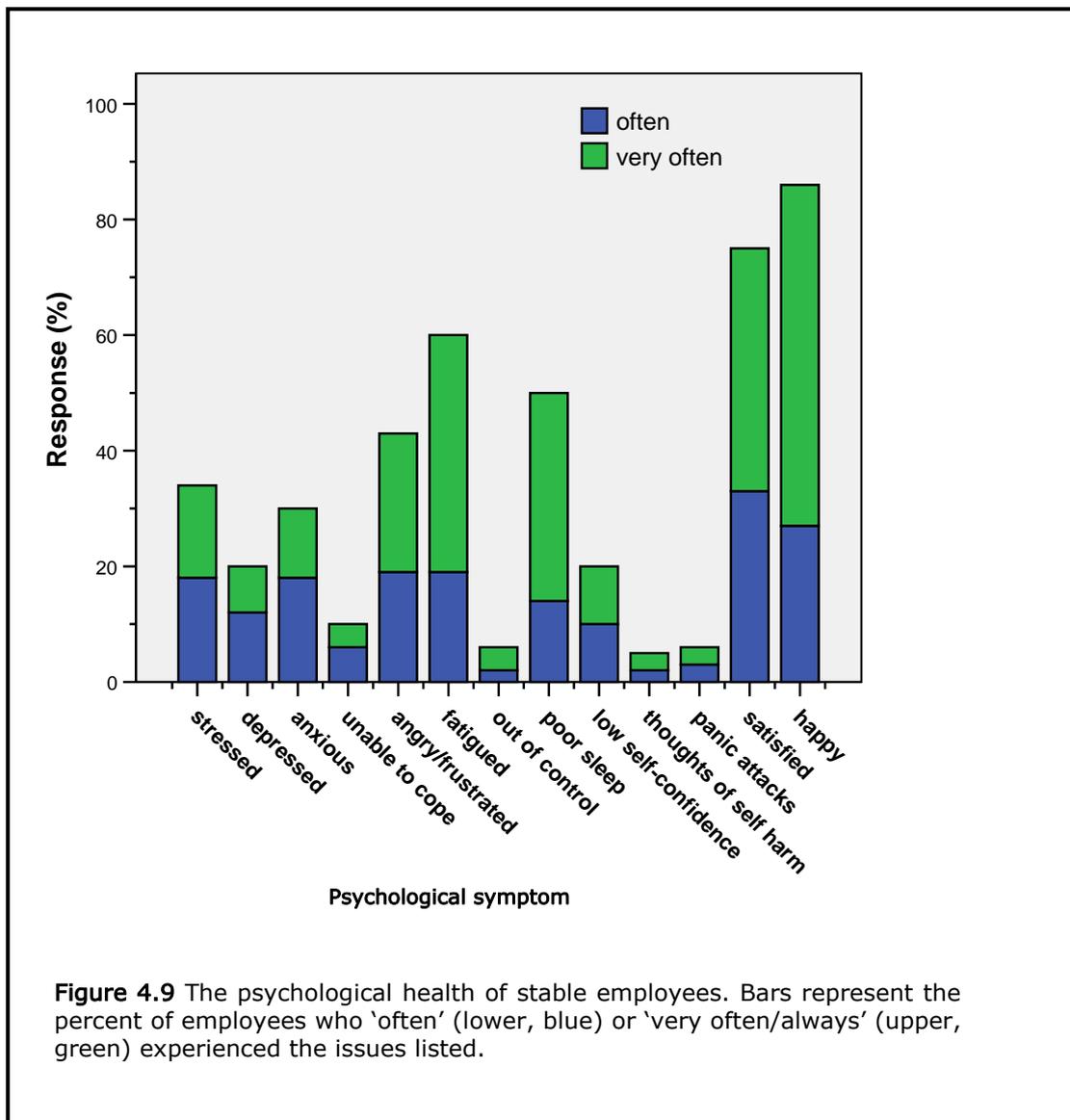
- Other common injuries sustained by stable employees as a consequence of their stable work include:
  - broken or bruised ribs – from riding falls, or being kicked or crushed by horses;
  - neck pain – from riding work, riding falls or overuse;
  - broken noses - from being head-butted by horses or riding falls;
  - concussion/unconscious – from riding falls;
  - black eyes, fractures, lacerations and bruising to the head and face – from riding falls or being kicked or head-butted by horses;
  - broken hips/pelvis and bruised hips – from riding falls or being kicked by horses;
  - significant bruising, lacerations, fractures and sprains to an unspecified body region – from riding falls, being kicked or bitten by horses, or from overuse.

- Several less common injuries or physical symptoms reported by stable employees include: bruised or ruptured kidneys or stomach (riding falls, kicked by horses), haematomas (kicked by horses), and respiratory complaints (asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis, allergies).

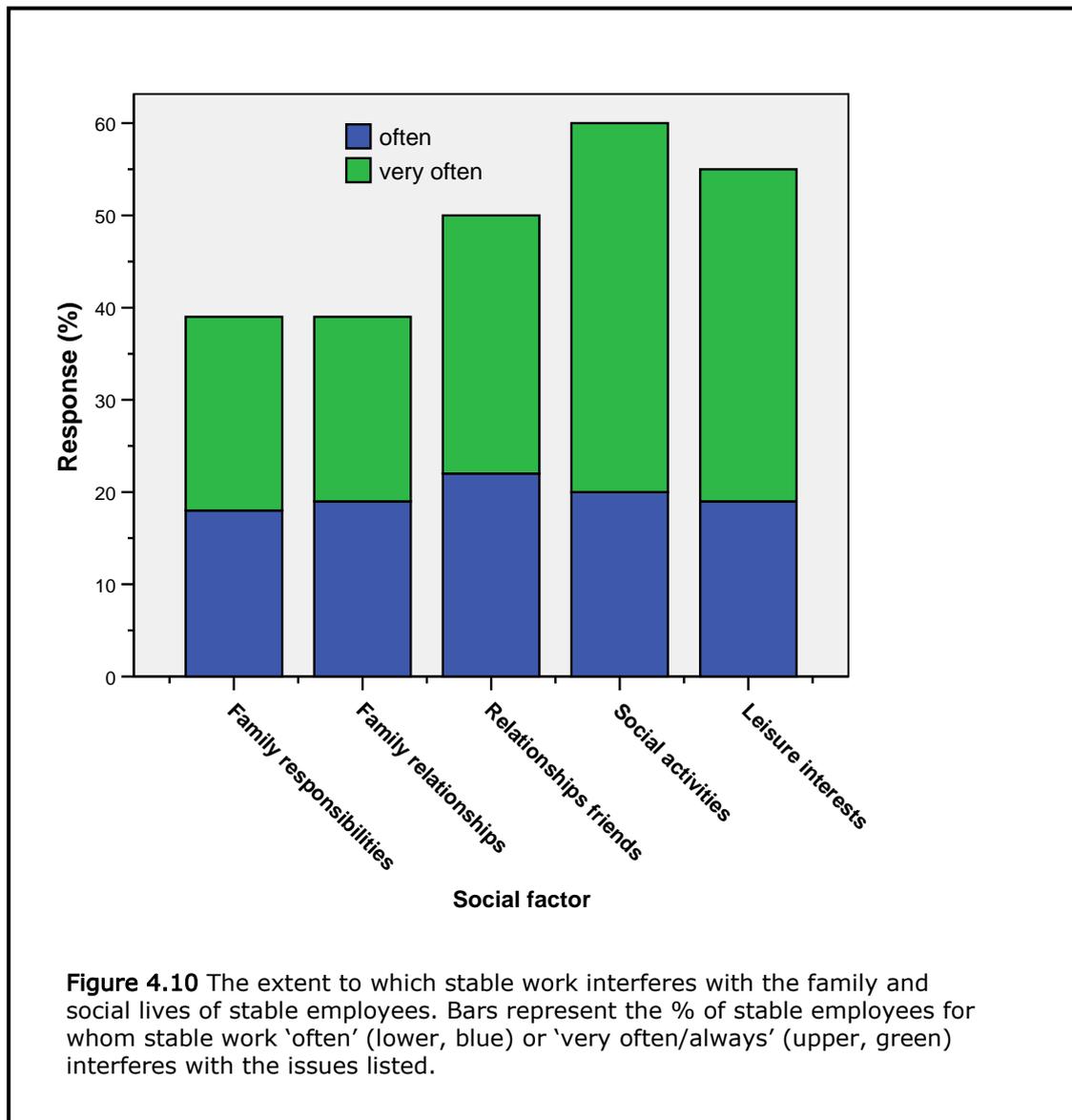
## 4.10 PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

- Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show the extent to which the work of stable employees influences their psychological health and well-being (Fig. 3.9), or interferes with their family and social/leisure life (Fig. 3.10). The response categories available to stable employees were: 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often', 'very often', and 'always'. The frequency data (%) presented in the figures are for the 'often', and 'very often/always (pooled together) response categories only, and across all groups of stable employees.
- The two bars on the right side of Figure 4.9 show that the majority of stable employees (approximately 75-85%) are, for the most part, happy and satisfied in their stable work. This finding is in contrast to the fact that a significant number of stable employees frequently feel fatigued (60%) and/or stressed (34%), and have poor sleep habits (50%; mostly related to lack of sleep), as a result of their stable work.
- Forepersons (50%), in particular frequently experienced stress, and female stable employees, frustration and low self-confidence.
- In addition, for many stable employees, both males and females, stable work frequently interfered with their family responsibilities (39%) and family relationships (39%), their relationships with friends (50%), and their social (60%) and leisure (55%) activities.
- A significant number of stable employees, particularly female employees, also frequently felt anxious (30%) and depressed (20%), or had low self-confidence (20%), as a result of their stable work.
- A smaller number of stable employees frequently experienced feelings of being unable to cope (10%) or being out of control (6%) that were related to

their stable work. In addition, several stable employees reported having frequent panic attacks (7%) or thoughts of suicide and/or self harm (4%).



- 27% of stable employees (23% males, 29% females) indicated that they would be interested in using the services of a professional counsellor (e.g., medical doctor, psychologist), if a private and confidential counselling service were provided at reduced fees or no charge.
- 17% of stable employees responded that they were unsure whether they would use a counselling service. Proportionally, more female stable employees (20%) compared to male stable employees (13%) were unsure.



## 4.11 GAMBLING & SUBSTANCE USE

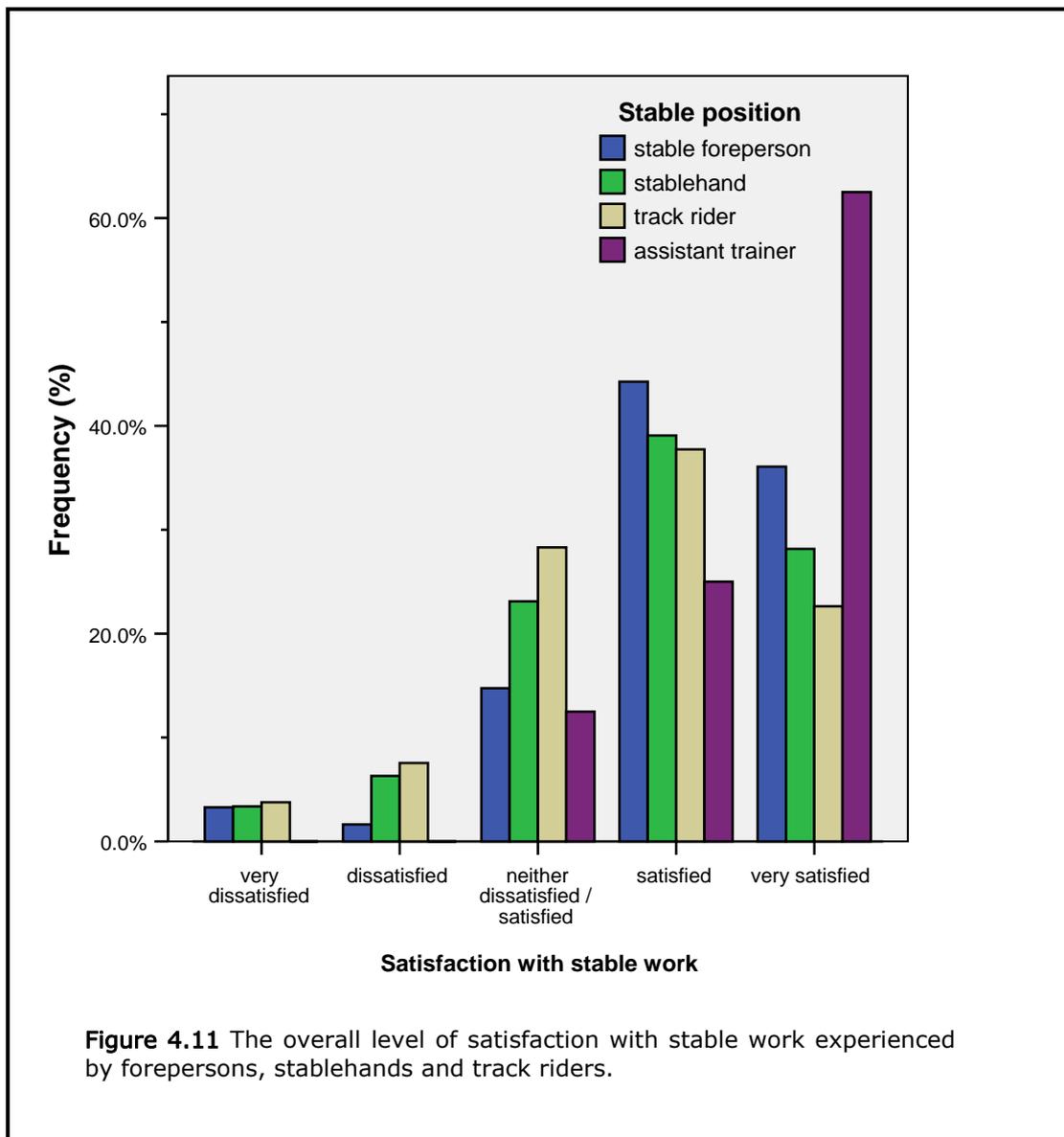
- 50% of stable employees indicated that they do not engage in gambling (wagering or gaming) activities, and a further 41% indicated that they do engage in gambling activities but have not experienced any problems related to those activities.
- A small number of stable employees (4%) reported having experienced gambling problems in the past ( $n = 17$ ), but no longer do, and 5% of stable employees ( $n = 20$ ) indicated that they currently experience problems relating to gambling.

- In both cases (past and present gambling problems), financial difficulties and family issues were the two most commonly cited problems related to gambling. Several stable employees also reported having experienced health- and work-related problems as consequences of their gambling activities.
- Approximately 65% of stable employees indicated that they consume alcohol but have not experienced any alcohol-related problems. A further 8% of stable employees ( $n = 33$ ) reported that they have experienced problems related to their alcohol use, 13 of whom continue to experience problems. Typically, these problems have revolved around financial, health and family matters.
- The vast majority of stable employees (90%) reported that they do not use recreational drugs (e.g., ecstasy, marijuana). 6% of stable employees ( $n = 24$ ) indicated that they do use recreational drugs, but do not consider that they have experienced any problems related to their drug use. A further 4% of stable employees ( $n = 15$ ) reported that they have experienced problems related to their drug use, 2 of whom continue to experience problems.

## 4.12 FUTURE PLANS

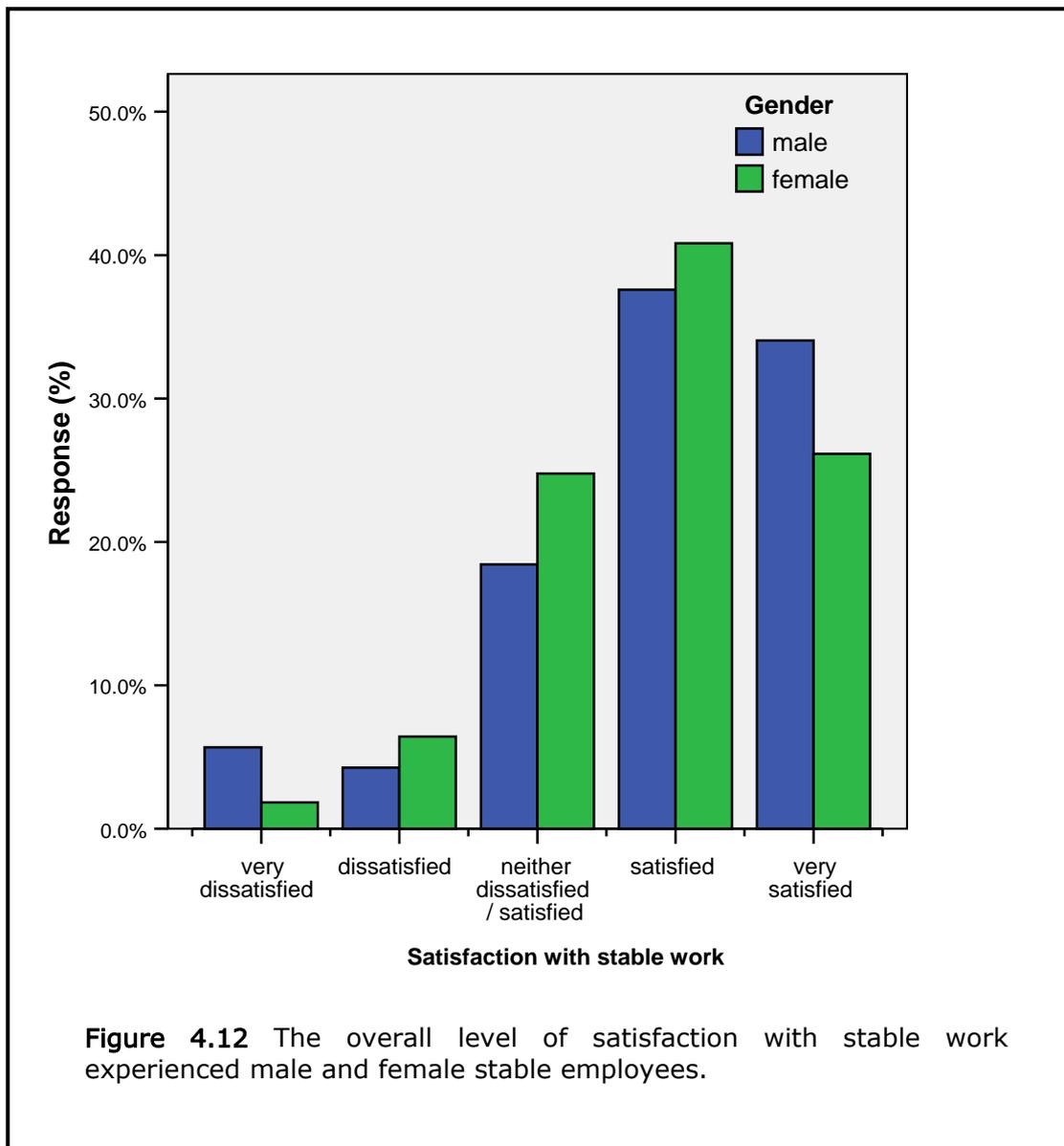
- Most stable employees (87% track riders, 80% foremen, 67% stablehands) were satisfied or very satisfied overall with their stable work. Some 5-10% of stable employees, however, indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with stable work. Figures 4.11 and 4.12 show the full breakdown of responses across stable positions (Fig. 4.11) and gender (Fig. 4.12).
- 72% of male stable employees and 67% of female stable employees were either satisfied or very satisfied with their stable work.
- Nearly half of all stable employees who participated in the study (47%) stated that they are considering leaving their work as stable employees, including, 42% of male and 56% of female stablehands, 38% of male and 61% of female track riders, and 40% of male and 33% of female forepersons.
- 46% of those stable employees who are considering leaving are thinking about doing so within the next 12 months. A further 26% of stable employees are thinking about leaving stable work within the next 1-2 years, and 29%

within the next 3-5 years. This pattern was similar for male and female stable employees and across stable positions, with the exception of forepersons. The majority of forepersons who were considering leaving their stable positions, were thinking of do within 1-2 years (35%) or 3-5 years (40%).



- The most commonly cited reasons underlying why stable employees are considering leaving their stable work revolve around issues related to:
  - nature of the work (e.g., long hours, little time off, early starts),  $n = 42$
  - low pay, to go to a higher paying job,  $n = 39$
  - change in career, to advance career,  $n = 26$

- age, retirement,  $n = 25$
- no career prospects in stable work,  $n = 21$
- exhaustion, too hard on body, injuries,  $n = 19$
- work in another area of racing industry,  $n = 15$
- further study,  $n = 15$
- harassment in job,  $n = 8$
- family reasons, start a family,  $n = 8$
- lack of job satisfaction,  $n = 7$ .



## 4.13 STABLE EMPLOYEES' RECOMMENDATIONS

Stable employees were given the opportunity to comment on how they thought RVL or other industry bodies could assist them in their future work as stable employees. Many stable employees took up this opportunity. This section summarises their comments, under headings relating to the key themes that emerged from the data. Note: multiple comments about the same issue are presented only once.

### Employee representation

- some form of representation / advocacy for stable employees;
- should be run by someone who has had direct experience in the industry or actually run by a stable employee, so it's more personal;
- stable employees should be encouraged to provide input into the association;
- an association whereby workers can call up and ask questions that would normally not be answered or they feel too intimidated to ask.

### Wages

- increase award wages;
- ensure all staff are paid award wages and paid on pay day;
- all hours need to be paid – not just lump sums (e.g., for race day);
- overtime needs to be paid;
- stable employees should get a cut of prize monies, % of winnings should go into a staff pool;
- trainers need to give pay slips to employees– many staff don't know their own rates of pay;
- system of penalties for trainers who don't pay workers;
- penalty rates for weekend work;
- pay rates should be based on experience and ability.

### **Workplace Conditions**

- access to drinks and food at races – stablehands often can't leave horses; look at Rosehill, NSW for an example on how it could be done;
- later start, more reasonable hours;
- enforce workplace agreements between trainers and contract stable workers;
- employees should be paid for travel to races;
- regulate hours worked, stable workers could have log books to record hours worked and they could be checked by RVL;
- have one race-free day per week;
- ensure all stable employees have contracts with employers;
- pressure trainers to pay correct rates and give leave entitlements;
- trainers should have work clocks so that stable employees' hours worked are recorded;
- WorkCover for track riders or RVL guarantee acceptable payments if injured;
- More education and stricter penalties for those who are caught harassing other staff.

### **Work safety**

- enforce work safety rules and regulations at stables, regular interviews of staff;
- better lighting at tracks in early morning (too many dark spots), and at stables early and late in day;
- more rigorous drug testing of all stable employees;
- provide information to stables on safety and emergency procedures;
- newly broken horses should need to have approval to be on track;
- conduct random safety checks on stables;
- compulsory training for new staff in OH&S, particularly horse handling. There is limited time in a busy stable to teach staff about safety procedures.

## **Education and Training**

- make education and training more accessible, provide training over the internet, schedule of training needs to take account of hours worked by stable employees;
- basic training courses for all new employees should be compulsory;
- more training opportunities;
- more information about available training, provide trainers with information about staff training;
- encourage trainers to allow workers time away from work to undertake courses;
- need career pathways and opportunities for stable employees – to help retain good staff;
- staff need to be taught how to ride track work as there are not enough track riders;
- courses could be run closer to training tracks to cut down on travel time, a lot of courses are run in the country or at TAFEs that are hard to get to;
- training provided at stables or directly able to be accessed through the workplace so it would be like an apprenticeship or traineeship;
- provide opportunities for stable employees to gain skills associated with racing, but outside of stable work (e.g., RVL public relations);
- provide scholarships for workers who want to undertake training;
- more career and training opportunities for advancement in stable work;
- improve induction into industry;
- provide first-aid training to employees.

## **Industry Information**

- provide information about different jobs in industry (e.g., jockey, stablehand, trackrider);
- provide easily accessible contact information for the various racing departments.

**Recognition**

- more recognition (e.g., recognition for years in service to industry);
- awards night to recognise contribution of stable employees to racing industry;
- recognition awards – for regional areas or racing clubs.

**Horse trainers**

- educate trainers on how to treat staff;
- give trainers tax rebates to encourage higher wages;
- help get money owed to trainers, then the workers can get paid;
- assist small trainers to ensure jobs are viable and they can pay staff.

**Country racetracks**

- increase prize monies at country races;
- better track conditions;
- need to have food and drinks available at country racetracks.

**Services**

- personal counselling service;
  - financial counselling service;
  - telephone 'hotline' so staff can inform or notify RVL about harassment or safety issues, and seek advice about various issues;
  - have an independent group where staff could submit complaints;
  - a service where personnel can find out about issues that relate to being stablehands.
-

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: HORSE TRAINERS

### OVERVIEW

This investigation into the health and welfare of trainers and stable employees in the thoroughbred horse racing industry provides the most detailed picture to date of the business operations and workplace practices of trainers and stable workers in Victoria, and of the ways in which the day-to-day demands of their horse training and stable activities influence their personal health and welfare. The primary outcome objective of the research was the development of recommendations for ways in which the horse racing industry in Victoria can better assist trainers and stable employees in their business and work activities, and enhance the overall quality of their lives and experiences in the horse racing industry.

This chapter of the report summarises and discusses key findings of the investigation, as they relate specifically to horse trainers. The quantitative survey data and written submissions to open-ended questions from trainers are combined to present an overall picture of the ways in which the demands and work environments of trainers influence their personal health and welfare. The chapter also presents recommendations for ways in which the racing industry in Victoria can assist trainers in their future business and work endeavours.

Formulation of the recommendations was undertaken by members of the Victoria University research team. Consideration was given to data collected from a variety of sources during the course of the investigation, including: survey and written responses from trainers, and interviews with representatives of different stakeholder groups within the racing industry (trainers, RVL, ATA), and the AWU. Where appropriate, additional information, or clarification of information, was sought from members of the Steering Committee. The following recommendations to the horse racing industry were made after an extensive analysis and synthesis of all obtained data and information. Note that the term 'racing industry' is used in the recommendations in a general context to refer to the industry's governing body, RVL, and the relevant industry stakeholders, most notably, the ATA and the AWU.

## 5.1 Profile of Participants

Surveys were mailed to 1,250 licensed thoroughbred horse trainers residing in Victoria, Australia. Three hundred and three surveys were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 24%. Low response rates to mailed surveys are typical in this kind of research, but generalizations can still be confidently made from the data gathered. Thirteen trainers who completed the survey also provided written submissions on key issues as identified in the survey responses.

The trainers who participated in the investigation covered a diverse mix of demographic categories and horse training situations. Representation of the different licence categories was approximately proportional to that seen in the greater Victorian horse trainer population (*Inside Racing*, January, 2007). Both male and female trainers were also well represented in the research, as were country and metropolitan trainers. Although the majority of trainers, both Owner and Permit Trainers, worked in small stables that serviced 10 or fewer horses and employed few stable staff, the larger stables (>20 horses) were also represented.

Fifty percent of trainers were aged between 40 and 60 years, with the remaining 50% split equally among the younger and older age groups. On average, trainers had held a licence to train for 18 years, however, the sample included a number of both new trainers (< 5 years) and long-term trainers, some of whom had been in the business for 40-50 years.

Permit Trainers included a significant number of both full-time and part-time trainers, whereas nearly all Owner Trainers worked part-time. All trainers, regardless of their licence type or employment status, worked 6-7 days a week, usually in split shifts. For most trainers, full-time and part-time, the number of hours they work each week far exceeds what are considered industry standards in the general workforce for full-time and part-time employment.

Most full-time trainers derived 100% of their income from their horse training work or business. For the majority of part-time trainers, horse training contributed 20% or less to their total annual incomes, and they usually engaged in additional employment or business activities to their horse training activities.

Many part-time trainers, particularly Owner Trainers, had professional careers or significant work commitments outside of the horse racing industry and considered horse training as hobbies or secondary interests only. Many of the

trainers who considered horse training as their primary career interest also needed to undertake additional work because of limited financial returns or work opportunities in horse training.

For the vast majority of trainers, horse training in Victoria is a rewarding occupation that generates considerable satisfaction and happiness. This finding is in contrast to the fact that much of their lives are spent engaged in horse training activities, with few chances to recover from the stresses of one day before the next day begins, or to spend time with families and friends. And, the major rewards of horse training are, for the most part, intrinsic to the activities that trainers engage in, not financial. Many trainers, particularly those with small training stables, survive mostly on the passion they have for their work and the industry, and struggle daily to make ends meet. So numerous and widespread were comments relating to financial issues and work commitments among participating trainers, that these two issues alone constitute the bulk of this discussion.

## 5.2 Financial Issues

The results of the present investigation indicated that nearly two-thirds of the participating trainers had experienced significant financial difficulties related to their work or business as horse trainers. These difficulties revolved around four main issues: (a) receiving payment (debt recovery) for training services; (b) income generation, particularly in the cases of small-scale or new training operations; (c) training fees; and (d) superannuation.

### 5.2.1 Debt recovery

For many trainers, adequate cash flow is an on-going problem. In many cases, the problem relates to difficulties in obtaining payment for the services they provide. More than half of the Permit Trainers surveyed had encountered problems in obtaining payment from the owners of horses, and for many, slow or non-payment had been persistent sources of financial and emotional stress, compromising the viability of their horse training businesses and negatively affecting their personal lives.

A number of trainers commented that many owners do not appreciate the repercussions of slow or non-payment for horse trainers. As one Permit Trainer stated:

*There have, in the past, been times when we didn't know how we would pay wages or creditors. I was fortunate to have understanding creditors. They [slow or non-paying owners] just don't think about that.*

Comments such as "I'm constantly in debt", "finances are always a juggling act", "there's not enough money to pay staff", and "I'm often unable to meet creditors' accounts" were also common among Permit Trainers. Other trainers described difficulties obtaining finance for their horse training businesses, and incurring credit interests or credit defaults as direct consequences of slow and non-paying owners.

For some Permit Trainers, the repercussions of non-payment extended into their personal relationships with stable staff and industry personnel, with breakdowns in workplace relations resulting from wages or fees not being paid. Several trainers also attributed the constant stress of dealing with non-payment to breakdowns in family and other social relationships. When asked about the personal consequences of non-payment, one Permit Trainer commented:

*This is probably the biggest problem I've encountered ... it definitely contributed to my marriage breakdown.*

And another:

*In the case of bad debts, I believe that the unnecessary pressure that it not only places on you, but your staff and family, has a detrimental effect on your training of the horses. You are constantly under pressure juggling the need to have horses in work, continuing a working/friendly relationship with a client [owner] who obviously doesn't respect you or your work by their late or non-payment. Emotionally this has an enormous effect on your life. You are often in the awkward situation of dodging creditors, as well as trying to remain positive in your work environment.*

To encourage timely payment by owners, some trainers specify strict terms for account settlement, with late fees and interest charged on overdue accounts. According to several trainers, rigorous adherence to such conditions has met with some success, but there are still trainers for whom even financial penalties prove to be ineffective.

In response to non-payment, several trainers indicated that they simply cease racing and training horses until all debts are fully paid. In a few cases, relating particularly to horses that have been unsuccessful in racing or have broken down, this tactic has resulted in horses being abandoned at the stables and left

in the trainers' care. A more common outcome, however, is that horses are removed from the stables by owners, only to be placed at other stables, where the cycle of non-payment has continued. As one trainer commented:

*In the case of non-payers and late payers, after 1 month I have ceased to train the horse for them. So they [owner] move on to another trainer, and it [non-payment] just goes on.*

And another:

*At the moment, a horse can be taken out of your stable too easily and the bills not paid.*

A small number of trainers reported that they had instigated debt recovery processes through either the ATA or private debt collection agencies. The ATA provide its members with two levels of assistance: a free service that includes letters of demand and dispute resolution, and access to formal legal services at reduced cost. For some trainers, however, debt collection was not an option they considered, because it was regarded to be "*too time consuming*" or "*too expensive*", or they were unaware of any debt recovery assistance provided by the racing industry.

More commonly, trainers carried the losses associated with non-payment. And, for many Permit Trainers, non-payment related not only to fees associated with the horse-training services they provide, but also to reimbursement for costs related to racing (e.g., nomination fees, transport) and the specialist care of horses (e.g., farrier and veterinary services).

It was clear that representatives of both RVL and the ATA were strongly supportive of assisting trainers in improving the process of payment, and in addressing the problem of late payments, chronic non-payers and debt recovery. Various comments were made by trainers during the course of the investigation as to strategies that they thought would be most effective (refer Section 3.13). These comments centred around three main areas:

**(1) *reporting and obtaining information about slow and non-paying owners:***

Currently there exists no formal process for trainers to report cases of non-payment or to access information about owners who have a history of poor or non-payment. Several trainers suggested that a registry of defaulting owners would be beneficial to trainers, particularly in the case of owners who move horses around different stables, leaving a trail of non-paid debts.

(2) ***mechanisms for receiving payment from owners and undertaking debt recovery:*** A number of trainers considered that the racing industry (RVL or the ATA) should act as an agent for trainers in matters related to payment (of training fees and other expenses covered by trainers) and the recovery of debt. One suggestion was that RVL provide a central billing service for horse trainers, collecting fees from owners and distributing payments to trainers. Several trainers further suggested that RVL (or the ATA) should have the power to collect debts on behalf of trainers, with one trainer commenting:

*The fact that RVL are requesting payment, would, I believe, give owners the understanding of the importance of settling debts.*

An alternative suggestion for the recovery of debts and fees was to enable trainers to access prize monies awarded to horses of non-paying owners.

(3) ***penalties for non-paying owners:*** A number of trainers commented that applying penalties for outstanding debts would both encourage trainers to make timely payment and also formally reprimand trainers who fail to meet their financial obligations to the industry. Examples of penalties suggested by trainers include: de-registration or suspension from racing of non-paying owners until all debts are paid, forfeiture of prize monies, and rejection of nominations.

Although it is beyond the scope of the present investigation to determine the effectiveness of mechanisms for dealing with non-paying owners and the recovery of debt, it is clear that the issues of slow and non-payment are both widespread and enduring in the racing industry, with consequences that extend far beyond financial inconvenience.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

That the racing industry explore viable options for identifying non-paying owners and additional mechanisms for assisting trainers with debt recovery.

## 5.2.2 Income accrual difficulties

For many trainers, the expenses related to training and racing horses far exceed the income that is generated from training fees and/or prize monies. This is particularly the case for trainers with small scale training operations (< 5 horses) and for trainers who are new to the industry.

**Small-scale trainers:** For many small-scale trainers, particularly Owner Trainers, income from horse training derives almost solely from prize monies received, and all expenses related to the purchase, training and racing, and day-to-day care of horses must be met by the trainer. For some Owner Trainers, horse training and racing is a 'hobby' interest, which is intentionally funded through external sources of finance. For a significant number of other Owner Trainers, and many small-scale Permit Trainers, however, horse training is their primary career interest, and they are forced to seek additional employment, in other areas of the racing industry, or outside of the industry, in order to supplement their horse-training income or cover the costs of their horse-training and racing activities.

A number of Owner Trainers commented that the restrictions associated with an Owner Trainer licence mean that there is very limited opportunity for generating income from horse training or for building a profitable business. Indeed, for the majority of Owner Trainers (68%), horse training and racing contributes 10% or less to their annual income. One Owner Trainer stated:

*As an Owner Trainer, I'm not able to take outside/paying horses and so can't go forward in the industry ... I need constant support from outside income just to survive.*

Another small-scale trainer remarked:

*I need to win or gamble to pay for the horses.*

A consequence of their restricted licences is that most Owner Trainers (96%), who participated in the study, had small scale stable operations, with 5 or fewer horses in active training. Almost 50% of Permit Trainers also had small stable operations ( $\leq$  5 active horses), either by choice or because they were unable to afford to develop their training businesses into a larger scale operations because of the limited income generating potential of those businesses.

Several small-scale trainers commented that they are in *Catch 22* situations. As they have few horses and little income flowing in to their horse-training businesses, they are unable to purchase or attract quality race horses, and as a consequence, there are limited opportunities to obtain prize monies to sustain or grow their businesses. Other trainers commented on the difficulties they had experienced competing with large scale training operations, in terms of attracting owners and quality race horses, and gaining a share of available prize monies. One trainer remarked:

*I would like to compete [race] against similar trainers and budgets. The big trainers purchase horses for millions of dollars and I purchase horses for under \$20,000. How can I possibly compete and survive?*

Several other trainers also suggested that there was a need for restricted races to be scheduled into the calendars of both metropolitan and regional race meetings, so as to increase the opportunities for small-scale trainers to race and access prize monies. For example:

*I think one of the best things that could be done to help the smaller trainers with lower-class horses would be to program races restricted to horses which have, say, been sold at public auction for no more than \$50,000.*

*I suggest races [be] restricted to trainers with less than a certain number of horses on their books or with less than a certain number of wins.*

*Restricted races for country trainers. I have noticed in the past 6 months that most [country] races now are taken up with runners from the big city stables.*

Another trainer highlighted additional difficulties experienced by small country-based trainers:

*I'm unable to compete with larger stables due to the quality of horses ... Even at the local racetrack, they [non-local, large training stables] bring their horses and take away most of the prize money. Country races should be for the locals.*

The sentiments of this latter trainer were widespread among country trainers. And, as several small-scale country trainers pointed out, in addition to having reduced opportunities for accessing prize monies at country races, because of the dominance of horses from large stables, the actual prize monies awarded at country racing events are considerably lower than equivalent events held at city locations. For some country trainers, racing at city-based racetracks was not considered to be an option because of the added expense of transporting horses, in some cases, for considerable distances.

The inequity of prize monies across metropolitan and regional events was an issue raised by numerous country-based trainers, 65% of whom run small-scale training operations (5 or less horses). Industry representatives also acknowledged the need for a more equitable distribution of prize monies, not only across metropolitan and country race meetings, but also between major and minor racing events. Accordingly, RVL is in the process of undertaking a review of current and past prize monies for races throughout Victoria, to determine both the extent of disparities and the most fair and effective means for apportioning available monies.

The vast majority of Victorian horse trainers have stables that are located in country Victoria, and train approximately 80% of Victoria's thoroughbred racehorses. Country racing in Victoria also contributes important economic and social benefits at the State, regional, and local levels (Country Racing Victoria, 2006). So significant is country racing to the success of the racing industry that the Victorian Government branded it "the backbone of the racing industry in Victoria" (Office of Gaming and Racing, 2006).

#### RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the racing industry complete the review of the distribution of prize monies across metropolitan and regional racing events, and where identified, address significant inequities through a fair and transparent process.

**New trainers:** Almost three-quarters of trainers (Permit and Owner Trainers) who had held licences to train horses for 5 years or less ( $n = 54$ ) indicated that they had experienced significant financial problems associated with their horse training activities. Trainers starting up a horse training business experience many of the same cash flow problems as established trainers with small-scale businesses (e.g., difficulties attracting owners and acquiring quality horses, limited opportunities for generating income and accessing prize monies), in addition to the many industry start-up costs, and expenses related to securing property and equipment. As one trainer commented:

*I am currently in the first 5 years of a racing business ... and I am experiencing the situation of lower horse quality and significant start up costs. I try to limit advertising / overheads, which unfortunately also limits opportunities for new clients. I have other horse skills besides race horse training, and I supplement this activity [training] with others (e.g., breaking-in and pre-training) ... to make ends meet. I sink a significant*

*proportion of my non-horse training income into staying afloat in the hope that it will be returned to me in the short term (5 years), however, this money could probably have a better return if it was invested elsewhere.*

A number of comments and suggestions were made by trainers as to strategies they thought would assist small-scale trainers and new trainers in building and sustaining more viable horse training businesses. Scheduling of restricted races was one strategy suggested by several trainers. For the most part, trainers' comments centred around mechanisms for reducing the high overhead costs faced by many small-scale and new trainers, and included:

- start-up grants/subsidies;
- transport subsidies;
- a sliding scale of fees;
- reduced licence insurance for trainers with few horses;
- cost relief, such as caps on farriers, vets etc.; and
- cheaper access to training tracks;

One trainer commented:

*When trainers are starting off, it is the most expensive time (bridles, saddles etc.). A small subsidy or grant may help, or even a waiver of their licence fee for the first year.*

High overheads and limited income opportunities are common among many new and small business operations. In the general business world, State and Commonwealth governments, and many industry governing bodies, provide small and new businesses with industry incentives and financial relief in the form of development funds, subsidised start-up fees, and other financial concessions. Such industry practices are models that the Victorian racing industry could consider to assist trainers who struggle financially, and to support small-scale and new horse trainers in building more viable business operations.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

That the racing industry explore options for providing business and/or financial support and assistance to trainers starting up horse-training businesses and to those trainers with current small-scale business operations.

### 5.2.3 Fee structure

**Fee Structure:** Currently there is no formal industry-regulated fee structure for training race horses in Australia. The ATA has a recommended training fee of \$98.00 per day per horse. Trainers, however, often undercut that fee in order to attract business from owners. This seems to be particularly the case for small-scale training operations. One Permit Trainer commented:

*Sometimes trainers are their own worst enemy. For example, most trainers never stick to the recommended fee. They all have different prices. Undercut to pinch a good horse from another trainer. They give owners deals to get [their] horses and then struggle financially. This has to be stopped. This is where trainers fall down.*

And another:

*Because the industry undercharges for their services (training fees), it results in the trainer often working long and consistent hours to provide a multidimensional service because he cannot afford to pay qualified employees to offset the demanding workload.*

An analysis of training fees listed in RVL's Online Trainers' Directory (March, 2006) revealed that the majority (90%) of small-scale trainers charged daily training fees in the range \$30 to \$50. Only 12 small-scale trainers charged more than \$50, and the maximum rate listed was only \$72.50. Many large-scale trainers, with 20 or more active horses, also charged daily training fees below the recommended rate, however, in the majority of cases (85%), those fees were in excess of \$50 per horse. Although the listed prices for trainers are incomplete (as some are recorded as "negotiable", and not all trainers are included in the list), the general pattern is clearly evident. The bulk of horse trainers in Victoria are charging well below the industry recommended rate for their services.

The fierce competition between trainers to attract good owners and racehorses, although understandable, actually serves to drive down their income and restrict their overall earning potential. The negative results of this competition are felt most severely by the new and small-scale stables. Having an industry-regulated, but economically flexible, fee structure would both protect small and young stable businesses and provide an industry standard for appropriate remuneration for a range of training services.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:**

That the racing industry consider the introduction of a regulated horse training fee structure in Victoria.

**5.2.4 Superannuation**

In the racing industry, there is the potential for horse trainers to earn significant sums of money. Only a small number, however, take a share of the bulk of available monies, and, as is clearly evident in the current investigation, many trainers struggle to keep their businesses afloat. According to statistics published by RVL (2006, p. 38), only 40 trainers (approximately 3% of all trainers) earn an average income of \$50,000 or more from their horse-training and racing activities. It is therefore important that trainers become educated in the areas of business and financial management (see Section 5.4), and be encouraged to plan financially for their future.

One mechanism for developing financial security in trainers, and preparing them for life after horse training, is through investment funds such as superannuation schemes. Currently, there are no collective superannuation schemes for trainers. The ATA recommends NationWide's superannuation scheme and many trainers use this scheme for contributions on behalf of their employed staff. It appears that far fewer trainers, however, take up the option of private superannuation for themselves. Only one-third of the trainers who participated in this study made regular contributions to superannuation schemes, and for the most part, those contributions were relatively small amounts (< \$5,000 per annum).

Although some trainers may contribute to superannuation schemes through their work commitments outside of the racing industry, the results of the current study suggest that a significant number of trainers do nothing to prepare for their future financial security. The comments of several trainers suggest that lack of knowledge about superannuation schemes and hectic work schedules may both act as barriers for trainers to initiate such financial planning. Other comments suggest that some trainers may believe that their incomes from horse training are insufficient to enable meaningful superannuation contributions.

In 2004, RVL, in collaboration with the Victorian Jockeys' Association (VJA), established the Jockeys' Retirement Benefit Package to help jockeys prepare financially for their future. The package, which includes a superannuation scheme (Jockeys' Super Benefit) and a retirement benefits scheme (Jockeys' Career Benefit), has received strong support from jockeys since its introduction. Together, the two schemes complement each other so as to provide a reasonable level of financial support when a jockey retires from race riding or is in need of financial assistance.

Industry investment schemes, and particularly The Jockeys' Benefit Package, may provide suitable models for encouraging and assisting horse trainers to achieve financial security and plan for their future.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**

That the racing industry explore options for introducing an effective superannuation scheme for trainers.

The provision of industry incentives and financial relief (e.g., subsidies, reduced fees), and the introduction of a collective superannuation scheme for trainers are important ways in which the racing industry can assist and support horse trainers in establishing more viable business operations and plan for their futures. Providing trainers with opportunities to access a professional financial counselling service would further encourage and assist trainers in developing financial responsibility, both during and after their careers in the racing industry. The comments of a number of trainers who participated in the study suggest that such a service would be welcomed and strongly supported by trainers, particularly those who are new to the industry.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

That the racing industry provide trainers with opportunities to access confidential counselling services that deal with all matters related to financial and business management.

### 5.3 Work Commitments and Leave Arrangements

***Time Commitments:*** There was almost unanimous agreement among horse trainers and industry personnel that training thoroughbred race-horses involves a significant time commitment. Regular days off, annual leave and sick leave are, for most trainers, luxuries they seldom experience.

In terms of the number of hours worked each week, the participants in the study fell into two clearly-defined groups: those who worked full-time training horses and those who worked part-time. Full-time trainers were, in almost all cases, Permit Trainers, who, on average, worked around 60 hours per week. A significant number worked well in excess of the average working week, and as many as one-quarter of all full-time trainers worked 80 or more hours each week.

Most Owner Trainers (93%), and a significant number of Permit Trainers (36%), trained horses on a part-time basis, and many had significant work commitments outside of the racing industry. Although a sizeable number (40%) of part-time trainers worked less than 25 hours a week training horses, almost 25% worked in excess of 38 hours (what is considered a full-time workload in the general work-force), and 10% of part-time trainers worked in excess of 50 hours each week.

In terms of the number of days each week that trainers engaged in training activities, all trainers, irrespective of their licence types or whether they were full-time or part-time trainers, worked more than a five-day week, and a staggering 98% of trainers spent significant amounts of time 7 days a week attending to horse training duties. The main difference between full-time and part-time trainers lay in the extent of their daily time commitments. Although almost all trainers worked split-shifts that typically began in the very early morning, the split-shifts of the majority of full-time trainers covered most of the day, and consisted of early morning, mid-day and late afternoon/evening hours of work, whereas most part-time trainers worked split-shifts that consisted of early morning and late afternoon hours of work only.

***Leave arrangements:*** Given the considerable amount of time that most trainers engage in training horses and running their business operations, it is perhaps not surprising that few trainers take adequate time-off from their horse training activities for rest and recovery, and even fewer take annual leave or sick leave,

even when needed. Almost two-thirds of the trainers who participated in the study never, or rarely, took a day off, and as few as 2% of trainers took annual leave. Comments, such as those below, were widespread among trainers, and particularly Permit Trainers:

*I've worked 7 days a week, 80 hours, without a day off in 4 years.*

*We have had one holiday in 10 years with most other travel being business related (e.g., yearling sales).*

*Sick leave only when hospitalised, one holiday in 40 years.*

Many trainers commented that working long hours, coupled with no or little time off, adversely affects both their horse training businesses and their personal lives. A significant number of trainers also indicated that they were considering leaving the horse training industry because of the excessive work commitments and resulting stresses (see p. 39).

For many trainers, balancing their training and racing activities with management and administration of their business operations, and with professional education and training programs, is a source of constant stress and difficulty. A number of trainers indicated that they simply did not have the time to undertake many of the administrative duties associated with running their horse training businesses. In some cases, spouses or partners helped out, whereas in other cases, the work just didn't get done, or it was done late into the evening when all other work was completed, which only served to further deprive trainers of much needed sleep. Not surprisingly, for many trainers, particularly those who train horses full-time, professional education and training would be additional time burdens, and thus, are not important priorities.

Of particular concern to some trainers, were the increased risks of workplace injuries and accidents that can result from working when fatigued or stressed. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that fatigue, lack of sleep and stress are all directly linked to higher workplace accident rates, (e.g., Frank, 2000; Akerstedt, 2002; van Dijk & Swaen, 2003; Swaen, et al., 2003). An alarming finding in the current study, is that a significant number of trainers reported frequently (often or very often) being fatigued (57%) and/or stressed (36%), and many had poor sleep habits (41%; mostly related to lack of sleep), because of their horse-training work.

In addition to increasing the risk of accidents or injuries at work, fatigue and stress can result in reduced performance and productivity, and disturbed mood

(e.g., anxiety, depression). Fatigue and stress can also interfere with a person's ability to communicate effectively and deal with workplace conflict. Several comments by trainers who participated in the study pointed directly to breakdowns in workplace relationships because of fatigue and the stresses of training and racing horses.

Some 40% of trainers indicated that their horse-training commitments also interfered with their family responsibilities and relationships. Comments such as:

*Basically, I have no family life. It's very upsetting.*

*No time for family, they always have to fit in and set important dates around race meetings.*

*My partner doesn't understand the hours and dedication.*

*The time I spend working has always been an issue ... creates family stress.*

were common among trainers. In almost all cases, the disruption to family life was a direct result of the long hours (and odd hours) that trainers worked. As one trainer lamented:

*Sadly, the children know how to feed themselves, but the horses don't.*

And another:

*Work [horse training] demands resulted in my marriage breakdown.*

Some trainers reported that they rarely had time to spend with their families, unless family members were involved in their training operations. Other trainers indicated that they were often too tired or stressed to attend to family responsibilities and relationships. For example:

*As I do practically everything myself, there is little energy left over for anything else.*

*I'm too tired to enjoy time off with the family.*

And, for some trainers, particularly female trainers, there were the added difficulties associated with trying to balance work commitments with the responsibilities that go with caring for children and/or maintaining a home. One female trainer commented:

*It's hard getting children to school on time and balancing household tasks.*

For similar reasons, many trainers (approximately 50%) found that their horse-training activities significantly interfered with their social and leisure activities, particularly those outside of the racing industry. For the most part, trainers had little time or were usually too tired to engage in social or leisure activities. And, for those who were able to schedule social activities into their busy routines, more often than not the activities revolved almost exclusively around the racing industry, either intentionally, or because they had had few opportunities to develop social networks outside of their work environments.

As was evident in previous research into the health and welfare of jockeys (Speed, Seedsman, & Morris, 2001), when individuals' lives and sense of who they are, their self-identities, are so inextricably intertwined in their careers within the racing industry, forced time away from their work (e.g., due to injury or illness) or retirement from those careers can be extremely stressful periods, often associated with loss of personal identity and social networks, feelings of lack of direction or purpose, and a sense of being disconnected from, or forgotten by the industry. Time away from their horse training activities to develop social networks and interests outside of the racing industry is, therefore, important for trainers' social, mental, and physical health. Such breaks from work would not only provide immediate benefits to trainers, but they also have long-term implications for trainers' future health and well-being.

For a small number of trainers, their passion for horses and the trainer's lifestyle seemed to over-ride their need for taking weekly or annual leave from their horse training activities, as illustrated by such comments as: "horses are my relaxation", "horses are our lives" and "no desire to have time off or go away", and "there's no incentive to leave the stables, I love my job."

The majority of trainers, however, considered that the long hours of work with little opportunity for time-off was imposed upon them. Many trainers, both Owner Trainers (79%) and Permit Trainers (39%), for example, did not employ any staff at their stables, and as a consequence, undertook all of the horse training duties themselves, or had family or friends help out when needed. Many of these trainers described difficulties finding suitably skilled and responsible staff to replace them, or simply couldn't afford the costs involved with hiring a replacement trainer. Other trainers felt that there was too much at stake to leave management of their stables to another person:

*I have to be there to ensure everything is done to the maximum - there's too much at risk;*

*I don't like being off the place – too much at stake*

By far the most cited reason for not taking time off work, however, related to what trainers considered to be an overloaded racing calendar which sees racing events held 7-days a week, almost every week of the year. During the 2005/2006 racing season, for example, Victoria's racing industry was host to 580 race meetings, (4686 races), covering nearly every day of the year. There were also 488 industry trials conducted with 3030 starters, the equivalent of an additional 300 races or 38 race meetings (RVL, 2006).

Almost half of all the trainers who participated in the study considered that the current racing calendar is excessive, and the main reason why they have to work long hours with little time off. As one trainer commented:

*The worst move by the industry which is detrimental to trainers was 7 day a week racing – the traditional "day off" for family and relaxation was removed, meaning that people who already work 7 days on 24hr call have no down time at all.*

Many trainers suggested that racing should be limited to a 6-day week, with a mandatory day off, to enable trainers to recover and spend time with their families. This solution, however, is probably a false hope, as, regardless of the racing calendar, horses need to be tended to every day. In addition, and as mentioned above, many trainers are unable to afford or find suitable replacement staff, or believe that there is no-one available who is capable of taking over their stable responsibilities. Reducing the racing calendar will probably do little to change those situations or perceptions.

What is clear, however, is that the majority of trainers in Victoria have excessively high workloads that place the physical, mental and social well-being of trainers at risk. How to most effectively address this issue is unclear, and is a challenge that the racing industry will need to take up as a matter of some priority. Changing the racing calendar may assist some trainers, particularly those with large-scale training operations. Providing trainers with better time management options, and with greater access to highly trained staff to replace them may also help to reduce their workloads.

In some instances, the trainers themselves will need to be the main agents of change, as no doubt some have already been. This is particularly so in the case of adopting more appropriate time management of their horse training and racing activities, and also of the extent to which they choose to engage in racing opportunities provided by a 7-day weekly racing calendar.

In other instances, RVL and/or other industry bodies will need to instigate change and give support to trainers. Given the widespread view of trainers that the problem is tied to the racing calendar, as a starting point, the racing industry could explore the need for programming a weekly day off from racing events, and where identified, consider other mechanisms to assist trainers manage their workloads more effectively. In undertaking a needs analysis, the racing industry should consider examining records relating to the attendance of trainers (from both small-scale and large-scale operations) at racing events throughout the calendar, both from retrospective and prospective viewpoints. Doing so will provide the racing industry, and horse trainers, with important data to tease apart the demands that the current 7-days-a-week racing calendar place on trainers from those that are inherent in the responsibilities associated with training and caring for racehorses.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 7:**

That the racing industry explore the need for programming a weekly day off from racing events in Victoria, taking into account the racing commitments of trainers from metropolitan and country locations, and also small and large scale training operations.

## **5.4 Training and Education**

The majority of trainers who participated in the study had attained at least Year 10 high school education, and a significant number had tertiary level qualifications. In addition, most trainers who had held trainer's licences for 5 years or less (when formal qualifications became a compulsory licence requirement) had completed, or were in the process of completing, a Certificate or Diploma of Racing. Few other trainers (7%), however, had undertaken formal education related to horse training, and even fewer had received training in business management or administration skills, despite the fact that many of them managed their own horse-training businesses.

In addition, although the majority of trainers had undertaken training in Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S), a significant number of trainers had not undergone training in this area, and the majority of trainers indicated that they

had no training in the workplace practices related to equal opportunity, harassment/bullying, emergency procedures, or staff relations/management.

Those trainers who had undertaken higher education courses, and/or courses related to OH&S, workplace relations, and business management, were mostly Owner Trainers, which probably reflects the more advanced qualifications required of many Owner Trainers in their pursuit of professional careers outside of the racing industry.

As already discussed, for many trainers, finding time to engage in formal education and training has proved to be major difficulties for them. For those trainers who do manage to find time, they often do so as additional loads to their already heavy work commitments, and usually at the cost of having time off from work, and less time for relaxation and/or family or social engagements. As a consequence, as one Owner Trainer commented:

*Like many trainers, I work full-time outside of horse training so [educational] training is often done while I'm tired and stressed from both jobs.*

The costs involved in undertaking professional qualifications and workplace training, and the need for considerable travel to education centres, were also barriers for some trainers.

A number of trainers made suggestions for strategies that might enhance educational and training opportunities and encouraged trainers to take up those opportunities. For the most part, these suggestions centred around two key initiatives:

- *The provision of on-line training courses delivered over the internet:* Many government and private educational institutions and organisations provide distance education using a variety of electronic formats (e.g., web-based platforms, video conferencing) to deliver educational programs across the country. Considering that the majority of trainers (78%) who participated in the study used the internet to access information related to their horse-training activities, these distance education programs may serve as excellent models for the development of suitable educational and training programs for trainers.
- *Greater provision of educational courses and workplace training in regional Victoria:* Although trainers are currently able to access the Certificate and Diploma of Racing courses through TAFE colleges at several major regional

locations, some trainers are still required to travel considerable distances to attend these courses, and currently, there are few opportunities to undertake training related to workplace practices through this system. One suggestion was to provide on-site workplace training at strategically located regional stables around the State. Extending educational and training opportunities to a number of less central regional locations, may circumvent both the time and travel difficulties experienced by trainers, and provide trainers with more engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

***Business management training:*** Operating a horse-training business requires expertise not only in areas related to horse training and racing, but also in business management and administration. Knowledge of government and industry regulations, and practical skills in financial management, record keeping, business planning and marketing, are all fundamental to running a successful horse-training business.

Only a small number of trainers who participated in the study (16% of Owner Trainers and 5% of Permit Trainers) had received formal training in business management and administration skills. As stated above, those who had were mostly Owner Trainers, which probably reflects the more advanced qualifications required of many Owner Trainers in their pursuit of professional careers outside of the racing industry. Trainers who had held training licences for less than 5 years, had also received some business management training in their Certificate and Diploma courses, however, as one trainer stated:

*The Diploma of Racing covers business planning but not basic financial procedures such as lodgement of BAS, payment of wages, super, etc. ... practical things that I need to do on a regular basis.*

For many new trainers, the first few years are a time when they are developing both their technical expertise as horse trainers and the necessary skills to market and manage their business operations. As a consequence, new trainers are often in vulnerable positions, both financially and professionally, and without the appropriate guidance and training, are at increased risk of running into financial and other difficulties that may compromise their horse-training businesses and cause undue stress.

The comments of several trainers and industry personnel suggest that an equally small number of trainers employ professional business managers or seek expert financial guidance on matters relating to their business operations. The majority of trainers, it seems, and particularly those with small business operations,

manage all aspects of their businesses themselves, including the main financial and administrative tasks, and do so with little guidance and no formal training.

In the case of trainers who employ staff at their stables, there is the additional need to possess quality staff management skills and have a sound understanding of regulations concerning workplace relations systems and practices. Approximately 50% of trainers who participated in the study employed one or more staff at their stables. Fewer than one-quarter of those trainers, however, had received formal training in staff relations, and as many as 50% had little or no understanding of the new national workplace relations system (i.e., *WorkChoices*). Many trainers did, however, indicate that they would be interested in undertaking formal training in the *WorkChoices* system, if appropriate training was made available to them.

It should be noted that, since the conclusion of the current investigation, all trainers have been provided with a joint statement from RVL, the ATA, Thoroughbred Breeders Victoria and the AWU, which addresses the new workplace relations system. The statement outlines the racing industry's position and employment rights and obligations under the new industrial relations system, and also addresses minimum standards of employment. Although the statement provides useful and practical advice to trainers on several key issues in the new legislation, many areas that may be relevant to the specific workplace arrangements of horse trainers are not covered in the statement, and trainers should be provided with, and strongly encouraged to undertake, additional training opportunities.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 8:**

That the racing industry provide trainers with opportunities for: suitable training and educational programs in business management skills; gaining understanding of obligations with respect to the Horse Training Industry Award 1998; education in WorkCover and superannuation; and managing the workplace issues of equal opportunity, harassment, risk management, and emergency procedures.

## 5.5 Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)

Safety in the workplace is critical to the success of any business, and to the industry in which the businesses are housed. As business owners, horse trainers have certain rights and responsibilities regarding health and safety in their workplaces. Understanding and complying with OH&S regulations both protects trainers and their employees from workplace injuries and illnesses, and creates work environments that promote positive and productive work ethics.

In addition to the concerns that trainers have regarding working when fatigued or stressed, which has already been discussed, the main OH&S issues identified by trainers who participated in the study revolved around four main areas: OH&S regulations and their documentation, staff training, facilities at racetracks, and harassment / bullying.

### 5.5.1 Regulations and Documentation

Although many of trainers had undertaken training in OH&S issues (52% of Permit Trainers, 71% of Owner Trainers), a significant number of trainers indicated that they struggled to understand and implement some of the OH&S standards and policies that apply to horse training and the stable workplace.

Currently, RVL and the ATA provide all trainers in Victoria with detailed information relating to new and amended OH&S legislation and policies. Given the limited time that trainers have to access and attend to the vast array of industry information concerning training and racing horses and managing stable staff, and considering the complexity that is inherent in many OH&S policies, more user-friendly and comprehensible guidelines may be necessary.

A number of trainers also commented on what they believed are excessive requirements for OH&S by the industry, which drive up horse-training costs and unnecessarily interrupt or interfere with the day-to-day operations of their horse-training and stable activities. As one trainer commented:

*It's a nightmare. The financial and emotional stress of OH&S appears to me to only cause more work and cost for the trainers. It's over the top and too inconsistent in application.*

As an example, one area of concern, particularly for small scale-trainers, centres around OH&S policies that relate to stable work undertaken by non-employed friends and family members. Several trainers commented that complex OH&S policies essentially prohibit family and friends from involvement in horse-training and stable activities, resulting in the trainers having to undertake most or all of the work of training and tending to horses.

According to industry representatives and documentation, RVL and WorkSafe Victoria have developed new industry OH&S policies and guidelines for the horse racing industry that are more relevant to the various employment sectors of the industry than has previously been the case. During the development phase, key employer groups within the racing industry were consulted, and all members of the industry were invited to comment on both the content and recommendations of the policies. One of the key findings of the present investigation is that the industry should consider, as a matter of high priority, suitable ways to convey information relating to the new OH&S policies and regulations to horse trainers in ways that will facilitate their understanding, both in terms of application and relevancy.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 9:**

That the racing industry review available information on OH&S policies and regulations related to horse training and stable work, and where necessary, consider more appropriate ways in which to present and disseminate this information to relevant industry groups.

### **5.5.2 Staff training**

Serious safety concerns were raised by a number of trainers (and also stable employees) about new people entering the industry who are under-skilled, or unskilled, and working in dangerous and often unpredictable environments. Comments that new stable employees often “lack horse-sense and initiative”, “lack basic experience and horse logic” and “are enthusiastic, but haven’t a clue around horses” were all too common among trainers. One trainer commented:

*I think the way to achieve the best [OH&S] results is good training of young people. Putting them in a situation where they have a chance to learn horse-sense and good anticipation of what horses are likely to do in all sorts of situation.*

Another trainer highlighted the fact that not only do inexperienced stable staff put themselves at risk, they may also place the safety and, indeed lives, of other people at risk.

Industry representatives acknowledged that in the past, stable employees frequently joined stables having little or no knowledge of stable environments or understanding of working with horses. To address this issue, Racing Victoria Limited recently introduced compulsory minimum standards of basic horsemanship for all new stable employees. Although it would be difficult, and impractical, to impose these industry standards across all stable staff, many of whom have been working at stables for more than 20 years, from this point forward, all new staff entering the industry will have received, at the very least, the basic skills and knowledge-base required of them to work safely in stable and racetrack environments.

### 5.5.3 Facilities at racetracks

For most trainers, a day at the racetrack means work. It also often means spending the day fighting their way through crowds of spectators, and trying to go about their business activities in frequently chaotic environments. Several trainers commented about difficulties that they had experienced in accessing food and refreshment outlets or public toilets, when in competition with spectators and others at the track, or trying to find a quiet place to speak on the phone or consult with jockeys or colleagues. As one trainer recalled:

*At some racecourses, you have to navigate the crowds to get to toilets or buy drinks. We are located in north eastern Victoria, and in summer, we battle with 40°C heat on some days.*

Racecourses are one of a number of places where trainers undertake horse-training and racing activities. And, for some trainers, they spend considerable time in those environments, often in inclement conditions. Having access to private areas on-course, where they can rest, refresh, and conduct their business activities without disruption or discomfort, is a work environment that many people in the general workforce take for granted.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:**

That the racing industry provide dedicated spaces at metropolitan and major country race tracks for horse trainers to conduct their business activities and take refreshments.

**5.5.4 Harassment and bullying**

A fundamental right of all workers in the horse-racing industry is to be able to go about their business or work activities in safe and healthy environments that are free from discrimination, harassment and bullying. An alarming finding of the present investigation is that for a significant number of horse trainers (and stable employees), this fundamental right is violated.

Almost one-quarter of all trainers, male and female, who participated in the study indicated that they had directly experienced harassment or bullying in the workplace. In the current investigation, 109 cases (from 66 trainers) of harassment and bullying were reported by trainers, however, as discussed earlier (refer Sections 3.8 and 4.8), the data reported here are probably underestimates of the full extent of harassment and bullying experienced by the trainers who participated in the study.

The majority of incidents of bullying and harassment reported by Permit Trainers came from horse owners, whereas most reported cases by Owner Trainers came from people in the racing industry who were not employed at their stables.

Verbal abuse was the most common form of harassment, but there were also numerous reports of emotional and physical harassment and several reports of sexual harassment, by both male and female trainers. In many cases, the harassments were not isolated incidents but occurred repeatedly (in some cases, daily) over periods ranging from weeks to years.

Although a significant number of trainers (23%) had taken some form of action in response to being harassed or bullied, the majority had remained silent on the issue. Several Permit Trainers commented that they just had to put up with the harassment, or risk losing a value source of their income (e.g., from horse owners). Where action was taken, trainers most commonly made an official complaint to RVL or club officials.

Harassment and bullying in the workplace are serious occupational health and safety issues. The stress caused by being harassed or working in a climate of harassment and bullying can result in a range of psychological responses, including anxiety and depression. When they are part of a repeated pattern, they can seriously undermine an individual's confidence, self-esteem and physical health.

A key component of any serious campaign to address workplace harassment and bullying is the Whistleblower policy, which is aimed at encouraging and facilitating disclosures of improper conduct. In accordance with the Victorian Whistleblowers' Protection Act 2001, public bodies are required to adopt a Whistleblower policy that:

- promotes a culture in which whistleblowers feel safe to make disclosures;
- protects people who disclose information about serious improper conduct;
- provides a framework for investigating disclosed matters; and
- ensures that investigated matters are properly addressed.

To adequately address issues of harassment and bullying in the workplace, the racing industry will need to develop policies and processes that are guided by the key principles of the Victorian Whistleblowers' Protection Act. Only in this way will the industry be able to ensure that its member and employee groups are able to raise concerns regarding issues of misconduct in the industry, without being subjected to victimisation or discriminatory treatment, and have those concerns properly investigated and handled with care and respect.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 11:**

That the racing industry develop a 'whistleblower' policy related to harassment and unfair or discriminatory work practices, and explore options for providing trainers and other industry personnel with a confidential service (e.g., telephone 'hotline') for reporting incidents of harassment and bullying, and communicate details of that service to all parties.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:**

That the racing industry undertake an educational campaign aimed at reducing harassment and bullying in horse-racing workplaces and informing industry personnel of appropriate courses of action for dealing with and reporting incidents.

## 5.6 Physical and Mental Health

### 5.6.1 Workplace injuries

Previous studies have shown that almost all jockeys invariably suffer injuries during the course of their riding and racing work (Waller et al., 2000; Speed, Seedsman, & Morris, 2001; Turner, McCrory, & Halley, 2002). The results of the present investigation reveal that trainers are also at high risk of injuries. That is, if you train race-horses, the probability that you will sustain at least one severe or moderately severe injury as a result of that work is high. In the past 5 years, well over half of all trainers who participated in the current investigation experienced injuries, pain, or other negative physical symptoms related to their work. A total of 362 injuries or cases of significant pain/physical symptoms resulting from horse-training work were reported by 180 trainers. Note, however, that the number of injuries reported here may be significant underestimates of the actual number of injuries sustained by the participants of the study (refer to Section 3.9).

The two most frequent sites of injury to trainers were the back and lower limbs. Together, these sites accounted for nearly 45% of all reported injuries. The most commonly reported back problems were back pain or soreness (from heavy lifting, and falls from horses) that were, in most cases, rated by trainers as being minor or moderate in severity. Broken bones in the lower limbs (feet, ankles, or lower leg) and broken or dislocated bones in the upper limbs (wrists, fingers) were also common, and resulted typically from falls or being kicked or trodden on by horses. Falls from horses were also responsible for a number of broken or dislocated shoulders and collarbones, concussions, and fractures and lacerations to the head and face areas.

It is clear from these results that horses are unpredictable and stables are dangerous places to work. It is therefore important that controllable risks are minimised. A problem compounding workplace injuries is that many trainers continue to work while injured, potentially further compromising their safety, increasing risks of further injuries, and possibly prolonging recovery time.

With the exception of back and neck pain, the vast majority of injuries and significant pain experienced by trainers was acute in nature and eventually healed. Back pain, and to a lesser extent neck pain, however, are often chronic conditions that many trainers live with and work with on a day-to-day basis.

### 5.6.2 Mental health

The majority of trainers (approximately 70-75%) are, for the most part, happy and satisfied in their work/business as horse trainers. This positive finding is in contrast to the fact that a significant number of trainers frequently feel fatigued and/or stressed, and have poor sleep habits.

For many trainers, both male and female, horse training frequently interfered with their family responsibilities and relationships, their relationships with friends and their social and leisure activities. In addition, a significant number of trainers often feel anxious and/or depressed as a direct result of the stresses associated with training and racing horses or running their businesses. Written comments by several trainers suggest that, at least for some trainers, financial issues, time pressures and/or workplace conflicts are major sources contributing to these negative feelings and social disruptions.

***Trainers at risk:*** A smaller number of trainers (approximately 5-10%) frequently experienced low self-confidence and feelings of being unable to cope (or being out of control) that were related to their horse training work/business. Several trainers also reported having frequent panic attacks or thoughts of suicide and other forms of self-harm.

When considered as percentages of the total horse-trainer population, a statistic of 5-10% might appear to suggest that these latter issues are unimportant or only minor problems within in the horse training community. In terms of the actual numbers of people who experience these feelings, or of the consequences of experiencing these feelings, the implications of these statistics are substantial. For example, 25 trainers often, very often or always feel unable to cope, and 10

trainers often, very often or always experience thoughts of suicide or self-harm, that are in some way related to their work or businesses as horse trainers. Remember, only 24% of trainers responded to the survey. When we project these numbers to the population at large (multiply these numbers by 4.0), then the significance of these findings becomes alarming.

Gambling and alcohol use were also problematic for a small number of trainers. Approximately 6% of trainers reported having experienced gambling and alcohol problems in the past, but no longer do, and between 2% and 4% of trainers indicated that they currently experience problems relating to gambling or alcohol use.

Note, however, that because of the shame and stigma attached to gambling and alcohol problems, the figures reported here are most likely underestimates of the true extent of the problems. In both cases (past and present gambling problems), financial difficulties, health, and family issues were areas that were often affected by gambling and alcohol use.

The results of the current investigation point to an urgent need for those trainers (and possibly former trainers) currently experiencing significant psychological and behavioural difficulties to have access to counselling services that operate externally to the racing industry, as in one of the services provided by the Jockey Welfare Program. In addition, the findings suggest that many trainers, not just those with immediate counselling needs, would benefit from personal counselling services. The good news is that one in five trainers who participated in the study indicated that they would be interested in using the services of professional counsellors (e.g., medical doctor, psychologist), if private and confidential counselling services were available at reduced fees or no charge.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:**

That the racing industry provide current and retired trainers with opportunities to access personal and confidential counselling services that are delivered externally to the racing industry for psychological, behavioural, or relationship difficulties.

## 5.7 Recognition

A number of comments by trainers pointed to the need for there to be greater appreciation and recognition by the racing industry of the commitment and skilled work undertaken by those who tend to the training and racing of racehorses. One trainer commented:

*The quality of your work is only judged by winners.*

Performance at the racetrack, however, does not guarantee recognition. In contrast to the previous remark, another trainer commented:

*I have finished in the top 20 for the past 2 years in the provincial area with no recognition from the industry.*

This statement may suggest that there is an even greater need for the industry to formally recognise the contribution of its country trainers.

Several trainers were quite specific in targeting owners as failing to appreciate their work commitments and dedication, which often went well beyond their job descriptions and duty of care. Unfortunately, there may be many trainers who have already been lost to the industry. Some may wonder why they put so much work and effort into their horse training and made so many personal sacrifices. For many trainers, it appears they feel that nobody really noticed.

There was strong support from industry representatives for the racing industry to give greater recognition to trainers for their contributions to racing in Victoria. The Fred Hoysted Award is well regarded as a formal recognition of the work undertaken by horse trainers, and of their value to the industry. Outstanding trainers may also receive recognition through induction into the Australian Racing Hall of Fame. Nevertheless, apart from some other less formal recognition given by some sectors of the industry, there was a general view that, as a whole, the level of recognition of trainers' contributions to the racing industry was frustratingly low.

### **RECOMMENDATION 14:**

That the racing industry explore ways in which to provide trainers with greater recognition for their contributions and years of service to the racing industry, both during their horse-training careers and at the time of retirement.

## 5.8 Staffing Issues

A significant number of trainers commented about the difficulties they experienced accessing trackriders to exercise their horses. According to many trainers, there are simply not enough trackriders to go around. The problem appears to be most severe among small and country stables, particularly when the work is on a casual basis. As one country trainer commented:

*There are NO track riders available at country tracks to help out small trainers when needed.*

Understandably, many track riders are more attracted to large-scale and city-based stables where they can obtain better wages and full employment.

One trainer suggested that:

*It would assist [trainers] if RVL could ensure that a 'club rider' is made available at training centres and be used among trainers requiring his/her services.*

Other ways that participants suggested the industry might address this staffing problem, include:

- incentives to encourage experienced track riders to relocate to Victoria from around Australia, and if necessary, from overseas;
- a nation-wide promotional campaign to recruit experienced track riders, and potential track riders, from other appropriate equine-related communities;
- the provision of more training opportunities for trainee track riders that can assist them in progressing through to advanced levels;
- extending the operating hours of training track facilities so as to increase the availability of existing trackriders to exercise horses.

Recruiting experienced track riders, and/or having 'club riders' more available, would provide immediate, although probably only temporary, relief to the many trainers in need of their skills and services. Recruiting and training riders from other equine disciplines and providing more training opportunities for trainee track riders would add to the existing pool of riders and ensure that future demands will be met.

In addition to recruiting strategies, the current results suggest that there is an urgent need to address the retention of trackriders. Some 38% of male and 61% of female trackriders who participated in the study indicated that they were considering leaving the industry within the next 12 to 24 months. The most frequently cited reasons for considering leaving related to their working conditions (particularly the early morning starts and little time off) and poor remuneration for the high-risk work that they undertake.

The racing industry acknowledges the growing need to recruit people with advanced riding skills and experience, and they are undertaking promotional and educational campaigns to attract and train new trackriders to the industry, particularly riders from other equine disciplines. In addition, a Trackrider Skill Recognition program has been established, to provide existing trackriders, who have no formal qualifications in racing, with opportunities to further develop their competencies and skills.

The first initiative by the racing industry should produce an increase in the size of the existing pool of available trackriders in the future, whereas the second initiative should help to sustain that pool, by retaining trackriders who otherwise might be lost to the industry (see Section 6.4 – Career Pathways). Although the racing industry are to be commended for both of these initiatives, the findings of the current investigation suggest that there is a need for industry to explore additional options for recruiting and retaining trackriders, so as to adequately address the current shortages faced by trainers, and ensure that suitably skilled trackriders are available in all metropolitan and regional areas in the future.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 15:**

That the racing industry develop and implement further strategies to actively promote the recruitment and retention of track riders and other stable employees, and communicate those strategies to the wider horse racing community in Victoria.

## **5.9 Training Tracks**

Extending the operating hours of training facilities was favoured by many horse trainers, for reasons not only related to accessing trackriders. A number of

trainers, particularly part-time trainers who have significant work commitments outside of their horse training activities, reported that they experienced frequent difficulties in attending training tracks because of the limited operating hours of many venues. For example, one trainer commented:

*Open race tracks in the afternoon. For some [trainers] with day jobs it is difficult to get the horse to the track and back [to the stables] again in mornings before work.*

In the case of full-time trainers, many of whom start their long work day as early as 3:00am, being able to exercise their horses later in the morning or day, would shorten their overall work days, in some cases, quite dramatically.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 16:**

That the racing industry undertake a review of the operating hours at metropolitan and regional training tracks and, if warranted, explore options for increasing the flexibility of current hours of operation.

## **5.10 The Future Plans of Trainers**

In contrast to their high levels of work satisfaction, just over one-third of all trainers who participated in the investigation were contemplating leaving horse training, and 40% of those trainers were considering leaving within the next 1 to 2 years. Male Permit Trainers (41%) were at greatest risk of leaving the industry, followed by female trainers (34% for both Permit and Owner Trainers) and male Owner Trainers (25%). Given the findings of the current investigation, it is perhaps not surprising that the central reasons for trainers considering leaving horse training revolved around financial problems and work conditions.

Age was also a significant factor for trainers planning to leave the industry, with a number of trainers intending to retire from all significant work commitments in the near future. Considering the average age of trainers who responded to the survey was approximately 50 years, within an age range that extended from 23 to 84 years, this result is also not surprising. What it does indicate, however, is that the industry will need to consider future projections of the number of trainers operating in Victoria, and the locations of trainers around the State, to

ensure that an adequate pool of trainers is available in the future to service the needs of the racing community.

## 5.11 Future Research

The current investigation provides the first detailed picture of the workplace and business experiences of horse trainers in Victoria (and world-wide), and of the ways in which the day-to-day demands of their horse-training operations and activities influence their personal health and welfare.

During the course of the investigation, a number of issues were raised, or came to the foreground, that were beyond the investigative scope, or were outside of the terms of reference, of this project. Addressing these issues, although important, is a matter for future research. The final recommendation below suggests that, as a matter of priority, future research into the health and welfare of horse trainers target two key areas. Other areas that could be considered for investigation are numerous, and are implied by many of the results contained within this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION 17:**

That the racing industry consider undertaking further research in the following areas:

- injury prevalence and prevention in the stable workplace;
- loss and retention of horse trainers in the racing industry; and
- past, present and future trends in stable size and composition across the different trainer licence categories and stable locations.

## 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: STABLE EMPLOYEES

---

### OVERVIEW

This investigation into the health and welfare of trainers and stable employees in the thoroughbred horse-racing industry provides the most detailed picture to date of the business operations and workplace practices of trainers and stable workers in Victoria, and of the ways in which the demands of their horse-training and stable activities influence their personal health and welfare. The primary outcome objective of the research was the development of recommendations for ways in which the horse-racing industry in Victoria can better assist trainers and stable employees in their business and work activities, and enhance the overall quality of their day-to-day lives and experiences in the horse-racing industry.

Many of the workplace experiences of stable employees were similar to those experienced by horse trainers, as described in the previous chapter. There were also many experiences that were unique to the stable employees who participated in this investigation. Some readers may be interested only in the findings related to trainers, whereas other readers may have interests only in the findings that relate to stable employees. In order for this chapter of the report to stand independently of the trainers' findings, a full discussion of the stable employees' results follows. As a consequence, there is considerable repetition between this chapter on stable employees and the previous chapter on horse trainers.

This chapter of the report summarises and discusses key findings of the investigation, related specifically to stable employees. The quantitative survey data and written submissions to open-ended questions from stable employees are combined to present an overall picture of the ways in which the work demands and environments of stable employees influence their personal health and welfare. This chapter also presents recommendations for ways in which the racing industry in Victoria can assist stable employees in their future work endeavours.

Formulation of the recommendations was undertaken by members of the Victoria University research team. Consideration was given to data collected from a variety of sources during the course of the investigation, including: survey and written responses from stable employees, and interviews with representatives of different stakeholder groups within the racing industry (trainers, RVL, ATA), and the AWU. Where appropriate, additional information, or clarification of information, was sought from members of the Steering Committee. The following recommendations to the horse-racing industry were made after an extensive analysis and synthesis of all the data and information that were obtained. Note that the term 'racing industry' is used in the recommendations in a general context to refer to the industry's governing body, RVL, and the relevant industry stakeholders, most notably, the ATA and the AWU.

## 6.1 Profile of Participants

Surveys were mailed to 3,100 thoroughbred stable employees residing in Victoria, Australia. Three hundred and three surveys were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 13%. Twelve stable employees who completed the survey also provided written submissions to open-ended questions on key issues as identified in the survey responses.

The stable employees who participated in this investigation covered a diverse mix of demographic categories and stable situations. All categories of stable employee (except stable administrators) were represented in the study, although there were proportionally more assistant trainers (40%) and forepersons (34%) compared to stablehands (15%) and trackriders (5%). Both male and female stable employees were also well represented in the research (59% female, 41% male), as were country and metropolitan stable employees (73% country, 27% metropolitan), and employees from small- (<10 horses; 29%), medium- (10-40 horses; 46%) and large-scale (40+ horses; 25%) training operations.

The average age of stable employees was 35.4 years ( $SD = 14.0$ ), within an age range of 14 to 73 years. Fifty percent of employees were aged between 24 and 46 years, with the remaining 50% split equally among the younger and older age groups. On average, male stable employees (mean age = 42 years) were older than female employees (mean age = 31.2 years), and assistant trainers (mean age = 46 years) were older than employees in any other stable positions.

At the time of study, the majority of stable employees worked at one stable only, although trackriders, more than any other position, worked for more than one stable (up to four stables). Approximately 50% of stable employees had worked at stables for between 1 and 10 years, however, the sample included a number of both new employees (< 1 year) and long-term employees, some of whom had been at stables for more than 40 years. Typically, assistant trainers and trackriders had been engaged in stable work longer than employees in other positions. By far the most common reason for gaining work as a stable employee was love of horses. Being associated with the horse-racing industry, love of the outdoors lifestyle and family connections were also common reasons that participants chose to work in stables.

Most assistant trainers and forepersons were employed on full-time bases and worked 6 to 7 split-days a week, many in excess of 40 hours, and in some cases, in excess of 60 hours a week. Stablehands and track riders were more commonly employed on a casual or part-time basis, and a number had no formal work arrangement with their employer. Those who were full-time employees (28% of trackriders, 35% of stablehands), usually worked long hours in split shifts, 6 to 7 days a week, and many often felt under pressure from their employers to work additional overtime. Casual and part-time trackriders and stablehands, on the other hand, typically worked fewer than 25 hours per week, usually part-days (i.e., early mornings), and the majority did not work overtime.

Most full-time stable employees derived 100% of their income from their stable work. A significant number of casual and part-time employees also derived 100% of their income from stable work. The majority, however, undertook additional employment, either elsewhere within the racing industry (e.g., agistment, breeding, horse breaking) or outside of the industry. In most cases, stable employees engaged in additional work because they were unable to earn sufficient incomes from stable work alone. For some casual and part-time employees, however, stable jobs were secondary sources of income, or secondary work interests only, and they had careers or significant work or study commitments outside of the horse-racing industry.

For a large majority of stable employees, working at racing stables in Victoria is a rewarding occupation that generates considerable satisfaction and happiness. This finding is in contrast to the fact that, for many of them, much of their lives are spent engaged in stable work, with few chances to recover from the physical and mental stresses of one day before the next day begins, or to spend time with families and friends. Unlike some other occupations within the horse-racing

industry (e.g., jockeys, trainers), there is no potential for stable employees to earn significant sums of money. Many stable employees survive mostly on the passion they have for horses and for the racing industry, often working long hours in dangerous and unpredictable environments, for wages that are, by most industry standards, at the low end of the scale.

## 6.2 Financial Issues

The results of the present investigation indicate that stable employees experienced a range of financial issues that relate to their employment at racing stables. These difficulties revolve around three main issues: (1) remuneration for work undertaken, (2) documentation of their work hours and wages, and (3) superannuation.

### 6.2.1 Remuneration

The remuneration that most stable employees receive for the work they undertake is specified under the Horse Training Industry Award (1998). From the comments made by many stable employees who participated in this study, the majority of stable employees in Victoria receive, at most, the minimum Award wage. Although a small number of employees may earn above Award wages, it was clear that a significant number are remunerated well below the Award.

Some stable employees commented directly on the fact that they were being paid below Award rates by their employers, but did not feel in secure enough positions to be able to challenge their employers, for fear of causing conflict or possibly even losing their jobs.

Many stable employees also complained about not being paid for all the hours they worked, particularly in the case of overtime. For example:

*I'm working too many hours, 60+ per week, and getting paid only for 40 hours.*

*With animals, long hours are always going to be there, but getting paid for the hours or time off is the problem.*

The suggestion of a clocking on/off system for recording the hours worked was common among participants.

Some 83% of full-time stable employees and 53% of part-time employees who participated in the study frequently worked overtime. Between 50% and 80% of those employees, however, *never* or *only sometimes* received payment for the overtime hours they worked. Also, some of those employees, who did receive payment for overtime, received remuneration below minimum Award rates.

Other stable employees indicated that bonuses, for strappers and other stable workers, from the owners of winning horses were sometimes not passed on by employers to the stable employees. As one stable employee remarked:

*It is also common for stables to bill the owners a percentage of their winning prize money to go into a stable fund for the strappers as a bonus to their wages. Most of this money is never seen by the workers [strappers].*

Another area of concern for a number of stable employees related to the payment of allowances, specifically, that they frequently did not receive the allowances that they were entitled to, including allowances for transport, meals and for protective clothing and safety gear (i.e. boots, cap and vest).

A common theme underlying many comments of stable employees related to what they believed were inappropriately low rates of pay, as specified by the Award, taking into account the potentially dangerous environments in which they work, the physical demands of the work, and the long and odd hours (e.g., split-shifts, very early starts) that are typical of their work conditions. For example:

*Considering the hours of work and shift work, the wages are ridiculous. All other industries that work shift work get double what the racing industry pays.*

*It's poor pay for the risk I take and the skills required to do it [stable work]. It takes years to learn this and it pays peanuts.*

*Rate of pay and conditions are very backward. You would expect these conditions in 1950, not 2006.*

Another stable employee suggested that flat rates of pay, such as those specified in the Award are no longer relevant for today's stable employees, who come to their jobs with wide ranges of educational qualifications and experiences in the work they do.

Low rates of pay and the failure of, at least some, employers to pay staff Award rates or overtime were both attributed, by some stable employees, to what they considered were shortcomings of the racing industry. As one employee commented:

*This [low pay rates] is an industry problem, as prize money at the lower ends of the scale need to be raised so that owners are willing to pay higher trainer costs, and then stable employees can be paid better wages.*

And another participant wrote:

*The industry needs to make more provisions to assist small [scale] trainers to ensure jobs are there, and trainers can afford to pay staff.*

An issue that was not raised directly by stable employees, but that was clearly evident from many of their survey responses, concerned the lack of awareness that a significant number of stable employees have regarding various financial details of their employment agreements. About 4% to 8% of stable employees were unsure as to whether they received payments for overtime worked, or whether their employers took taxes out of their pay or made contributions on their behalf to superannuation funds. Many employees were unaware of the allowances to which they are entitled. These findings are perhaps not surprising when they are considered in a broader context. About one-third of all participants in this investigation were unaware of the workplace award under which their conditions of employment were specified, and 7% were unaware of whether or not they had written contracts with their employers.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

That the racing industry explore options for increasing the awareness of stable employees about issues relating to the financial aspects of their employment (e.g., rates of pay, superannuation, overtime payment).

## 6.2.2 Documentation

The lack of awareness of some stable employees of important financial matters and other aspects of their employment at stables may be attributable, at least in part, to the failure of some employers to provide adequate documentation to workers covering such details. For example, many stable employees commented that they never or only rarely received pay slips from their employers, and some employees indicated that they experienced difficulties obtaining documentation that related to accrued leave entitlements, or hours worked during previous pay periods.

### RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the racing industry review the need for developing standardised forms of documentation relating to the employment contracts, pay details (e.g., pay slips), and work hours of stable employees.

## 6.2.3 Superannuation

A frequent comment made by stable employees is that many of them struggle financially on the wages they earn. As one employee expressed:

*There's not enough pay to live. I have to gamble to live and make ends meet.*  
[for more on gambling see Section 6.6]

Not being able to earn sufficient income from stable work was by far the most commonly cited reason why many stable employees seek additional employment, in other areas of the racing industry, or outside of the industry. It was also one of the main reasons why many stable employees were considering changing to another occupation. Educating employees on the importance of financial planning and encouraging them to plan financially for their future are ways that the racing industry can help their employees develop financial security. One mechanism for doing this is through investment schemes such as superannuation.

Most full-time stable employees (80%), and, to a lesser extent, part-time and casual stable employees, have regular contributions to superannuation funds made on their behalf by their employers. Only a relatively small number of

employees (10%-20%), however, contribute personally to superannuation schemes, and for the most part, those contributions are relatively small amounts (\$50 - \$200 per month).

In 2004, RVL, in collaboration with the Victorian Jockeys' Association, established the Jockeys' Retirement Benefit Package to help jockeys prepare financially for their future. This package, which includes a superannuation scheme (Jockeys' Super Benefit), and a retirement benefits scheme (Jockeys' Career Benefit), have received strong support from jockeys since its introduction. Together, the two schemes complement each other and provide reasonable levels of financial support when jockeys retire from race riding or are in need of financial assistance.

Although there currently is a collective superannuation fund for stable employees, it is clear from the findings of this investigation that few employees contribute to the fund. What is not clear is why so few employees take up this option. Lack of knowledge about superannuation schemes and the hectic work schedules of stable employees are two possible reasons. Furthermore, because of their low incomes from stable work, many employees may believe that their incomes from horse training are insufficient to enable meaningful superannuation contributions, and taking another slice of their already low incomes may make for further immediate financial difficulties.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

That the racing industry undertake a review and evaluation of the existing superannuation arrangements for stable employees, and where necessary, revise the arrangements so as to best meet the present and future needs of stable employees.

## **6.3 Work Commitments and Leave Arrangements**

*Time commitments and leave:* For the majority of full-time stable employees, and a significant number of casual and part-time employees, stable work means very early mornings and long days, particularly race days. Working in excess of 40 hours per week, and in some cases, 60 hours per week, was standard practice for many participants in this investigation, some of whom often felt

under pressure from their employers to work additional overtime. Regular days off were luxuries that a significant number of stable employees, particularly forepersons and assistant trainers, seldom experienced.

In terms of the number of days each week that stable employees worked, the majority of employees, irrespective of their stable position or whether they were full-time, part-time or casual, worked 6 to 7 days per week. The main difference between the different groups of employees was in the extent of their daily time commitments. Full-time stable employees typically worked split shifts that consisted of morning and afternoon hours of work, whereas part-time and casual employees mostly worked mornings only.

The majority of full-time stable employees had formal annual leave arrangements (typically 4 weeks per year) and sick leave arrangements (5 to 7 days per year or when required) with their employers. Few part-time or casual staff had such arrangements, despite the fact that many worked the equivalent of full-time employment. Those who did have leave arrangements, however, often experienced difficulties in actually taking leave. In most cases, the problems revolved around having no time, employers being unable to find skilled replacement staff, or employers being unsupportive of requests for leave. As several stable employees commented:

*I'm always too busy at work to get holidays owed.*

*Last year I had 31 out of 365 days off (which includes a two week holiday). I worked 6 weeks in a row without having a day off. You have to take leave when the boss wants you to.*

*Taking leave or sick days always seemed VERY inconvenient [to the employer]. I felt very guilty when unwell. I usually work when sick or when my children are sick.*

Many stable employees also described difficulties getting adequate time off, either during the work day, or between consecutive work days. Comments such as:

*Hours worked are not the problem but not enough rest breaks or time off is.*

*Regardless of how long a morning's work is, we are never allowed a tea-break.*

*It would be good being able to have a break – or go to the toilet, without being reminded – 'it's your job to look after the horses' all day.*

*Stop nightly racing. A 10.30pm last race and 4am starts don't mix.*

*Night racing, then attending work the next morning without a suitable break between shifts.*

were common among stable employees. Other comments targeted the excessive work hours or interruptions to scheduled leave that were often required of stable employees on race days. For example:

*It would not be unusual to work 15 hours straight if attending a race meeting - 4am start to 7pm by the time the horse is unloaded, fed and rugged.*

*Employers always expect you to work overtime without notice. I often have to attend race meetings on my rostered day off without being given another day to compensate.*

Many stable employees commented that the hours they worked were excessive, and when coupled with few opportunities for time off, caused problems related to their physical and mental health and interference with family life, relationships, and social and leisure activities.

Stable work and track riding are physically demanding activities. Working long hours and having little time to adequately recover from one day to the next left many stable employees frequently feeling fatigued, run-down, and stressed. Comments such as "*constantly tired*", "*get stressed out*" and "*sore body most of the time*", were very common among stable employees. As one stable employee commented:

*I am 28 and walk around like a 60 year-old. Always physically tired.*

This finding is particularly worrisome, given the increased risks of workplace injuries and accidents that can result from working when fatigued or stressed. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that fatigue, lack of sleep and stress are all directly linked to higher workplace accident rates, (e.g., Frank, 2000; Akerstedt, 2002; van Dijk & Swaen, 2003; Swaen et al., 2003). An alarming finding in the current study, is that a significant number of stable employees reported frequently (often or very often) being fatigued (60%) and/or stressed (34%), and many had poor sleep habits (50%; mostly related to lack of sleep) because of their stable work.

In addition to increasing the risk of accidents or injuries at work, fatigue and stress can result in reduced performance and productivity, and disturbed mood (e.g., anxiety, depression). Fatigue and stress can also interfere with a person's ability to communicate effectively and deal with workplace conflict (see Section 6.5).

Some 40% of stable employees indicated that their horse-training commitments also interfered with their family responsibilities and relationships. As several stable employees commented:

*Always at work and never getting to see family and friends can get you down.*

*Partners that are not involved in the industry get very frustrated with you not being able to take time off, especially when you work in a small stable. This puts a great deal of strain on both the relationship and on yourself.*

*The long hours and constant workload takes its toll on family and social life and greatly affects personal relationships. Weekends don't exist as Saturday morning is an ordinary work morning, horses still have to be worked and fed on Sundays. With races 7 days a week ... then, you're more likely to have a race meeting to go to on a Saturday or Sunday.*

The same stable employee further added:

*When you do finally get a day off, you're generally too tired to be bothered doing anything.*

In almost all cases, the disruption to family life was a direct result of the long and odd hours that trainers worked. For some stable employees, particularly female trainers, there were the added difficulties associated with trying to balance work commitments with the responsibilities that go with caring for children and/or maintaining households. One female trainer commented:

*I am a mother now and cannot continue working in the industry because of the hours and there is no day-care for those hours.*

For similar reasons, many stable employees (40%-60%) found that their stable work significantly interfered with their social and leisure activities, particularly those outside of the racing industry. For the most part, stable employees had little time or were usually too tired to engage in social or leisure activities. And, for those who were able to schedule social activities into their busy routines, more often than not the activities revolved almost exclusively around the racing industry, either intentionally, or because they had had few opportunities to develop social networks outside of their work environments. For example:

*Over the years I have constantly cancelled outings and sporting events due to the fact that I have been too tired to attend. Once I [had to go to] my G.P. as I was physically and mentally exhausted by my work.*

*Social and family life are basically non-existent for me. Never able to plan anything due to hours worked and the expectation by trainers that you should be available to go to the races or have your work roster changed or days off cancelled to suit them.*

*The nature of the job doesn't allow for easy relationships with people not in the racing industry due to split shifts and very early starts.*

*Long hours have a significant effect on social life, especially if you mix [with people] outside the game.*

As was evident in previous research into the health and welfare of jockeys (Speed, Seedsman, & Morris, 2001), when individuals' lives and sense of who they are, their self-identities, are so inextricably intertwined in their careers within the racing industry, forced time away from their work (e.g., due to injury or illness) or retirement from those careers can be extremely stressful periods, often associated with a loss of personal identity and social networks, feelings of lack of direction or purpose, and a sense of being disconnected from, or forgotten by the industry. Time away from their stable work to develop social networks and interests outside of the racing industry is, therefore, important for employees' social, mental, and physical health. Such breaks from work would not only provide immediate benefits to stable employees, but such recovery time also has long-term implications for their future health and well-being.

***Horse Training Industry Award (1998):*** The findings of this investigation suggest that a number of stable workplace practices described by participants relating to stable employees' conditions of employment are in direct contravention of the Horse Training Industry Award (1998). This award which covers the majority of stable employees. Of particular concern are the practices of a number of employers with regard to: pay rates, work schedules, formal recording and documentation of employee work commitments, overtime, and leave entitlements.

Another area of concern relates to the employment of casual staff. A significant number (15% overall) of casual stable employees worked 40 or more hours per week, including one-third of all stable forepersons, and approximately 10% of stablehands (very few track riders or assistant trainers worked in excess of 30 hours a week).

Under the Horse Training Industry Award (1998), casual employees may only be engaged for work in order to: meet short-term work demands, carry out work in emergency situations, or to perform work unable to be rostered to permanent (full-time or part-time) employees (Clause 10.5.2). In addition, employees who have been engaged to work on a regular pattern of hours for 16 consecutive weeks, at most, must thereafter be re-engaged as permanent staff with full employment entitlements (e.g., leave, overtime payment, superannuation). The finding here that many casual stable employees are regularly working the

equivalent of full-time workloads, or more, in some cases for many months or years, suggests that some trainers, in their employment arrangements with staff, are in breach of the Award conditions.

A number of comments from both stable employees and industry representatives further suggest that some horse trainers are employing unregistered persons in positions at their stables. According to the Rules of Racing, "A trainer must not employ or retain in employment any person in connection with the training or care of racehorses unless such person is registered" (Rules LR 39A and LR 29B). Although no estimates of the number of unregistered stable employees could be established from the data in this investigation, such practices are in direct breach of the Rules of Racing and only add to the difficulties that the racing industry faces in enforcing the industry award for its workers.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

That the racing industry explore viable options for improving compliance by horse trainers in upholding the Horse Training Industry Award 1998 in matters relating to stable employee core conditions of employment, particularly as they relate to employment contracts, rates of pay, superannuation, hours of work, leave entitlements, overtime, allowances, WorkCover, and associated documentation.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5:**

That the racing industry explore options for increasing compliance by trainers in the mandatory registration of all stable employees.

## **6.4 Training and Education**

The majority of stable employees who participated in the study had attained at least Year 10 secondary school education, and a significant number had tertiary level qualifications. In addition, many stable employees had undertaken formal education related either directly to their stable jobs (e.g., Certificate 1 or 2 in

racings), or courses that related to horses generally (e.g., Bachelor of Equine Science) or other occupations within the racing industry (e.g., apprentice farrier, jockey).

Many stable employees had also received training in workplace practices related to occupational health and safety (OH&S) and emergency procedures. For the most part, this training was presented informally to employees at the stables where they worked, either at the time of induction or in specific training sessions. Only half of the participants in the study, however, had received training in the areas of equal opportunity, harassment and bullying, and staff relations. This fact may well explain the high incidence of harassment and bullying, and staff conflict that is characteristic of many stable environments (see Section 6.5.3).

Between 35% and 45% of stable employees had received formal induction training from their stable employers (or senior staff members) when they joined the stables. Many stable employees commented that there simply wasn't enough time to provide new staff with induction training, and as a consequence, those staff who had undertaken no training prior to taking up their stable positions, or who had little experience working with horses, were often left to 'make it on their own'. As one stable employee commented:

*Learning the ropes has always consisted of being thrown in at the deep end and it's sink or swim. There never seems to be enough time to do the job properly let alone train someone properly or be trained.*

*And another wrote:*

*They're [employers] not interested in educating new staff; they expect you to know it all from the start.*

Serious safety concerns were raised by a number of stable employees (and also trainers) about new people entering the industry who are under-skilled, or unskilled, and working in dangerous and often unpredictable environments. Comments that new stable employees often "lack horse-sense", "lack basic experience and horse logic" and "are enthusiastic, but haven't a clue around horses" were all too common among the participants.

Inexperienced stable staff put themselves at risk, and also jeopardise the safety of other people who work with them, and in some cases, the horses under their care. From the perspectives of inexperienced staff members, enjoyment of the work experience, self-esteem, and workplace interactions with other staff may all

be compromised, if individuals are unable to gain the skills required of their positions, or are left unsupervised. One stable employee commented:

*You can't learn about horses out of a book, it's a hands-on thing, horses are all different. How can you hand someone with 2 weeks experience a \$200,000 horse and expect them to know what they are doing. That's what happens, and people get hurt.*

Industry representatives acknowledged that in the past, stable employees frequently joined stables having little or no knowledge of stable environments or understanding of working with horses. To address this issue, RVL recently introduced compulsory minimum standards of basic horsemanship for all new stable employees. From this point forward, all new staff entering the industry will have received, at the very least, the basic skills and knowledge-base required of them to work safely in stable and racetrack environments, and to enable them to have enjoyable and rewarding early stable experiences. Although it may be difficult to require these industry standards across all stable staff, many of whom have been working at stables for more than 20 years,

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6:**

That the racing industry set compulsory minimum standards of basic horsemanship for all stable employee positions and explore options for the appropriate training and assessment of those standards.

Finding time to engage in formal educational courses and off-site workplace training are major difficulties for many stable employees. In most cases, employers expect stable workers to attend courses and training outside of their work commitments. Doing so, however, poses obvious problems for staff working full-time hours, many of whom already experience difficulties finding time to relax or tend to family or social responsibilities. Several stable employees commented:

*The variety of courses are good. The problems start when trainers won't allow time away from work to undertake the courses.*

*When working in a small stable, it is hard to be able to get any time away from work as there is generally only enough employees to just get the work done anyway.*

*Trainers expect you to attend training in your own time.*

Several stable employees made suggestions as to strategies that might enhance educational and training opportunities and encouraged staff to take up those opportunities. For the most part, these suggestions related to the location and scheduling of courses, or to the form of delivery of courses: For example:

*The courses could be run closer to training tracks to cut down on travel time. A lot of the courses are run in the country or at TAFEs that are too far away or too difficult to get to.*

*Training courses need to be run more locally to employees trying to access them. The hours of any course run also have to be considered as most employees have a split shift ... courses have to run around these times so employees don't have to take time off work.*

*Over the internet would be useful, especially to those who have limited transport access.*

*I would have like to have completed the course [track riding] ... the course always started too early to finish morning stable work and get to. They need to be at times suitable to our type of work.*

*Training provided at stables or directly able to be completed through the workplace would be very useful, so it would almost be like an apprenticeship or trainee situation.*

One stable employee suggested:

*They [employers] should be encouraged to have staff trained during work hours and the wages maybe should be subsidised by RVL or the government.*

#### RECOMMENDATION 7:

That the racing industry provide stable employees with opportunities for suitable training and educational programs in the workplace issues of OH&S, equal opportunity, harassment and bullying, risk management, and emergency procedures, and, where identified, consider alternative ways for delivering training.

**Career Pathways:** For some stable employees, work at racing stables is a secondary interest only, and they pursue career opportunities outside of the racing industry. For many stable employees, however, the racing industry is their life, and they make many sacrifices in order to fulfil their passion of having a career working with racehorses or of being part of the horse-racing industry. Unfortunately, the racing industry is at risk of losing many of these dedicated employees in the future because of the lack of opportunities for career advancement or professional development within the industry (see section 6.9).

Comments such as these below were common among stable employees.

*We have little or no chance of job progression.*

*It's a dead-end job – you're doing the same things 10 years [on] as you started doing.*

*They [racing industry] need to develop more consistent and stronger career paths.*

*There needs to be a program put in place that allows employees to further their education so that they don't fall into depression at being unable to move into other jobs [within the industry] or out of the industry if they wish to.*

These sentiments were echoed in the recent 'Champions Project' by Gauci (2006) who identified an urgent need for the racing industry to establish more career pathways and employment positions across Australia, in order to stem the increasing exodus of stable workers from the industry and recruit new staff into the industry.

A recent report by the Australian Institute of Management (AIM; 2006) revealed that lack of career prospects is the number one reason why many employees in Australia change jobs, outweighing both low pay and lack of recognition as factors for leaving or changing employment. Having career options and opportunities for career advancement motivates employees and keeps them psychologically 'engaged' and stimulated in their work. According to the AIM study, when employees become disengaged, they typically under-perform in their jobs, have high rates of absenteeism, and are at high risk of moving to other jobs. The authors of the report concluded that "businesses that fail to develop career pathways for their staff do so at their peril."

Although there are a range of job options within the Victorian racing industry (see, for example, the industry document titled "Not Cut Out to be a Jockey" and the Course Guide for Equine Education, 2007), there is a general lack of clearly defined pathways for pursuing career options, and no supporting framework to encourage career progression, or continuing professional development. The results of the current investigation suggest that the racing industry need to establish more effective engagement strategies for stable employees, and those strategies should promote and map out career pathways and developmental opportunities, and should support the concept of *industry careers*, rather than *industry jobs*.

## 6.5 Occupational Health and Safety

The main OH&S issues identified by stable employees who participated in the study revolved around three key areas: safety at stables and training/race tracks, facilities at racetracks, inexperienced stable workers (refer Section 6.4) and harassment / bullying.

### 6.5.1 Safety at stable and training/race tracks

For many stable employees, safety in their workplace was paramount. Suitable training was provided to staff, and when safety issues were raised by staff, they were usually dealt with as a matter of priority. The comments of some stable employees, however, suggested that at some stables, safety concerns for staff (and in some cases horses) were severely lacking, both in terms of policies and procedures. Comments such as 'does not exist', 'doesn't get much thought', 'frequently over-looked' and 'poor level of safety' were common.

Of particular safety concern at some stables were: poor maintenance of riding and other stable gear, unclear or un-communicated safety and emergency procedures, inadequate first aid kits, inexperienced staff working without adequate supervision, and employees working when exhausted or injured.

Several stable employees also commented about the failure of some employers to take suitable actions to rectify safety problems when identified by staff. For example:

*Safety issues should be better addressed as often OH&S is a joke. When you make a complaint, you are either ignored or ridiculed.*

*If I bring up safety issues, the boss brushes them aside.*

A number of stable employees indicated that having periodic visits by industry or OH&S officials had been beneficial in maintaining safety standards at their stables. Others felt that either the officials were ill-equipped to determine appropriate safety standards for a stable environment, or had little overall effect on raising the standard of safety. In addition, as one stable employee correctly noted:

*Stewards may come and assess the safety of a stable, but the way the work is performed is also an issue – i.e., lifting bins of manure into waste disposal units etc.*

While some stable employees had no issues with safety at their stables, there was considerable commentary regarding unsafe work practices at some training tracks and racecourses.

*It is when you get out on training tracks and racecourses that things become unsafe.*

*Trainers and owners should not be allowed past the crossing on any track.*

*At racecourses, especially during carnival times, more thought needs to be placed in where marquees, patrons and entertainment will be in regards to locations and movement of horses. Horses aren't used to lots of people, loud noises, or big white structures that flap in the wind and will take fright at them, which is a potential accident/injury.*

Of particular concern to some stable employees were the mounting yards on race days.

*The most important safety issue that needs to be immediately addressed is the dangerous environment in mounting yards on race days. Some enclosures are far too small, particularly on some country tracks. I am convinced that it is only a matter of time before somebody is killed either before or after a race.*

*Stewards need to control race day activities as the mounting yard is extremely dangerous with strappers not doing correct procedures.*

Several stable employees also mentioned situations of construction crews working around training and race tracks.

*Most of these workers [construction crews] have no idea about horse behaviour and incidents are just waiting to happen around these sites, whether it be through the actions of workers on site at the time or things they have moved / left lying around that horses may shy at or that may fly at / across horses and frighten them.*

*Stable staff have to put up with horses jumping on them because of trucks, tractors and other things going on while we try to work. It will take some one to get killed before it gets fixed.*

The lack of experience of some trackriders was also a safety issue identified by some stable employees, including several trackriders themselves, particularly in cases when they are required to ride young or highly spirited horses. For example:

*Track riders need more experience in riding before allowed on tracks.*

*Riders new to track riding should have to go to the training centre and ride one or two horses to show they have some ability.*

*Young horses should not have inexperienced trackriders allowed to ride them. It's going to end in disaster one day.*

#### **RECOMMENDATION 8:**

That the racing industry explore options for improving compliance by industry personnel in maintaining appropriate safety standards at both stable and track workplaces throughout Victoria.

### **6.5.2 Facilities at racetracks**

A significant problem for many stable employees is accessing food and refreshments, and public toilets at racecourses. Unlike patrons who are free to wander the racetracks at will, stable employees are bound to the stalls areas, tending to the care and protection of their horses. If they are lucky enough to be able to leave their charges, they are usually in competition with spectators and others at the track for access to public facilities and food outlets. The sentiments of the following comments by stable employees were widespread among participants in the study.

*Access to food and drinks at racecourses is a major problem. As an attendant has to be with the horses at all times, it can be hard to get away to go and get something to eat or drink as you're often on your own, and a trainer may or may not arrive to saddle the horse. Once you arrive at the course, you've probably been working for 8 hrs. You've generally started work between 3 and 5am, done the morning's work at the stables, changed at the stables and gone straight to the races. You may have travelled a couple of hours to get to the races, and you have to be at the races 1 to 2 hrs before your race or earlier if you have travelled with another horse in a race before yours ... it's too early to eat before you go to the races and too late by the time you get back.*

*Having to go out in public areas for food and drink is very difficult especially if there are long lines at canteen spots and you have to get back to the horses.*

*There needs to be easier access in food and drinks at races. It is not safe to leave your horse unattended for any period of time, yet this has to happen in order to get lunch.*

*On hot days it's quite difficult in the heat, and you have trouble to get to places where a drink is available.*

A number of stable employees made suggestions for strategies that might enhance the conditions of employees who work at race courses, and help them to undertake their work duties better. These included:

- locating a coin-operated drink machine in the stalls area.
- employing a person to sell food and drinks at a portable stand (or moveable cart) in the stalls area;
- having a food van visit the stalls area periodically throughout the day (similar to what happens at construction sites);
- having a 'floating' person, located at the stalls area, who is able to collect food orders for staff, or tend to horses if staff need to leave the area temporarily.

Racecourses are one of a number of places where stable employees undertake their work duties. And, for some stable employees, they spend considerable time in those environments, often in inclement conditions. Having easily accessible food and refreshment facilities and opportunities to use public toilets or other required amenities are fundamental to stable employees being able to successfully carry out their work duties at racing events.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 9:**

That the racing industry explore options for providing stable employees with easily accessible, affordable and nutritional food and drink refreshments at metropolitan and regional race tracks.

### **6.5.3 Harassment and bullying**

A significant number of stable employees indicated that they had, at some time, directly experienced harassment or bullying by other persons in the workplace. In terms of actual numbers, overall, 138 stable employees reported a total of 232 cases of harassment or bullying. In terms of gender, 104 female employees reported 173 cases, and 34 male employees reported 59 cases. As was discussed earlier in this report, however, these data are probably underestimations of the full extent of harassment and bullying experienced by the stable employees who participated in the study.

Female stable employees and trackriders (both female and male) were particular targets for harassment and bullying. A staggering 45% of all female stable employees and 52% of trackriders (females, 61%; males, 40%) had experienced harassment or bullying by other persons in the workplace. Males too were often targets (22% across all positions), but to a lesser extent than their female counterparts.

Verbal abuse was the most common form of harassment, but there were also numerous reports of emotional and physical harassment by both male and female stable employees, and female stable employees, in particular, reported incidents of sexual harassment. In many cases, the harassment was not an isolated incident but occurred repeatedly (in some cases, daily) over periods ranging from weeks to years.

In most cases, the harassment of stable employees came from other employees at the stables or from their employers. To a lesser extent, the harassment involved members of the wider racing community or the general public, and in some cases, occurred outside of the stable environments. For example:

*Harassment that I have personally experienced is on race day with drunken public asking and making suggestive comments while at the stable area and in the mounting yard area.*

Although a significant number of stable employees (38%) had taken some form of action in response to being harassed or bullied, the majority had not. Comments such as "I would have lost my job, so I just ignored it", "It would have been seen that you were weak if you said anything" and "No point, nothing will stop it because everyone does it" were common among stable employees. These comments underlie what some stable employees consider is a 'culture of harassment' within the racing industry, where harassment and bullying are tolerated. For example:

*I am sick of the exploitation and harassment that is rife throughout the stables, and the ignorance and indifference shown by many trainers or their representatives.*

*[Some] trainers seem to think that harassment and bullying are just part of the job, and if you choose to work in the industry you should just put up with it.*

*General bullying by employees is usually tolerated by employers.*

*I am unable to do my job properly when I am undermined by bitching and bullying and yet not supported by the boss.*

As a consequence of this 'culture of harassment', surviving in the industry meant for some employees that they had to learn to just live with, or adjust to, the harassment:

*Verbal sexual harassment is day-to-day, but it doesn't affect me any more as you learn how to deflect it fairly quickly.*

For some of those employees who were not able to 'deflect it', however, repeated harassment and/or bullying in the workplace had seriously undermined their confidence, self-esteem and general psychological well-being. As one female stable employee commented:

*Harassment and bullying in racing affected me for many years. It made me depressed and suicidal. I didn't want to go to work and didn't think anything was worthwhile.*

and another wrote:

*It is certainly an experience to be harassed and bullied. It almost takes your feelings to an all time low.*

For some stable employees, leaving their jobs and moving to other stables, or leaving the industry altogether, was seen as the only available options for escaping the harassment. For example:

*I have already left [one] employer due to depression from bullying/harassment.*

*I intend to leave the racing industry for good soon, as I can't put up with the harassment and abuse any longer.*

Fear of retribution (e.g., escalating harassment) was a significant barrier to reporting incidents of harassment for many stable employees. For example:

*I wasn't confident that my claims would be taken seriously and that the bullying, and more so, harassment, wouldn't increase or become worse. More people would come forward if they were 100% sure something would be done.*

*If you say nothing about harassment, it just continues. If you stand up to the bully and report them, they just make your life miserable – stab you in the back, gossip about you – and if you are female, they try to ruin your reputation by saying that you are sleeping around.*

*Harassment is hard to report if it's only directed at you, then the harasser will know it's you who reported them.*

*Making a complaint usually brings on more harassment.*

Where action was taken stable employees usually reported the incidents to employers or supervisors. In many cases (at least 50%), however, it seems that no disciplinary action was taken against the person against whom the complaint was made. Two stable employees commented:

*I discussed with the trainer my observations of indecent assault. The trainer did absolutely nothing.*

*I have witnessed first class sexual harassment and the trainer did nothing as she was living with the perpetrator.*

The comments of a number of stable employees pointed to the Victorian racing industry as needing to take a proactive approach to dealing with harassment in the work place. Several participants in the study made suggestions as to how this might be achieved, including:

- introduce compulsory training of all industry personnel on issues related to discrimination, harassment and bullying;
- undertake police checks of industry personnel;
- education and stricter penalties for those caught harassing or bullying;
- provide trainers and stable employees with access to (free) counselling services;
- provide a confidential "hot-line" for reporting cases of harassment;
- undertake a promotional campaign that delivers a clear message that harassment and bullying are not tolerated in racing industry workplaces.

Harassment and bullying in the workplace are serious occupational health and safety issues. The stress caused by being harassed or working in a climate of harassment and bullying can result in a range of psychological responses, including anxiety and depression. When they are part of a repeated pattern, they can seriously undermine an individual's confidence, self-esteem and physical health.

A key component of any serious campaign to address workplace harassment and bullying is the Whistleblower policy, which is aimed at encouraging and facilitating disclosures of improper conduct. In accordance with the Victorian Whistleblowers' Protection Act 2001, public bodies are required to adopt a Whistleblower policy that:

- promotes a culture in which whistleblowers feel safe to make disclosures;
- protects people who disclose information about serious improper conduct;
- provides a framework for investigating disclosed matters; and
- ensures that investigated matters are properly addressed.

To adequately address issues of harassment and bullying in the workplace, the racing industry will need to develop policies and processes that are guided by the Victorian Whistleblowers' Protection Act. Only in this way will the industry be able to ensure that its member and employee groups are able to raise concerns regarding issues of misconduct in the industry, without being subjected to victimisation or discriminatory treatment, and have those concerns properly investigated and handled with care and respect.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:**

That the racing industry develop a 'whistleblower' policy related to harassment and unfair or discriminatory work practices, and explore options for providing trainers and other industry personnel with a confidential service (e.g., telephone 'hotline') for reporting incidents of harassment and bullying, and communicate details of that service to all parties.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:**

That the racing industry undertake an educational campaign aimed at reducing harassment and bullying in horse-racing workplaces and informing industry personnel of appropriate courses of action for dealing with and reporting incidents.

In addition to harassment and bullying, a significant number of stable employees (22%) commented about the lack of professionalism of many stable staff (trainers and stable employees), particularly with regard to their day-to-day interactions with other staff, leading to strained relations and generally unpleasant work environments. The main areas of complaint revolved around: bitching and gossiping among staff, workplace conflicts and excessive yelling, lack of respect (particularly for young female employees), the use of foul language, personality clashes between staff and lazy workers.

*I am sworn at and cursed, treated differently because I'm female.*

*Nastiness and trouble makers drive me crazy and make me depressed.*

Some stable employees attributed these negative relations between staff and workplace practices to the fact that many trainers and stable employees are often tired and stressed from early morning starts, long work hours and lack of time off. As one stable employee remarked about relationships between stable workers:

*Constant pressure and tiredness don't mix well.*

Others commented that a lack of leadership and poor management around the stables, often lead to increased tension between staff and unacceptable or disruptive behaviours.

Promoting a positive and healthy industry environment that fosters respect and good-will among employers and workers requires commitment from the top. RVL, as the industry governing body, and the various representative associations within the industry (e.g., ATA, VJA), need to make clear to all industry stakeholders the expected standards of behaviour and demonstrate a strong and consistent commitment to those standards throughout the industry.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 12:**

That the racing industry develop or review professional codes of conduct for all member groups involved in ownership, training, and day-to-day care of racehorses and explore options for enforcing those codes.

## **6.6 Physical and Mental Health**

The two main physical health problems stable employees frequently reported were fatigue (see Section 4.10), from long work hours and lack of adequate recovery time, and injury risk, particularly when working while run-down, sick, or already injured.

### 6.6.1 Workplace injuries

In the past 5 years, well over half of all stable employees who participated in the study experienced injuries, significant pain, or other negative physical symptoms related to their work. A total of 538 injuries or cases of significant pain/physical symptoms resulting from stable work were reported by 237 employees. More track riders (89%), than individuals in any other stable positions, had experienced injuries or significant pain, followed by forepersons (65%), stablehands (58%) and assistant trainers (50%). In addition, male stable employees were 1.5 times more likely to have sustained injuries than female employees

As with horse trainers, the two most frequent sites of injury were the back and lower limbs. Together, these sites accounted for nearly 46% of all reported injuries. Back injuries and pain were particularly common among track riders, resulting mostly from riding falls or from overuse caused by riding horses (particularly horses that pull). Back pain, or soreness from overuse, was also common in stablehands and forepersons, resulting primarily from heavy lifting around the stables. Fractures to the lower limbs (feet, ankles or lower leg) were common across all positions, and resulted mainly from being trodden on or kicked by horses, or in the case of track riders, from riding falls.

Falls from horses and being kicked by horses were also responsible for a range of fractures to the upper limbs (arms, wrists and hands), along with dislocated shoulders and broken collarbones, and to a lesser extent, severely bruised or broken ribs, concussions, and fractures and lacerations to the neck, head and face. Shoulder pain was particularly common in track riders, and was usually attributed to overuse, particularly from riding work involving horses that pull.

It is clear from these results that horses are unpredictable and stables are dangerous places to work. It is, therefore, important that controllable risks are minimised. A problem compounding workplace injuries is that many stable employees continue to work while injured, potentially further compromising their safety, increasing risks of further injuries, and possibly prolonging recovery time.

In many cases (e.g., fractures, sprains, cuts and abrasions), the injuries and/or pain experienced by stable employees were acute in nature and, therefore, eventually healed. Most back, neck and shoulder pain, and other over-use injuries, however, are chronic conditions that stable employees live, and work with, on a day-to-day basis.

## 6.6.1 Mental health

Stable employees in all positions are for the most part, very happy and satisfied in their stable work. This positive finding is in contrast to the fact that a significant number of stable employees frequently feel fatigued (60%) and/or stressed (34%), and have poor sleep habits (50%; mostly related to lack of sleep). Forepersons, in particular, frequently experience significant levels of stress, possibly because of the additional responsibilities that come with their positions.

For many stable employees, both male and female, horse training frequently interfered with their family responsibilities and relationships, their relationships with friends and their social and leisure activities. In addition, a significant number of stable employees, particularly females, often experience anxiety, frustration and depression, which are direct results of the stresses associated with their stable work and stable environments. Many female employees also experience poor self-confidence. Written comments by several stable workers suggest that fatigue, time pressures, harassment and bullying, poor stable morale, and workplace conflicts are major sources contributing to these negative feelings and social disruptions.

***Stable employees at risk:*** A smaller number of stable employees frequently experienced feelings of being unable to cope (10%) or being out of control (6%) that were related to their stable work. In addition, some stable employees reported having frequent panic attacks (7%) or thoughts of suicide and/or self harm (4%).

When considered as percentages of the total stable employee population, a statistic of 5-10% might appear to suggest that these less frequent issues are unimportant or only minor problems within in the racing community. In terms of the actual numbers of people who experience these feelings, or of the consequences of experiencing these feelings, the implications of these statistics are substantial. For example, 38 stable employees often, very often or always feel unable to cope, and 14 stable employees often, very often or always experience thoughts of suicide or self-harm, that are in some way related to their stable work. Remember, only 13% of stable employees responded to the survey. When we project these numbers to the population at large (multiply these numbers by 8.0), then the significance of these findings becomes alarming.

Gambling, alcohol and recreational drug use were also problematic for a small number of stable employees. Approximately 4% of stable employees reported having experienced gambling problems in the past, but no longer do, and 5% ( $n = 20$ ) of stable employees indicated that they currently experience problems relating to gambling. In addition, between 6% and 8% of stable employees reported having experienced alcohol or drug problems in the past, but no longer do, and between 3% and 4% ( $n = 13$  to  $15$ ) of stable employees indicated that they currently experience problems related to alcohol or drug use.

Note, however, that because of the shame and stigma attached to gambling and alcohol / drug use, the figures reported here are most likely underestimates of the true extent of the problems. In both (past and present) cases of gambling problems, financial difficulties and family issues were areas that were often affected by gambling, In the cases of alcohol and drug use, financial difficulties, health, and family issues were areas that were most commonly affected. Again, when the numbers here are projected to the whole population, the extent of the problems becomes particularly worrisome.

The results of this investigation point to an urgent need for those stable employees currently experiencing significant psychological and behavioural difficulties to have access to counselling services that operate externally to the racing industry. An industry example would be some of the services provided by the Jockey Welfare Program. In addition, the findings suggest that many stable employees, not just those with immediate counselling needs, would benefit from personal counselling services. The good news is that nearly 30% of stable employees who participated in the study indicated that they would be interested in using the services of professional counsellors (e.g., medical doctors, psychologists), if private and confidential counselling services were available at reduced fees or no charge.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:**

That the racing industry provide stable employees with opportunities to access personal and confidential counselling services that are delivered externally to the racing industry for psychological, behavioural, or relationship difficulties.

## 6.7 Recognition

A number of comments by stable employees pointed to the need for there to be greater appreciation and recognition by the racing industry for the commitment and skilled work undertaken by those who tend to the training and care of racehorses. Comments such as:

*I feel unappreciated and underestimated.*

*We are the forgotten people in this industry.*

*We get nothing and we are the ones who do all the work – rain, hail or snow.*

*I have never even got a pat on the back.*

were common among stable employees.

A number of stable employees were quite specific in targeting employers as failing to appreciate their work commitments and dedication, which often went well beyond their job descriptions and duty of care. Unfortunately, there may be many stable employees who have already been lost to the industry. Some may wonder why they put so much work and effort into their stable jobs and made so many personal sacrifices. For many stable employees, it appears they feel that nobody really notices.

Several stable employees suggested that, at a minimum, stable employees should be rewarded for their work by having access to the available pool of prize monies awarded to horses. Comments such as:

*Stablehands should receive payments when horses get winnings.*

*Trainers and jockeys get a cut of the prize money. Strappers have to rely on owners and the honesty of trainers to pass [any money] on to them.*

The current Rules of Racing (Victoria) specify that a share of prize monies awarded to horses be allocated to both trainers (10%) and jockeys (5%) [*Rule L.R. 16(3)*]. Stable employees, however, are not entitled to share in the prize monies, although some owners or trainers do distribute winnings amongst their employees, particularly to the race day strappers.

In the UK and some other international racing industries, prize monies are allocated to the stables from which winning or placed horses are trained. In the

UK, this allocation is known as 'pool money', and its distribution between employees of a stable is usually agreed upon by the employees themselves and controlled by the Jockey Club (British Horseracing Authority, Orders and Rules of Racing).

Including stable employees in the distribution of prize monies is one way in which the Victorian racing industry, as a whole, could demonstrate their appreciation of the work undertaken by all of those who contribute to the day-to-day care and preparation of racehorses. A model such as that used by the British Horseracing Authority may be suitable, and easily adapted, to the racing program in Victoria.

There was particularly strong support from industry representatives for the racing community to give greater recognition to stable employees for their contributions to racing in Victoria. In 2006, the industry, for the first time, formally acknowledged the dedication, commitment and contribution of stable employees in the inaugural Thoroughbred Employee of the Year Awards. Although, the racing industry are to be commended for their initiative, the level of formal (and informal) recognition of stable employees' contributions to the racing industry remains frustratingly low and is one area in need of considerable expansion.

Other forms of recognition of stable employees that could be considered by the racing industry include:

- listing the names of strappers associated with horses, together with trainers and jockeys, in the race program;
- awarding prizes to the strapper of the best turned-out or winning horses of selected race events;
- encouraging racing clubs around the State to consider establishing some form of annual award for local stable employees; and
- profiling outstanding stable employees in racing-related and community media.

**RECOMMENDATION 14:**

That the racing industry explore options to provide stable employees with greater recognition for their contributions and years of service to the racing industry.

**6.8 Formal Representation**

Many of the issues raised by stable employees, and several of the recommendations made in this report, point to the value of stable employees in Victoria having some form of dedicated industry representation.

Currently, there is no formal industry-driven body that represents the interests of, and provides support to, stable employees in Victoria. Over the past 12 years, the Australian Workers' Union has represented thoroughbred horseracing employees in Victoria (and elsewhere in Australia), particularly with regard to advocacy and advise relating to occupational health and safety, award entitlements and working conditions. In recent years, approximately 400-500 Victorian stable employees have taken up membership with the AWU. Although data were not available on the number or demographics of stable employees who have sought assistance from the AWU, there was strong evidence of the AWU actively pursuing the interests and rights of stable employees, and other horseracing employees, around Australia.

A significant number of unsolicited positive comments relating to the establishment of an industry-driven stable employees' collective were provided by stable workers in the survey phase of this investigation. Only one comment was unsupportive. Even stronger support for a collective was voiced, in the written submissions phase, in response to questions that specifically targeted employee representation. The sentiments of the following stable employee's response were echoed in many comments:

*It [a collective] will finally give stablehands a voice in the industry, and the opportunity to address the issues which directly concern them.*

Horse breeders, owners and trainers, and jockeys, all have formal representation by professional racing industry bodies. Many stable employees were strongly in

favour of the establishment of some form of dedicated industry collective for stable employees (for example, like the Irish Stablestaff Association, UK Stable Lads' Association), and provided a range of suggestions as to what might be the functions of such a collective. For the most part, these suggestions focussed on four key areas: representation and advocacy, advice and information, education and training, and professional and social networking. Examples of comments from participating stable employees include:

- **representation and advocacy**

*I would personally support the association if there was one. Issues that I think could be dealt with would be cases such as unfair pay or possibly bosses and employers being made sure that they are running their businesses properly [safely] for their employees.*

*I think there should be an association for stable employees. Immediately, the focus should be on gaining more respect and acknowledgment from the racing industry and the public. Stable employees' inputs are not recognised enough ... It should also offer HR [human resources] support for employees experiencing difficulties at work to talk to someone confidentially who also is aware of the industry demands and employees' rights.*

- **source of advice and information to its members**

*An association would be ideal, perhaps informing stable/track riders of pay, wages, super, tax, and allowances.*

*It should provide a source of advice, guidance and representation for those industry individuals who generally lack professional recognition and respect.*

*An association that workers can call up and ask questions that would normally not be answered or they feel intimidated to ask.*

*A monthly or bi-monthly newsletter or publication with information on conditions, positions vacant, news on training.*

- **education**

*Champion the recognition of skills, structured career development and enhanced status for grooms.*

*Ensure trainers are aware of their obligations to their employees (e.g., hours, wages, OH&S, sick leave etc.)*

- **networking (social and professional)**

*Facilitate the creation of local and community networking opportunities, which will encourage social introductions, interaction and mutual support for groups of industry individuals who are often marginalised, socially or rurally isolated.*

*Another possibility could be the association run a placement program, for example, trainers could get in contact with the association expressing that*

*they are looking for someone. The same could go for the stable employee and then the association could match them up.*

Several additional comments made by stable employees were very clear in their message to the industry that employee input into any collective body, whatever its form, needed to be of highest priority.

*Running of the association should be done by somebody/persons who have had direct experience in the industry or somebody who was a stable employee themselves so that the association would be more personal to those who are under the care of the association.*

*Ensure that the running of the association has a high input from those under it.*

The current research findings provide the Victorian racing industry with an important strategic opportunity to initiate a proactive approach to resolve issues related to the health and welfare of stable employees in Victoria. An industry collective for stable employees is one option through which the racing industry could address and implement a range of innovative strategies for supporting this employee group and enhancing the quality of their lives and experiences in the horse racing industry.

Another option would be to recognise more formally the alliance between RVL and the AWU, and to consider ways in which the AWU might extend its operations so as to meet more fully the range of current and future needs of stable employees. Regardless of which option proves to be the most beneficial and workable for stable employees (and the industry), in both its development and operational phases, there clearly needs to be a strong collaboration between RVL and the AWU, that is open and transparent throughout, and suitable communication avenues in place to solicit input from stable employees, and other interested industry stakeholders.

**RECOMMENDATION 15:**

That the racing industry, in collaboration with the Australian Workers' Union, investigate the value of establishing a formal stable employees' representative body to pursue the interests of all stable employees in Victoria, and explore other alternatives for providing stable employees with a collective voice.

## 6.9 The Future Plans of Stable Employees

Although the majority of stable employees experienced overall high levels of work satisfaction, nearly half of all participants in the study stated that they were considering leaving their work as stable employees, most within the next 12 months, or 1-2 years. Female trackriders (61%) and stablehands (56%) were at greatest risk of leaving the industry, followed by male stablehands (42%) and trackriders (38%), and female forepersons (33%).

Given the findings of the current investigation, it is perhaps not surprising that the central reasons for employees considering leaving stable work revolved around financial issues (low pay rates), work conditions (e.g. early starts, long and anti-social hours, inadequate leave arrangements) and lack of career options.

Age was also a significant factor for employees who were considering leaving the industry. Whereas a number of older stable employees were intending to retire in the near future, many younger employees were leaving to pursue career interests outside of the racing industry. In some cases, the choice to go outside the industry for a career was related to the nature of the work (e.g., early starts, long hours), and in other cases, it related to the belief held by some employees that stable work affords workers no opportunities for career advancement.

Other frequently reasons cited by stable employees included:

- physical health factors – injury, chronic exhaustion, wear and tear on body;
- to work in another area of the racing industry – e.g., jockey apprenticeship, horse trainer;

and to a lesser extent:

- harassment and bullying in the industry;
- family reasons (e.g., start a family, spend more time with family)
- lack of job satisfaction and enjoyment.

## 6.10 Future Research

The current investigation provides the detailed picture of the workplace experiences of horse stable employees in Victoria, and of the ways in which the day-to-day demands of their stable work influence their personal health and welfare.

During the course of the investigation, a number of issues were raised, or came to the foreground, that were beyond the investigative scope, or were outside of the terms of reference, of this project. Addressing these issues, although important, is a matter for future research. The final recommendation below suggests that, as a matter of priority, future research into the health and welfare of stable employees target three key areas. Other areas that could be considered for investigation are numerous, and are implied by many of the results contained within this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION 16:**

That the racing industry consider undertaking further research in the following areas:

- injury prevalence and prevention in the stable workplace
- loss and retention of stable employees in the racing industry; and
- past, present and future trends in the composition of new recruits to the stable workforce, with a focus on equine-related skills and knowledge base, motivations and expectations, and general demographics (e.g., age, gender, education levels, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds).

## 7. REFERENCES

- Akerstedt, T., Fredlund, P., & Gillberg, M. (2002). A prospective study of fatal occupational accidents: Relationship to sleeping difficulties and occupational factors. *Journal of Sleep Research, 11*, 69-71.
- Australian Institute of Management – Victoria & Tasmania. (2006). *What Keeps Employees Engaged with their Workplace*. AIMS Managing the Future Survey Series.
- Caine, D., Caine, C., & Lindner, K. (eds.) (1996). *Epidemiology of Sports Injuries* Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics
- Country Racing Victoria (2006). *Economic and social contribution of thoroughbred horse racing in country Victoria*. Victoria: Country Racing Victoria.
- Cowley, S., Bowman, B., & Lawrance, M. (2007). Injuries in the Victorian thoroughbred racing industry. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. In press.
- Frank, A.L. (2000). Injuries related to shift work. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine, 18*, 33-36.
- Gauci, G. (2006). *Agri-Foods Industry Skills Council – Champions Project. Careers in Racing through the National Training Package*.
- Leadership Management Australasia (2006). *The Leadership, Employment and Direction (LEAD) survey, 2006*. <http://www.lma.biz/>
- Office of Gaming and Racing (2006). *Racing in Victoria Leading the Field*. State of Victoria, Department of Justice.
- Press, J.M., Davis, P.D, Wiesner, S.L., *et al.* (1995). The national jockey injury study: an analysis of injuries to professional horse-racing jockeys. *Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine, 5*, 236–40.
- Racing Victoria Limited (2006). *Annual Report 2006*. Harding Media Services Pty., Ltd.
- Speed, H.D., Seedsman, T., & Morris, A. (2001). *The Welfare of Retired Jockeys*. Racing Victoria Limited and Victoria University Research Report.

- State Services Authority (2006). *People Matter Survey 2006*. State Government of Victoria
- Swaen, G.M.H., van Amelsvoort, L.G., Bultmann, U., & Kant, I.J. (2003). Fatigue as a risk factor for being injured in an occupational accident: results from the Maastricht Cohort Study. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 60*, 105i-106i.
- Turner, M., McCrory, P., & Halley, W. (2002). Injuries in professional horse racing in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland during 1992–2000. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 36*, 403-409.
- van Dijk, F.J.H., & Swaen, G.M.H. (2003). Fatigue at work. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 60*. i105.
- Waller, A.E., Daniels, J.L., Weaver, N.L., & Robinson, P. (2000). Jockey injuries in the United States. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 283*, 1326-1328.
- 

## APPENDIX 1: Background and Summary

The research described in this report aimed to provide a detailed and personalised account of the ways in which trainers and stable employees cope with the demands of their jobs, and of the influence of their involvement in the horse racing industry on their personal health and welfare. The research was commissioned by Racing Victoria Limited (RVL), in response to a need to identify ways in which the racing industry can better support trainers and stable employees, and enhance the overall quality of their day-to-day lives in the horse racing industry. The project was supported by the Victorian Government through funding from the Racing Industry Development Program.

The methodological framework used to gather information was similar to that used for 'The Welfare of Retired Jockeys' investigation (Speed, Seedsman & Morris, 2001), employing a quantitative survey approach to yield a broad range of data across a large sample of horse trainers and stable employees, and a qualitative approach to gain a more in-depth insight into key issues relating to their work and personal well-being. The main findings of the research are summarised below.

### PARTICIPANTS

Surveys were mailed to approximately 1,250 licensed thoroughbred horse trainers and 3,100 stable employees residing in Victoria. A total of 303 trainers (24%) and 390 stable employees (13%) completed and returned the surveys. A further 13 trainers and 12 stable employees who completed the survey also provided written submissions on key issues as identified in the survey responses.

The horse trainers and stable employees who participated in the investigation covered a diverse mix of demographic categories and horse training and stable situations. Representation of the different trainer licence categories and stable positions was roughly proportional to that seen in the broader Victorian racing industry (*Inside Racing*, January, 2007). Both male and female trainers and

stable employees were also well represented in the research, as were all age groups, country and metropolitan stables, and small and large-scale stables.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

For the vast majority of participants in the study, horse training or stablework are rewarding occupations that generate considerable satisfaction and happiness. This finding is in contrast to the fact that much of their lives are spent engaged in work activities, with few chances to recover from the stresses of one day before the next day begins, or to spend time with family and friends. And, the major rewards of their work are, for the most part, intrinsic to the activities that trainers and stable employees engage in, not financial. Many trainers and stable employees, particularly those who run or work at small stables, survive mostly on the passion they have for their work and the industry, and struggle daily to make ends meet.

### Financial Difficulties

**Horse Trainers.** The results of the investigation indicated that nearly two-thirds of the participating trainers had experienced significant financial difficulties related to their horse training operations. For the most part, these difficulties related to debt recovery and income accrual, particularly in the case of small stable operations.

- **Debt recovery.** More than half of the Permit Trainers surveyed had encountered problems in obtaining payment from the owners of horses, and for many, slow or non-payment had been a persistent source of financial and emotional stress.

Although a small number of trainers had instigated debt recovery, more commonly, trainers carried the losses associated with non-payment. It was not uncommon for horses to be removed from the stables by non-paying owners, only to be placed at other stables, where the cycle of non-payment continued.

Currently there exists no formal process for trainers to report cases of non-payment or to access information about owners who have a history of poor or

non-payment. Several trainers suggested that a registry of defaulting owners would be beneficial to trainers, particularly in the case of owners who move horses around different stables, leaving a trail of non-paid debts. Other trainers suggested that RVL or the Australian Trainers' Association (ATA) act as an agent for trainers in matters related to payment of fees and the recovery of debt, or apply penalties to non-paying owners (such as de-registration or suspension, forfeiture of prize monies, rejection of nominations).

- ***Income Accrual Difficulties.*** For many trainers, particularly small-scale trainers and trainers with new businesses, the expenses related to training and racing horses far exceed the income that is generated from training fees and/or prize monies. In the case of Owner Trainers, income from horse training derives almost solely from prize monies, and all expenses related to the purchase, training and racing of horses must be met by the trainer.

For some small-scale trainers, particularly Owner Trainers, horse training and racing is a hobby interest that is funded primarily by external sources. For many other small-scale trainers, horse training is their primary career or business interest, and they are forced to seek additional employment in order to supplement their horse-training income or cover the costs of their horse training and racing activities.

Competing with large scale training operations can be particularly difficult for some small-scale and new trainers, both in terms of attracting owners and quality race horses, and obtaining prize monies, and in the case of new trainers, covering the considerable start-up expenses. Small-scale country trainers have even fewer opportunities for accessing prize monies at local country races, because of the dominance of horses from large stables, and because the prize monies awarded for country races are considerably lower than equivalent races held in city locations.

A number of suggestions were made by trainers as to how the racing industry could assist small-scale and new trainers build and sustain more viable horse training businesses, including subsidies and other financial concessions, and scheduling of restricted races. Providing trainers with opportunities to access a professional financial counselling service would further help trainers in managing the financial responsibilities required for running their business operations.

- **Fee Structure.** Currently, there is no formal industry-regulated fee structure for training race horses in Australia. The ATA has a recommended daily training fee, however, many trainers often undercut that fee in order to attract business from owners.

The fierce competition between trainers to attract good owners and racehorses, although understandable, actually serves to drive down their income and restrict their overall earning potential. The negative results of this competition are felt most severely by the new and small-scale stables. Having an industry-regulated, but economically flexible, fee structure would both protect small and young stable businesses and provide an industry standard for appropriate remuneration for a range of training services

**Stable employees.** Many stable employees also experienced problems related to financial aspects of their stable employment, which revolved mostly around (1) receiving adequate payment for the work they undertook, and (2) obtaining documentation regarding payment of wages and other financial details such as taxes and superannuation.

- **Remuneration.** The remuneration that most stable employees receive for the work they undertake is specified under the Horse Training Industry Award (1998). From the many comments of stable employees who participated in this study, it appears that the majority of stable employees in Victoria receive, at most, the minimum Award wage, and a significant number are paid well below Award rates.

Some stable employees commented directly on the fact that they were being paid below Award rates by their employers, others complained about not being paid for all the hours they worked, particularly in the case of overtime, or being paid inconsistent rates from one time period to another.

- **Documentation.** An issue that was not raised directly by stable employees, but that was clearly evident from many of their survey responses, concerned the lack of awareness that a significant number of stable employees have regarding the financial details of their employment agreements (e.g. pay rates, whether employers made contributions on their behalf to a superannuation fund, or paid them for overtime). This lack of awareness may be attributable, at least in part, to the failure of some employers to provide adequate documentation to workers covering such details. For example, many stable employees commented that they never or only rarely received pay slips

from their employers, and some employees indicated that they experienced difficulties obtaining documentation that related to accrued leave entitlements, or hours worked during previous pay periods. Inadequate remuneration for their work and the lack of award documentation added significantly to the frustrations of some stable employees

**Superannuation and Financial Counselling.** One mechanism for building financial security in horse trainers and stable employees and preparing them for life after their careers in the racing industry is through investment funds such as superannuation schemes.

Currently, there is no collective superannuation scheme for horse trainers. Although many trainers make contributions to a superannuation scheme on behalf of their employees, it seems that only some trainers (33%) take up this option for themselves. Although an industry superannuation fund has been established for stable employees, it is clear that only a relatively small proportion of employees (10%-20%) make personal contributions to the fund. For the most part, the superannuation contributions of both trainers and stable employees are only small amounts.

Why the majority of trainers and stable employees do not take up superannuation options remains unclear. Lack of knowledge about superannuation schemes and the hectic work schedules of trainers and stable employees are two possible reasons. Furthermore, because of the low incomes of many trainers and stable employees, there may be the belief that their incomes from horse training or stable work are insufficient to enable meaningful superannuation contributions, and taking another slice of their already low incomes may make for further immediate financial difficulties.

Superannuation is one way in which trainers and stable employees can build financial security and plan for the future, and so it is important that they are given every opportunity to accrue maximum benefits over the course of their working lives. Industry investment schemes, like the Jockeys' Benefit Package, may provide suitable models for encouraging and helping trainers and stable employees take up the option of personal superannuation. Providing trainers with opportunities to access a professional financial counselling service would further encourage trainers in developing financial responsibility for their business operations, both during and after their careers in the racing industry.

## Work Commitments and Leave Arrangements

There was almost unanimous agreement among horse trainers, stable employees and industry personnel that horse training and stable work involves long hours and demanding physical work. Regular days off, annual leave and sick leave are, for many trainers and stable employees, luxuries they seldom experience.

**Horse Trainers.** Many Permit Trainers who participated in the study work a 60-hour week, 6-7 days a week, and a significant number work in excess of 80 hours each week. Almost all Owner Trainers work part-time training horses, and many have significant work commitments outside of the racing industry. They too typically work 6-7 days a week undertaking horse training and business activities, many in excess of 38 hours (what is considered a full-time workload in the general work-force).

Given the considerable amount of time that most trainers engage in training horses and running their business operations, it is perhaps not surprising that few trainers take adequate time-off from their horse training activities for rest and recovery, and even fewer take annual leave or sick leave, even when needed. Almost two-thirds of the trainers (Permit Trainers and Owner Trainers) who participated in the study never, or rarely, took a day off from their horse training operations, and as few as 2% of trainers took annual leave.

**Stable Employees.** For the majority of full-time stable employees, and a significant number of casual and part-time employees, stable work means very early mornings and long days, particularly on race days. Working in excess of 40 hours per week, and in some cases, 60 hours per week, was standard practice for many stable employees, some of whom often felt under pressure from their employers to work additional overtime.

A significant number of stable employees, particularly forepersons and assistant trainers, rarely had a regular weekly day off from stable work, and many described difficulties getting adequate time off either during the work day, or between consecutive work days. Although many stable employees (mainly those working full-time) had formal annual and sick leave arrangements with their employers, a significant number often experienced difficulties in actually taking leave. In most cases, the difficulties revolved around having no time, employers being unable to find skilled replacement staff, or employers being unsupportive of requests for leave.

For many trainers and stable employees, working long hours, coupled with no or little time off, adversely affects both their working lives (e.g. reduced productivity, increased risks of workplace injuries, staff conflicts) and their personal lives (difficulties meeting family responsibilities, stresses on relationships with family and friends, few opportunities for social life or leisure interests). A significant number of trainers and stable employees indicated that they were considering leaving their horse training or stable within the next 12 months or 1-2 years, either for financial reasons or because of the excessive work commitments and resulting stresses.

A common perception held by trainers and stable employees is that the current Victorian racing calendar, which sees racing events held every day of the week, is the primary reason that they are unable to take adequate time off. Many suggested that racing should be limited to a 6-day week, with a mandatory day off, to enable trainers and stable staff to recover and spend time with their families. This solution, however, is probably a false hope, as, regardless of the racing calendar, horses need to be tended to every day. In addition, not taking time off is influenced by the beliefs of many trainers that there is no-one available who is capable of taking over their stable responsibilities. Indeed, half of the trainers who participated in the study cited this problem as a main reason for not taking time off work.

What is clear, however, is that the majority of trainers and a significant number of stable employees in Victoria have excessively high workloads that place their physical, mental and social well-being at risk. How to most effectively address this issue is unclear, and is a challenge that the racing industry will need to take up as a matter of some priority.

## **Trackriders and Training Facilities**

A significant number of trainers commented about the difficulties they experienced accessing trackriders to exercise their horses. According to many trainers, there are simply not enough trackriders to go around. The problem appears to be most severe among small and country stables, particularly when the work is on a casual basis. Understandably, many trackriders are more attracted to large-scale and city-based stables where they can obtain better wages and full employment.

The racing industry acknowledges the growing need to recruit people with advanced riding skills, and is undertaking promotional and educational campaigns to attract experienced trackriders to the industry and train new trackriders, particularly riders from other equine disciplines. In addition, a program has been established to provide existing trackriders, who have no formal qualifications in racing, with opportunities to further develop their competencies and skills.

Recruiting experienced trackriders would provide immediate, although probably only temporary, relief to the many trainers in need of their skills and services. Recruiting and training riders from other equine disciplines and providing more training opportunities for trainee trackriders would further add to the existing pool of riders and ensure that future demands will be better met.

In addition to recruiting strategies, the present results suggest that there is an urgent need to address the retention of trackriders. Some 38% of male and 61% of female trackriders who participated in the study indicated that they were considering leaving the industry within the next 12 to 24 months. The most frequently cited reasons for considering leaving related to their working conditions (particularly the early morning starts and little time off) and poor remuneration for the high-risk work that they undertake.

Several trainers raised the issue of having 'club riders' at training tracks, who are employed by the industry (e.g. training facility, racing club or RVL) and are available to any trainer who wishes to use their services. Other trainers suggested extending the operating hours of training track facilities so as to increase the availability of existing trackriders to exercise horses.

Extending the operating hours of training facilities was favoured by many horse trainers, for reasons not only related to accessing trackriders. For example, a number of trainers, particularly part-time trainers who have significant work commitments outside of their horse training activities, reported that they experienced frequent difficulties in attending training tracks because of the limited operating hours of many venues. In the case of full-time trainers, many of whom start their long work days as early as 3:00am, being able to exercise their horses later in the morning or day, would shorten their overall work days, in some cases, quite dramatically.

## Education and workplace training

**Horse Trainers.** The majority of trainers who had held a trainer's licence for 5 years or less (when formal qualifications became a compulsory licence requirement) had completed, or were in the process of completing, a Certificate or Diploma of Racing. Few other trainers (7%), however, had qualifications related directly to horse training, and most had received no formal training in the workplace practices of equal opportunity, harassment/bullying, emergency procedures, or staff relations / management. For many trainers, cost factors and finding time to engage in formal education and training or travel to education centres proved to be major barriers. The issue of finding competent and reliable replacement staff was also problematic for a number of trainers.

Operating a horse training business requires expertise not only in areas related to horse training and racing, but also in business management and administration. Knowledge of government and industry regulations, and practical skills in financial management, record keeping, business planning and marketing, are all fundamental to running a successful horse-training business.

Only a small number of trainers who participated in the study had received formal training in business management and administration skills. Those who had were mostly Owner Trainers, which probably reflects the more advanced qualifications required of many Owner Trainers in their pursuit of professional careers outside of the racing industry. The comments of several trainers and industry personnel suggest that an equally small number of trainers employ professional business managers or seek expert financial guidance on matters relating to their business operations. The majority of trainers, it seems, and particularly those with small business operations, manage all aspects of their businesses themselves, including the main financial and administrative tasks, and do so with little guidance and no formal training.

In the case of trainers who employ staff at their stables, there is the additional need to possess quality staff management skills and have a sound understanding of regulations concerning workplace relations systems and practices. Approximately 50% of trainers who participated in the study employed one or more staff at their stables. Fewer than one quarter of those trainers, however, had received formal training in staff relations, and as many as 50% had little or no understanding of the new national workplace relations system (i.e., *WorkChoices*). Many trainers did, however, indicate that they would be interested

in undertaking formal training in the *WorkChoices* system, if appropriate training was made available to them.

**Stable Employees.** Many stable employees (between 30-45%) had undertaken formal education related either directly to their stable jobs (e.g., Certificate 1 or 2 in racing), or courses that related to horses generally (e.g., Bachelor of Equine Science) or other occupations within the racing industry (e.g., apprentice farrier, jockey). The majority of stable employees, however, and particularly older workers, had received no induction training when they joined the stables, and little or no formal training in the jobs they do, having learned their skills 'on-the-job'. In addition, although most stable employees had received training in workplace practices related to occupational health and safety (OH&S) and emergency procedures, only half of the participants in the study, had undertaken training in the areas of equal opportunity, harassment and bullying, and staff relations. This latter fact may well explain the high incidence of harassment and bullying, and staff conflict that is characteristic of many stable environments (see below).

Finding time to engage in formal educational courses and off-site workplace training are major difficulties for many stable employees. In most cases, employers expect stable workers to attend courses and training outside of their work commitments. Doing so, however, poses problems for staff working full-time hours, many of whom already experience difficulties finding time to relax or tend to family or social responsibilities. Because of heavy work-load and variable working hours and times, stable employees who wanted to take up training opportunities, commented that the provision of such training needed to be more flexible than is currently the case and oriented more closely to meet the unique needs of stable staff.

Aside from the obvious and serious occupational health and safety issues that arise when inexperienced and untrained staff are employed in stable environments, industry and workplace training can afford employees valuable opportunities for personal and career development. For many stable employees, the racing industry is their life, and they make many sacrifices in order to fulfil their passion of having a career working with racehorses or of being part of the horse-racing industry. Unfortunately, the racing industry is at risk of losing many of these dedicated employees, particularly younger workers, in the future because of the lack of opportunities for career advancement or professional development within the industry

Although there are a range of job options within the racing industry, there is a general lack of clearly defined pathways and training opportunities for pursuing career options, and no supporting framework to encourage career progression, or continuing professional development. The results of the current investigation suggest that the racing industry needs to establish more effective engagement strategies for stable employees, and those strategies should promote and map out career pathways and developmental opportunities, and should support the concept of *industry careers*, rather than *industry jobs*.

## Occupational Health and Safety

**Regulations.** Safety in the workplace is critical to the success of any horse training business, and to the racing industry, in general. As business owners, horse trainers have certain rights and responsibilities regarding health and safety in their workplaces. Understanding and complying with OH&S regulations both protects trainers and their employees from workplace injuries and illnesses, and creates work environments that promote positive and productive work ethics. Although many trainers who participated in the investigation had undertaken training in OH&S issues (52% Permit Trainers, 71% Owner Trainers), a significant number indicated that they struggled to understand and implement some of the OH&S standards and policies that apply to horse training and the stable workplace.

Currently, RVL provides all trainers in Victoria with detailed information relating to new and amended OH&S legislation and policies. Given the limited time that trainers have to access and attend to the vast array of industry information concerning training and racing horses and managing stable staff, and considering the complexity that is inherent in many OH&S policies, more user-friendly and comprehensible guidelines may be necessary.

A number of trainers also considered that some of the current OH&S standards are not appropriate for the specific stable and racetrack environments within which they and their staff work, and unnecessarily interrupt or interfere with the day-to-day operations of their horse training and stable activities.

It should be noted that RVL and *WorkSafe Victoria* have recently developed (subsequent to data collection for the current investigation) new industry OH&S policies and guidelines for the horse racing industry that are more relevant to the various employment sectors of the industry than has previously been the case.

During the development phase, key employer groups within the racing industry were consulted, and all members of the industry were invited to comment on both the content and recommendations of the policies. One of the key findings of the present investigation is that the industry should consider, as a matter of high priority, suitable ways to convey information relating to these new OH&S policies and regulations to horse trainers in ways that will facilitate their understanding, both in terms of application and relevancy.

***Fatigue and Stress.*** Of particular concern to trainers and stable employees, were the increased risks of workplace injuries and accidents that can result from working when fatigued or stressed. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that fatigue, lack of sleep and stress are all directly linked to higher workplace accident rates. An alarming finding in the current study, is that a significant number of both horse trainers and stable employees reported frequently (often or very often) being fatigued and/or stressed, and many lacked adequate sleep, because of their long hours of work.

In addition to increasing the risk of accidents or injuries at work, fatigue and stress can result in reduced performance and productivity, and disturbed mood (e.g., anxiety, depression). Fatigue and stress can also interfere with a person's ability to communicate effectively and deal with workplace conflict. Both trainers and stable employees pointed directly to breakdowns in workplace relationships because of fatigue and the stresses of their work.

***Staff Training.*** Serious safety concerns were raised by a number of trainers and stable employees about new people entering the industry who are under-skilled and lack 'horse-sense' and working in dangerous and often unpredictable environments.

To address this issue, RVL recently introduced compulsory minimum standards of basic horsemanship for all new stable employees. Although it would be difficult, and impractical, to impose these industry standards across all stable staff, many of whom have been working at stables for more than 20 years, from this point forward, all new staff entering the industry will have received, at the very least, the basic skills and knowledge-base required of them to work safely in stable and racetrack environments.

***Safety at stables and training tracks.*** For many stable employees, safety in their workplaces was paramount. Suitable training was provided to staff, and when safety issues were raised by staff, they were usually dealt with as a matter of priority. The comments of some stable employees, however, suggested that at

some stables safety concerns for staff (and in some cases horses) were severely lacking, both in terms of policies and procedures. Of particular concern were: poor maintenance of riding and other stable gear, unclear or un-communicated safety and emergency procedures, and, as mentioned previously, inexperienced staff working without adequate supervision, and employees working when exhausted or injured.

While some stable employees had no issues with safety at their stables, there was considerable commentary among stable employees and some trainers regarding unsafe work practices at some training tracks and racecourses. Poor lighting, people and machinery crossing tracks, small mounting yards at racetracks, and construction crews and materials in locations accessed by horses were the main safety concerns expressed by stable employees. There was also the concern that during racing carnivals, the placement of marquees and other entertainment fixtures close to areas where there is heavy movement of horses pose safety risks for both patrons and the horses and their strappers or riders.

***Facilities at Racecourses.*** Both trainers and stable employees commented about difficulties they experience in accessing food and refreshment outlets, or public toilets, at racecourses, particularly when they are in competition with spectators and others at the racecourse.

Racecourses are one of a number of places where trainers undertake horse-training and racing activities. And, for some trainers, they spend considerable time in those environments, often in inclement conditions. Having access to private areas on-course, where they can rest, refresh, and conduct their business activities without disruption or discomfort, is a work environment that many people in the general workforce take for granted.

For stable employees, the difficulties accessing public facilities are compounded by their need to remain in close proximity to the horses in their care. Having easily accessible and nutritional food and refreshment facilities, and opportunities to visit public toilets or other required amenities, are fundamental to stable employees being able to successfully carry out their work duties at racing events.

***Harassment and Bullying.*** A fundamental right of all workers in the horse racing industry is to be able to or go about their business or work activities in a safe and healthy environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying. An alarming finding of the present investigation is that almost one quarter of all trainers, and more than one third of all stable employees who participated in the

study indicated that they directly experienced harassment or bullying in the workplace.

Female trainers and stable employees were particular targets of harassment and bullying. Some 25% of female trainers and 45% of female stable employees (61% of female trackriders) reported having experienced harassment or bullying in the workplace. Males too were often targets, but to a lesser extent than their female counterparts (approximately 22% for both trainers and stable employees).

Verbal abuse was the most common form of harassment, but there were also numerous reports of emotional, physical and sexual harassment. In many cases, the harassment was not an isolated incident but occurred repeatedly (in some cases, daily) over periods ranging from weeks to years. The majority of incidents reported by Permit Trainers came from horse owners, whereas most reported cases by Owner Trainers came from people in the racing industry who were not employed at their stables. In most cases, the harassment of stable employees came from other employees at the stables or from their employers.

Although a significant number of trainers (23%) and stable employees (38%) had taken some form of action in response to being harassed or bullied, the majority had remained silent on the issue. Many Permit Trainers, for example, had to just put up with the harassment, or risk losing a value source of their income (e.g. from horse owners). For some stable employees, leaving their jobs and moving to other stables, or leaving the industry altogether, was seen as the only available options for escaping the harassment. Where action was taken, it seems that in many cases (possibly greater than 50%) no disciplinary action was taken against the offending person.

Harassment and bullying in the workplace are serious occupational health and safety issues that are evident in many Australian workforces. A recent survey of nearly 14,000 public servants in Victoria's Government departments and public agencies (State Services Authority, 2006), revealed that approximately one in five workers had been bullied or harassed by colleagues or managers in the past year. In most cases, the bullying took the form of psychological harassment and/or verbal abuse. Similar figures were reported in the latest national Leadership, Employment and Direction (LEAD) survey (Leadership Management Australasia, 2006), which addressed workplace issues across a broad range Australian industry sectors and organisational levels. The survey found that three out of every five Australian employees had witnessed bullying or harassment

behaviour in the workplace, and more than half of those who had been witness to those behaviours had themselves been subjected to harassment or bullying.

The racing industry is clearly not exceptional with regard to workplace harassment and bullying. What the current findings do indicate, however, is that the racing industry may face heavy costs in the future, both economic and social, if it fails to address this problem in its workforce.

Harassment and bullying in the workplace are serious occupational health and safety issues. They can cause serious damage to the collective workforce of horse training stables and put the professional reputation of the racing industry at risk. Promoting a positive and healthy industry environment that fosters respect and good-will among employers and workers requires commitment from the top. RVL, as the industry governing body, and the various representative associations within the industry (e.g., ATA, VJA), need to make clear to all industry stakeholders the expected standards of behaviour and demonstrate a strong and consistent commitment to those standards throughout the industry.

## Physical and Mental Health

***Workplace Injuries.*** Previous studies have shown that almost all jockeys invariably suffer injuries during the course of their riding and racing work (Waller et al., 2000; Speed, Seedsman, & Morris, 2001; Turner, McCrory, & Halley, 2002; Crowley, Bowman & Lawrance, 2007). The results of the present investigation reveal that trainers and stable employees are also at high risk of being injured. In the past 5 years, well over half of all trainers and stable employees who participated in the current investigation had experienced injuries, significant pain, or other negative physical symptoms related to their work. Trackriders are at particularly high risk of injury, with some 89% of all participating trackriders having sustained injuries or experienced significant pain, as a direct consequence of their riding work. Note, however, that because of limitations to the survey used in this investigation, the number of injuries reported here may considerably underestimate the actual number of injuries sustained by the participants of the study.

The two most common sites of injuries to both trainers and stable employees were the back (from heavy lifting, riding falls or pulling horses) and lower limbs (from falls or being kicked or trodden on by horses). Upper limb injuries were usually from falls or being kicked. With the exception of back and neck pain, the

vast majority of injuries and significant pain was acute in nature and eventually healed. Back pain, and to a lesser extent neck pain, however, are often chronic conditions that many trainers and stable employees live with and work with on a day-to-day basis. It is clear from these results that horses are unpredictable and stables are dangerous places to work. A problem compounding these workplace injuries is that many trainers and stable employees continue to work while injured, potentially further compromising safety, increasing risk of further injury, and possibly prolonging recovery time.

***Mental Health.*** The majority of trainers (70-75%) and stable employees (75%-85%) are, for the most part, happy and satisfied in their work. This positive finding is in contrast to the fact that for a significant number of trainers and stable employees, horse training or stable work frequently interferes with their family responsibilities and relationships, their relationships with friends, and with their social and leisure activities.

In addition, a significant number (20-30%) of trainers and stable employees, particularly females, often experience anxiety and/or depression, and low self-confidence, which are the direct result of the stresses associated with their horse training or stable work or with their workplace environments. A smaller number (5%-10%) also expressed frequently feeling unable to cope with the demands of their work, or having frequent panic attacks or thoughts of suicide and other forms of self-harm. Gambling and alcohol use were also problematic for a small number of trainers (2-4%) and stable employees (5%), and drug use had been, or continued to be, problematic for some stable employees (8%). Because of the shame and stigma attached to gambling and alcohol problems, the figures reported here are most likely underestimates of the extent of the problems.

Written comments by several trainers and stable employees suggest that fatigue, time pressures, financial stresses, harassment and bullying, poor stable morale, and workplace conflicts are major sources contributing to these negative feelings and social disruptions.

When considered as percentages of the total horse-trainer or stable employee populations, a statistic of 5-10% might appear to suggest that these latter issues are unimportant or only minor problems within in the horse racing community. In terms of the actual numbers of people who experience negative feelings or substance use problems, or of their consequences, the implications of these statistics are substantial. For example, 25 trainers and 38 stable employees often, very often or always feel unable to cope, while 10 trainers and 14 stable

employees often, very often or always experience thoughts of suicide or self-harm, that are in some way related to their horse training or stable work. In this investigation, only 24% of trainers and 13% of stable employees responded to the survey. When these numbers are projected to the populations at large (multiply these numbers by 4.0 for trainers and roughly 8.0 for stable employees), then the significance of these findings becomes alarming.

Workplace-related stress, fatigue, mental health issues and substance use are also pervasive problems in many Australian workforces. Although comparison data in other industries are not readily available, it is reasonable to conclude that the racing industry is not an exception in this regard. What the current findings do indicate, however, is that the racing industry may face heavy costs in the future, both economic and social, if it fails to address issues relating to the mental (and physical) health of its workforce.

The findings also suggest that there is an urgent need for those trainers and stable employees currently experiencing significant psychological and behavioural difficulties to have access to counselling services that operate externally to the racing industry, as in one of the services provided by RVL's Jockey Welfare Program. In addition, the findings here suggest that many trainers and stable employees, not just those with immediate counselling needs, would benefit from personal counselling services. The good news is that one in five trainers and just over one in four stable employees who participated in the study indicated that they would be interested in using the services of professional counsellors (e.g., medical doctor, psychologist), if private and confidential counselling services were available at reduced fees or no charge.

## Representation

The ATA is the peak representative body for horse trainers in Australia. The primary focus of the ATA is on representing and protecting the interests of trainers, and providing members with racing information, advice and support services. Few trainers who participated in the current investigation made comments that related to the ATA. This may be due to a generally positive attitude being held by most horse trainers toward the association, its administration and its operations. Several comments that were made, however, point to a potential need for there to be greater focus by the ATA on issues relevant to small-scale horse trainers, particularly those in regional Victoria, and

for the Association to disseminate more extensive information to its members regarding the full range of services that it offers.

Currently, there is no formal industry-driven body that represents the interests of, and provides support to, stable employees in Victoria. Over the past 12 years, the Australian Workers' Union has represented thoroughbred horseracing employees in Victoria (and elsewhere in Australia), particularly with regard to advocacy and advice relating to occupational health and safety, award entitlements and working conditions. In recent years, approximately 400-500 Victorian stable employees have taken up membership with the AWU. Although data were not available on the number or demographics of stable employees who have sought assistance from the AWU, there was considerable evidence of the AWU actively pursuing the interests and rights of stable employees, and other horseracing employees, around Australia.

Many of the comments made by stable employees pointed to the value of stable employees in Victoria having a collective representation that is industry-driven. Horse breeders, owners and trainers, and jockeys, all have formal representation by professional racing industry bodies. Many stable employees were strongly in favour of the establishment of some form of professional industry collective for stable employees (for example, like the Irish Stablestaff Association, UK Stable Lads' Association), and provided a range of suggestions as to what might be the functions of such a collective. For the most part, these suggestions focussed on four key areas: representation and advocacy, advice and information, education and training, and professional and social networking.

An industry collective for stable employees is one option through which the racing industry could address and implement a range of innovative strategies for supporting this employee group and enhancing the quality of their lives and experiences in the horse racing industry. Another option would be to recognise more formally the alliance between RVL and the AWU, and to consider ways in which the AWU might extend its operations so as to meet more fully the range of current and future needs of stable employees. Regardless of which option proves to be the most beneficial and workable for stable employees (and the racing industry), in both its development and operational phases, there clearly needs to be a strong collaboration between RVL and the AWU that is open and transparent throughout, and suitable communication avenues in place to solicit input from stable employees, and other interested industry stakeholders.

Trainers, stable employees, and industry representatives all commented on the need for there to be greater recognition by the racing industry of the commitment and skilled work undertaken by those who tend to the training and care of racehorses. Indeed, the vast majority of trainers and stable employees felt that they did not receive the recognition they deserved. Several trainers were quite specific in targeting owners, and stable employees in targeting employers, as failing to appreciate their work commitments and dedication, which often went well beyond their job descriptions and duty of care. Formal recognition is one way in which the industry can demonstrate its appreciation of the services provided by horse trainers and stable employees and formally acknowledge them as valued members of the racing community. Currently, there exists limited formal recognition of horse trainers by the racing industry, and almost no formal recognition of stable employees.

## Future Plans

Despite their high levels of work satisfaction, over a third of all trainers and nearly half of all stable employees who participated in the study were thinking about leaving the racing industry, many within the next one to two years. Some sub-groups were at particularly high risk of leaving, including: female trackriders (61% were thinking of leaving), female (56%) and male (42%) stablehands, male Permit Trainers, (41%) and female trainers (34%, both Permit and Owner Trainers).

For both trainers and stable employees, the main reasons for considering leaving the industry revolved around financial issues and work conditions. Age was also a significant factor, with a number of trainers and stable employees intending to retire from all significant work commitments in the near future. Many younger stable employees, on the other hand, were thinking about leaving stable work to pursue career interests outside of the racing industry. In some cases, the choice to go outside the industry for a career was related to the nature of stable work (e.g., early starts, long hours), and in other cases, it related to the belief held by some employees that stable work affords workers few or no opportunities for career advancement.

These findings provide further evidence of the urgent need for the racing industry to address the financial difficulties and onerous work commitments that many horse trainers and stable employees experience, particularly those who

own or work in small stables. They also suggest that the industry will need to consider future projections of the number of trainers (and possibly stable employees) operating in Victoria, and the locations of trainers around the State, to ensure that an adequate pool of trainers is available in the future to service the needs of the racing community.

## Future Research

During the course of this investigation, a number of issues were raised, or came to the foreground, that were beyond the investigative scope, or were outside of the terms of reference, of this project. Addressing these important issues is a matter for future research. In terms of priorities, it is suggested that future research target three key areas. Other issues that could be considered for investigation are numerous, and are implied by many of the results contained within this report. The three priority research areas include:

### *Injury prevalence and prevention in the stable workplace:*

The findings of this investigation revealed that many trainers and stable employees invariably suffer injuries during the course of their horse-training and stable activities. Unfortunately, it was not possible to provide an accurate and detailed account of the extent of those injuries, due to time and content limitations inherent in this investigation. The data reported here are, in all likelihood, significant underestimations of the true number of injuries sustained by those who participated in the investigation, and by those in the wider populations of horse trainers and stable employees in Victoria.

A recent study by Cowley, Bowman and Lawrance (2007), who analysed RVL injury records together with workers' compensation injury claims to the Victorian WorkCover Authority (2001-2005), supports the view that working with thoroughbred race horses is unpredictable and dangerous. Their data revealed significant numbers of injuries among jockeys, trackriders and stablehands, representing claim costs in excess of \$AUS6million per annum. The authors of the study also noted that it was difficult to gauge the full extent of the injury problem because of widespread under-reporting of incidents and injuries, and due to the fact that formal records of injuries are mostly limited to those that are severe and have led to workers' compensation claims.

What is needed are detailed epidemiological investigations, similar to those that have been undertaken with jockeys (e.g. Press et. al., 1995; Waller et. al., 2000; Turner, McCrory & Halley, 2001) and athletes in other sports (see, for example, Caine, Caine & Lindner, 1996), in order to determine more precisely, both the extent and nature of injuries sustained by these racing industry workers, and appropriate injury prevention strategies for reducing the incidences of injuries in the stable workplace.

***Loss and retention of horse trainers and stable employees in the racing industry:***

Some one-third of all trainers and nearly half of all stable employees who participated in the study were thinking about leaving the racing industry in the near future. The full range of reasons, and situations, surrounding the potential exits of these key personnel from the industry, and the various factors that may affect their eventual decisions, remain unclear. In addition, little is known about the costs involved, either to individuals (e.g., personal well-being) or to the racing industry as a whole (e.g., loss of people with extensive knowledge and skills). Research in this area should be a high priority of the industry, to avoid future losses to the industry and preserve the integrity of its workforce.

***Past, present and future trends in stable size and composition across the different trainer licence categories and stable locations, and of new recruits to the stable workforce:***

A number of issues identified by horse trainers and stable employees in the current investigation were common across the different trainer license categories and stable positions, and across small and large-scale stable operations, and those located in metropolitan and rural Victoria. There were also issues that were unique, or of greater concern, to particular sub-groups of trainers and stable employees. The current investigation, however, represents only a 'snapshot' of the lives of horse trainers and stable employees in the Victorian racing industry. In order to appreciate more fully the experiences of different member groups in the racing stable community, and develop effective strategies to support and instigate change within those groups, it is important that the current findings be placed within a broader historical context that takes into account past trends, and maps out potential future trends, in the organisational, economic, and social climates of horse training and the stable workforce.

This investigation into the health and welfare of trainers and stable employees in the thoroughbred horse-racing industry provides the most detailed picture, to date, of the business and workplace experiences of horse trainers and stable workers in Victoria, and of the ways in which the day-to-day demands of their work activities and environments influence their personal health and welfare. The findings in this investigation that relate to horse trainers are the first of their kind, world-wide.

The primary outcome focus of the research was to identify ways in which the racing industry, as a whole, can better support trainers and stable employees, and enhance the overall quality of their lives in the horse-racing industry.

By the very nature of this investigation and its objectives, many of the findings presented in this report focus on the negative experiences of horse trainers and stable employees, and of the shortcomings of their work environments and/or the Victorian racing industry. The clear message in this report is that there currently exists a number of areas relating to horse training and stable work that need attention, some as a matter of urgency. Unfortunately, this focus, and message, over-shadow the fact that, for many participants in the investigation, their chosen occupations within the racing industry, as horse trainers or stable employees, were very satisfying and filled with many positive experiences, despite the shortcomings within the industry.

The findings and recommendations of this investigation provide the Victorian racing industry with an important strategic opportunity to initiate proactive approaches, programs and policies to resolve issues related to the health and welfare of horse trainers and stable employees. In some instances, the trainers and stable employees themselves will need to be the main agents of change, as no doubt some have already been. In other instances, the racing industry will need to instigate change and give support to these industry groups.

Positive changes in any industry take time, and require the concerted and persistent efforts of key industry personnel, along with the full involvement and commitment of stakeholder groups and employees at all levels (including trainers and stable workers). Changes for the better can be initiated for trainers and stable employees, but it will take some time for those changes to be felt and noticed. The changes suggested in this report amount to no less than changing the cultural and economic landscapes of trainers' and stable employees' lives.

As an example of the history of changes, in the past 6 years, there has been a significant shift in the 'cultural landscape' of one of the Victorian racing industry's

other working populations – the jockeys. Many key members of horse-racing industries around the world are now looking at Victoria as the model of what their industries can become in terms of the health and welfare of jockeys. Those changes for jockeys took time, but Victoria now leads the world in best industry practices when it comes to the health and welfare of its professional athlete population. This current report on trainers and stable employees should help the Victorian racing industry initiate change and continue to lead the world in best industry employment conditions and practices.

## Structure of the Report

This report is structured in a series of chapters that deal separately with the findings relating to horse trainers and stable employees.

Chapter 1: Introduction;

Chapter 2: Methodology – combined for horse trainers and stable employees;

Chapter 3: Summary of findings – horse trainers;

Chapter 4: Summary of findings – stable employees;

Chapter 5: Discussion and recommendations – horse trainers;

Chapter 6: Discussion and recommendations – stable employees.

Many of the workplace experiences of stable employees were similar to those experienced by horse trainers. There were also many experiences that were unique to the two populations who participated in this investigation. As some readers may be interested only in the findings that relate to one population, either horse trainers or stable employees, the chapters have been written independently of each other. As a consequence, there is some repetition between the chapters that target horse trainers and those that focus on stable employees.

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: HORSE TRAINERS

---

Note that the term 'racing industry' is used in the recommendations below in a general context to refer to the industry's governing body, RVL, and the relevant industry stakeholders, most notably, the ATA and the AWU.

It is recommended that the racing industry:

1. explore viable options for identifying non-paying owners and additional mechanisms for assisting trainers with debt recovery;
2. complete the review of the distribution of prize monies across metropolitan and regional racing events, and where identified, address significant inequities through a fair and transparent process;
3. explore options for providing business and/or financial support and assistance to trainers starting up horse-training businesses and to those trainers with current small-scale business operations;
4. consider the introduction of a regulated horse training fee structure in Victoria;
5. explore options for introducing an effective superannuation scheme for trainers;
6. provide trainers with opportunities to access confidential counselling services that deal with all matters related to financial and business management;
7. explore the need for programming a weekly day off from racing events in Victoria, taking into account the racing commitments of trainers from metropolitan and country locations, and also small- and large-scale training operations;

8. provide trainers with opportunities for: suitable training and educational programs in business management skills; gaining understanding of obligations with respect to the Horse Training Industry Award 1998; education in WorkCover and superannuation; and managing the workplace issues of equal opportunity, harassment, risk management, and emergency procedures;
9. review available information on OH&S policies and regulations related to horse training and stable work, and where necessary, consider more appropriate ways in which to present and disseminate this information to relevant industry groups;
10. provide dedicated spaces at metropolitan and major country race tracks for horse trainers to conduct their business activities and take refreshments;
11. develop a 'whistleblower' policy related to harassment and unfair or discriminatory work practices, and explore options for providing trainers and other industry personnel with a confidential service (e.g., telephone 'hotline') for reporting incidents of harassment and bullying, and communicate details of that service to all parties;
12. undertake an educational campaign aimed at reducing harassment and bullying in horse-racing workplaces and informing industry personnel of appropriate courses of action for dealing with and reporting incidents;
13. provide current and retired trainers with opportunities to access personal and confidential counselling services that are delivered externally to the racing industry for psychological, behavioural, or relationship difficulties;
14. explore ways in which to provide trainers with greater recognition for their contributions and years of service to the racing industry, both during their horse-training careers and at the time of retirement;
15. develop and implement further strategies to actively promote the recruitment and retention of track riders and other stable employees, and communicate those strategies to the wider horse racing community in Victoria;

16. undertake a review of the operating hours at metropolitan and regional training tracks and, if warranted, explore options for increasing the flexibility of current hours of operation;
  17. consider undertaking further research in the following areas:
    - injury prevalence and prevention in the stable workplace;
    - loss and retention of horse trainers in the racing industry; and
    - past, present and future trends in stable size and composition across the different trainer licence categories and stable locations.
-

## APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: STABLE EMPLOYEES

---

It is recommended that the racing industry:

1. explore options for increasing the awareness of stable employees about issues relating to the financial aspects of their employment (e.g. rates of pay, superannuation);
2. review the need for developing standardised forms of documentation relating to the employment contracts, pay details (e.g., pay slips), and work hours of stable employees;
3. undertake a review and evaluation of the existing superannuation arrangements for stable employees, and where necessary, revise the arrangements so as to best meet the present and future needs of stable employees;
4. explore viable options for improving compliance by horse trainers in upholding the Horse Training Industry Award 1998 in matters relating to stable employee core conditions of employment, particularly as they relate to employment contracts, rates of pay, superannuation, hours of work, leave entitlements, overtime, allowances, WorkCover, and associated documentation;
5. explore options for increasing compliance by trainers in the mandatory registration of all stable employees;
6. set compulsory minimum standards of basic horsemanship for all stable employee positions and explore options for the appropriate training and assessment of those standards;
7. provide stable employees with opportunities for suitable training and educational programs in the workplace issues of OH&S, equal opportunity, harassment and bullying, risk management, and emergency procedures, and, where identified, consider alternative ways for delivering training;

8. explore options for improving compliance by industry personnel in maintaining appropriate safety standards at both stable and track workplaces throughout Victoria;
9. explore options for providing stable employees with easily accessible, affordable and nutritional food and drink refreshments at metropolitan and regional race tracks;
10. develop a 'whistleblower' policy related to harassment and unfair or discriminatory work practices, and explore options for providing trainers and other industry personnel with a confidential service (e.g., telephone 'hotline') for reporting incidents of harassment and bullying, and communicate details of that service to all parties;
11. undertake an educational campaign aimed at reducing harassment and bullying in horse-racing workplaces and informing industry personnel of appropriate courses of action for dealing with, and reporting, incidents;
12. develop or review professional codes of conduct for all member groups involved in ownership, training, and day-to-day care of racehorses and explore options for enforcing those codes;
13. provide stable employees with opportunities to access personal and confidential counselling services that are delivered externally to the racing industry for psychological, behavioural, or relationship difficulties;
14. explore options to provide stable employees with greater recognition for their contributions and years of service to the racing industry;
15. the racing industry, in collaboration with the Australian Workers' Union, investigate the value of establishing a formal stable employees' representative body to pursue the interests of all stable employees in Victoria, and explore other alternatives for providing stable employees with a collective voice;
16. consider undertaking further research in the following areas:
  - injury prevalence and prevention in the stable workplace;
  - loss and retention of stable employees in the racing industry; and
  - past, present and future trends in the composition of new recruits to the stable workforce, with a focus on equine-related skills and

knowledge base, motivations and expectations, and general demographics (e.g., age, gender, education levels, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds).

---