

# THE COALITION FOR THE PROTECTION OF RACEHORSES Inc.

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## **Submission to the Racing Victoria 2024 Jumps Racing Review**

Melbourne, 22 October 2024

Dear Racing Victoria,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our concerns to be considered by the Jumps Review Panel in their review of the future viability of jumps racing in Victoria. In our submission, we have provided information for the Terms of Reference in which we have some expertise.

Our recommendation to the Panel is clear:

If the racing industry wishes to survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it must address animal welfare concerns in a meaningful way. The easiest and most impactful change that could be made immediately, would be to end jumps racing.

Jumps racing has had its day. The 2024 season has proven it is not safe and cannot be made safe. Jumps racing remains the deadliest and cruellest form of horse racing and it is time to end it once and for all before yet another horse is killed.

Kind regards

Elio Celotto

**President**  
**Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses**

## Terms of Reference

The Jumps Racing review group will investigate and review the following matters;

### **i. Findings of the Jumps Review Panel from the 2024 season;**

The 2024 jumps racing season in Victoria consisted of 73 races: 49 hurdles and 24 steeplechases.

A total of 10 horses lost their lives in jumps races or trials in the 2024 season, with a further two jumps horses being killed from injuries sustained during trackwork. These two, San Remo (9yo) and Sivar (7yo), are not included in the jumps death count for 2024 (but are included in CPR's annual Deathwatch Report).

On the final day of the season, 25 August in Ballarat, the on-track deaths of three horses illustrated the very high risks faced by both horse and rider, and the inherent danger of jumps racing. The deaths are evidence that despite eight government and industry inquiries (since 1994), with subsequent promises that safety has been improved, the nature of jumps racing is such that it cannot be made safe. All the risk factors are known: aging horses forced to clear obstacles at speed, within a group of other horses, over long distances, while being whipped by heavy jockeys and subject to the effects of track conditions, horse temperament and experience, horse/jockey interactions, jockey experience, horses' prior injuries and training regimes.

During the 2024 season the Stewards Reports noted many injuries and medical issues caused by the stressors of jumps racing, which place further strain on the horses in their future jumps races. A total of 472 incidents were recorded, including eight deaths on track, 32 lameness, 24 Falls, 51 Failed to Finish, and 34 other issues including EIPH, lacerations, respiratory, soreness, haematoma, and slow recovery. In addition, 275 Awkward jumps and 48 Blundered/knuckling occurrences of horses struggling to safely clear jumps were recorded. **On average, each of the 168 horses who raced in the 2024 jumps season, suffered 2.8 incidents overall, or a bit more than one incident every race.**

### **ii. Applicability of any broader equine welfare research, findings or data to inform jumps fatalities and jumps injuries to participants and horses;**

The risk factors and horse population indices in jumps racing deaths, falls and major injuries are well known. While there is some variability in the deaths and injuries from one season to the next, over the longer term, the 2024 season showed that jumps racing has not become any safer for either horses or jockeys, despite the introduction of safety measures and eight government and industry inquiries.

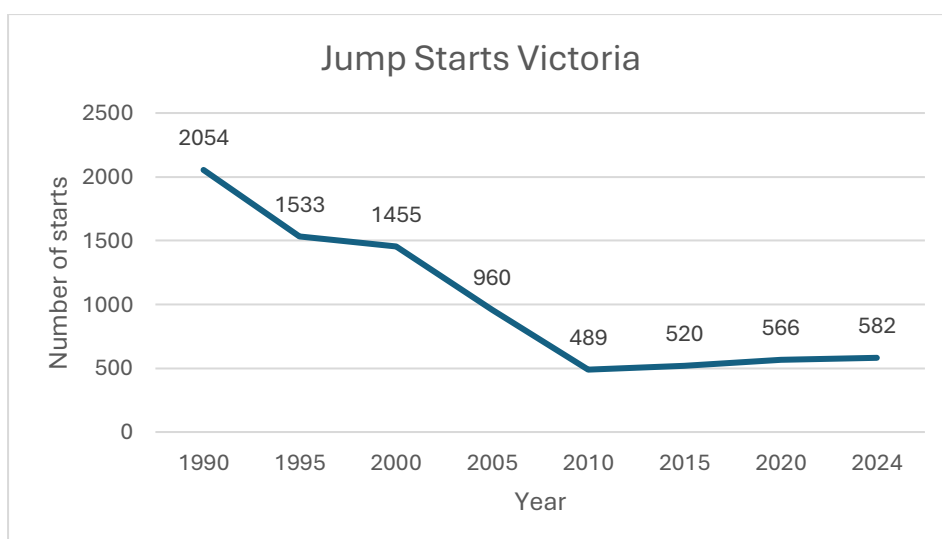
A record number of 20 Lost Rider incidents were recorded during races in the 2024 season. Over the past ten years, this figure has been on average, about ten Lost Riders per season (except for 18 in 2015). This year, several jockeys were rushed to hospital after being thrown off, when their horses, stumbled, or knuckled. Note that Lost Rider incidents do not include those where the horse fell, thus for 2024, jockeys fell from their horse a total of 44 times.

We calculate that for the 20 jumps jockeys in 2024, 44 falls is one fall every 13.2 rides/Starts, or 7.6 falls per 100 rides. This is far higher than the findings of Hitchens et al., (2009), for 1 fall per 19 rides (5.2 falls per 100 rides).

### iii. Analysis of trends relating to starters, field sizes, wagering and industry participation rates;

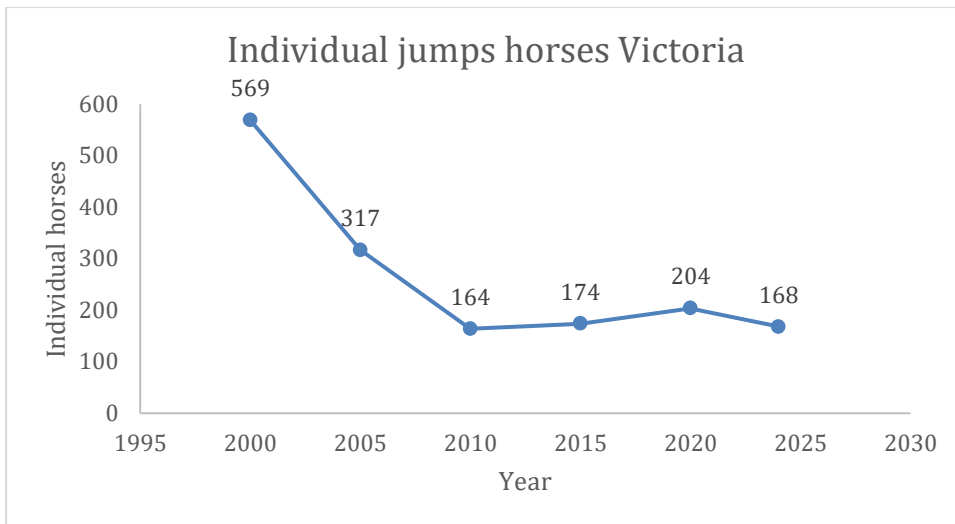
What is left of the jumps racing industry is the result of a substantial decline over many years, with Victoria the only state remaining. Since the late 1980s, jumps Starts have declined by approximately two thirds. Boden (2006) studied the 15-year period from 1989 to 2004, based on 23,857 Starts, which equates to an average of 1,590 Starts per year. In 2024 there were 582 jumps Starts – a little over one third of earlier activity.

Figures 1 and 2, showing Jumps Starts and Individual horses, illustrate the decline in Victorian jumps racing over past decades. The decline suggests a lack of interest by trainers, jockeys and the public in jumps racing.



**Figure1. Jumps Starts, Victoria 1990 to 2024**

Sources: Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses Data 2024, Animals Australia (2008), Racing Australia Fact Books; 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020



**Figure 2. Individual jumps horses, Victoria 2000 to 2024**

Sources: Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses Data 2024, Racing Australia Fact Books; 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020.

**vi. Analysis of horse engagement and longevity, and additional career opportunities provided by jumps racing;**

There is little to no evidence that jumps racing prolongs a horse's racing "career." In fact, in 2024, a single obstacle completely destroyed the life and successful flat racing career of Joffrey and Grand Promenade, each of whom was killed in their first jumps race.

CPR's analysis found that in 2024, 44 horses (26.2% of 168 individuals) ran in one jump only, similar to 2023, when 42 horses (24%) raced once only. For the three-year period 2012 to 2014, Ruse et al. (2015) also found that 22% of jumps horses raced once only, that 55% raced three times or less, and only 10% ran more than ten jumps races. Ruse et al. concluded that "[T]he jump career of the majority of horses involves participating in three or less hurdle races and over one season" (Ruse et al., 2015, p. 1072).

Table 1 summarizes CPR's analysis of the status of jumps horses from one season to the next over the past five years. Between 57.4% and 62.5% (an average of 59.6%), do not jump in the following year, and 43.4% of jumps horses do not appear in racing *at all* (not in any jumps races, flat races or Trials) in the subsequent year. CPR classes these horses as Missing – their whereabouts is unknown. The Missing percentage has been reasonably consistent, varying between 40.2% and 47%. Ruse et al., (2015) found that of the 2012 horses 37% ran in 2013, while 29% of 2013 horses jumped in 2014.

The very high turnover of horses each season reflects the extraordinary stress forced upon horses by jumps racing. **It makes a lie of the claim that a horse's racing "career" can be extended by jumps.**

**Table 1. Status of jumps horses in the following year (Percentages)**

	2023=175	2022=169	2021=189	2020=168	2019=184
<i>prior year Individuals</i>	2023=175	2022=169	2021=189	2020=168	2019=184
<i>current year Individuals</i>	2024=168	2023=175	2022=169	2021=189	2020=168
<b>MISSING (did not race jumps, flats or trial at all)</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>40.2</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>41.8</b>
Ran in flats/trials - not jumps	14.8	17.2	16.9	11.3	20.7
<b>Subtotal – Horses who did not race jumps in the following year</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>57.4</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>58.3</b>	<b>62.5</b>
Horses who reappeared in jumps	38.9	42.6	41.3	41.7	37.5
<b>Total prior year horses at end of current year</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### **viii. Analysis of the financial performance of the jumps industry for participants, clubs and the VTRI;**

Jumps racing makes up only a very small proportion of the overall Victorian racing industry, in trainers, jockeys, horses Starts and prize-money, and the benefits accrue to a small number of trainers and jockeys.

In the period, 2012 to 2014, Ruse et al., (2015) found that five trainers in Victoria accounted for 34% of Starts, and ten jockeys accounted for 62.1% of Starts. In Victoria there are now only 20 jumps jockeys (Stewart, 2024).

CPR notes that while many horses may “qualify” to jump, many do not race. Of 248 horses who trialled in jumps races in 2024, 67.7% (168 horses) actually raced.

It is doubtful that the imagined career extension of a jumps horse provides owners with any financial benefits. Given the low participation rates of most jumps horses, the additional veterinary bills and time away from racing because of injuries, and the risk of the horse’s early death, the transfer of a flat racing horse into jumps is more likely to impose an additional cost burden on the owners. As always, the horse bears the full burden of physical injury and death.

The total prizemoney for 2024, at \$5,030,000, is only about 1.5% of total Victorian prize money and bonuses (Stewart, 2024). If distributed among the 168 jumps horses, the prize money would not cover their basic upkeep for one year.

A recent news article stated that wagering on jumps was approximately \$60 million for 2022 and 2023, but is expected to drop in 2024, in the post-Covid era (Stewart, 2024).

## ix. Analysis of community participation and attendance at jumps racing events and broader economic benefit of jumps racing;

Table 2 shows details of the seven tracks where the 73 jumps races were held in 2024. Clearly Warrnambool is the current leader with 34.1% of prize money, 31.5% of the races, and subsequently, 50% of the on-track deaths. Sandown remains the only metropolitan track to run jumps races, but commands a reasonable amount of prize money (16.9%) even though it has only six (8.2%) of races. Ten years ago, Sandown hosted 21.2% of Victoria's jumps races. Hamilton and Sale each had one meeting only (10.9% of races), and together allocated 6.3% of total prize money.

**Table 2. Track details for 2024 jumps racing season**

Track	Prize money	% of Prize Money	Deaths	% Deaths	Races	% Races
Warrnambool	\$ 1,715,000	34.1	4	50.0	23	31.5
Sandown	\$ 850,000	16.9	-	-	6	8.2
Ballarat	\$ 805,000	16.0	3	37.5	10	13.7
Pakenham	\$ 705,000	14.0	-	-	12	16.4
Casterton	\$ 640,000	12.7	1	12.5	14	19.2
Hamilton	\$ 195,000	3.9	-	-	5	6.8
Sale	\$ 120,000	2.4	-	-	3	4.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 5,030,000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Prize money was determined from the Race Results and Victorian Jumps Calendar.

Table 2 shows that Warrnambool is the largest centre for Victorian jumps racing. Even so, CPR argues that given the relatively small proportion of jumps to flat races, the removal of jumps racing is unlikely to cause any downturn in wagering, track attendance and community participation.

The jumps racing industry's much touted May "Jumps" Carnival in Warrnambool, actually runs, and is dependent upon far more flat than jumps races. Of the **30 races run over the three days, 22 races, (73%) are Flat and less than one third are Jumps (8 races 27%).**

CPR believes that most racegoers would be just as willing to attend the carnival without jumps racing – to party and have a fun day out, without the added spectacle of horse deaths and injury.

Most racetracks run an annual, local flat race "Cup", which attracts large crowds: there is no reason to expect the Warrnambool Cup would not also draw

large crowds on its own merits. With such a low level of jumps races, it is difficult to credit the jumps industry with the success of the Warrnambool carnival.

On the third day of the Warrnambool Carnival, two feature races virtually compete with each other (Table 3). In Race 9, the Warrnambool Cup, a horse runs 2,350 metres on the flat, to win \$183,500 first prize. In Race 7, the Grand Annual Steeplechase, run about 90 minutes earlier, a jumps horse must run more than twice the flat race distance (5,500 metres), safely clear 33 steeples and risk 18.9 times the likelihood of death – for an additional \$40,000 first prize (\$223,500). The risk of a jockey fall is also far higher than in the flat race. Given a choice, no horse would run the steeple.

**Table 3. Comparison of feature events at Warrnambool**

	<b>Jump race Grand Annual Steeplechase Race 7</b>	<b>Flat race Sungold Warrnambool Cup Race 9</b>
Distance	5,500	2,350
Obstacles (steeples)	33	0
Total Prize 2024	\$395,500	\$303,500
First Prize 2024	\$223,500	\$183,500
Risk of Jockey fall (1)	1 fall per 19 rides	1 fall per 240 rides
Relative risk of horse death (2)	18.9	1

Sources: (1) Hitchens et al., (2009); (2) Boden et al., (2006)

### **x. Analysis of available research or reporting on the level of community acceptance of jumps racing and its impact on the broader appeal of thoroughbred racing; and**

Victoria remains the only Australian state to conduct jumps racing. The main reason for the decline and ultimate cessation of jumps racing in other states, was a lack of interest by the public and the racing industry. Jump racing was banned in South Australia in 2022, by Tasmania in 2007, NSW in 1995, while Queensland and Western Australia ran only a few races early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New Zealand is currently considering the future of jumps racing, because of reduced attendance and participation (Stewart, 2024). Studies in Australia and the United Kingdom have confirmed that on-track deaths have a negative impact on public opinion of racing (Buraimo et al., 2020; Duncan, Graham, & McManus, 2018.)

Jumps racing is not supported by most of the public, and it has a further negative effect on the reputation of the horse racing industry overall. Images of horses

crashing to the ground over an obstacle creates a disturbing image, for good reason – the horse is often “euthanised”. There are many catastrophic falls in jumps racing (and a higher death rate), which are available to the public on social media. The images of jumps racing directly conflict with the racing industry’s claim that it provides the best of care for the horses.

It is not surprising, that most jumps races are now held out of public view in remote rural towns. As Table 2 shows, jumps races were hosted by only seven tracks in 2024, and of these, Sale and Hamilton ran jumps at only one meeting each. Jumps races were removed from the programs of the more prestigious tracks, at Flemington, Moonee Valley and Caulfield in metropolitan Melbourne, because of the “bad press” given by falling and dying horses. Only Sandown remains.

Since the start of the 2024 CPR jumps racing campaign, up to 21 October 2024, close to 7,000 Australians have emailed the Racing Minister asking for a ban.

CPR communications with people who work in the racing industry reveal that while many support flat racing, they do not support jumps, and would be happy to see it abandoned.

During CPR protests at jumps races, over the past few years, CPR volunteers have noted the relatively poor public attendance at the jumps races (which are often held first on the program). This was particularly evident at Sandown on 4<sup>th</sup> August this year (for the \$350,00 Grand National Hurdle). Some CPR protesters mentioned they could remember in past years, long queues of racegoers waiting to enter. It was not so this year, with only one or two hecklers providing a bit of entertainment. Similarly, at the final jumps meeting in Ballarat on 25 August, for the \$350,000 Grand National Steeple, there were no long lines of patrons waiting to get in, and there were plenty of empty spaces in the car park. It seems that in Ballarat, the football was more popular.

#### **xi. Any analysis, research, resources that the JRG considers necessary to complete its report and recommendations.**

The racing industry is facing numerous, and serious challenges to its survival because of declining public interest. Racing must also face up to the fact, that animal welfare concern is an increasingly influential factor in public opinion. For example, the 2024 early death of Australia’s most beloved horse, Black Caviar brought to light, questionable practices concerning the welfare of all Broodmares. Jumps racing, in particular illustrates the industry’s appalling disregard for the welfare and safety of its animal “participants,” which in turn, contributes to a negative impression of the industry as a whole.



If the racing industry wishes to survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it must address animal welfare concerns in a meaningful way. The easiest and most impactful change that could be made immediately, would be to end jumps racing. Jumps races could be replaced by high-weight flat races, that could facilitate an easy transition for the jumps racing industry.

Jumps racing has had its day. The 2024 season has proven it is not safe, and cannot be made safe. It is not supported by most of the public, but is sustained by a small group of trainers and jockeys operating at remotely located race tracks. Jumps provides low levels of wagering and prize money benefits, and probably increases costs to maintain the horses' welfare after injury. Jumps racing does not provide an extension to a horse's racing "career". "Thrills and spills," once the catch phrase for jumps racing, is no longer publicly accepted. Jumps racing remains the cruellest form of horse racing, with winning positions contingent upon the horses actually surviving the race.

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