Size and Scope of the

Australian Equine Sector (Non Racing)

Prepared for the Australian Horse Industry Council by IER / March 2025

AHIC
Australian Horse Industry Council

ier

Contents

Key Findings

The Australian equine sector is responsible for **generating more than $15.7 billion in value added contribution** to the national economy **– 50.7% of which directly benefits regional economies**

Direct Spending Impacts

	Greater Metropolitan	Regional	Total
Total Direct Expenditure[1]	$4,972.7m	$6,311.9m	$11,284.7m

Economic Impacts

	Greater Metropolitan	Regional	Total
Total Value Added[2]	$7,768.6m	$7,985.5m	$15,754.1m
% of Industry Value Added	49.3%	50.7%	
Total Household Income[3]	$3,730.2m	$4,841.1m	$8,571.2m
Total FTE Employment	48,441	53,021	101,462

The Australian equine sector generated total direct spending of $11.3 billion. This expenditure is responsible for creating a direct value added impact (in terms of wages, salaries and profits) of $5.45 billion. However, the flow-on effects linked to this expenditure increase the size of the sector's value added contribution to in excess of $15.7 billion to the Australian equine economy.

Half of the total value added impact occurs in regional areas of Australia, with regional Queensland ($2.98b) representing the largest area of regional economic activity nationally.

The economic output generated by the sector is directly responsible for sustaining 54,154 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs across the country. When flow-on employment impacts are considered, the total FTE impact generated by the sector increases to 101,462 jobs.

This total represents the employment sustained within the sector, as well as the employment that is sustained in supply industries who meet the demand created by horse related activity.

1. Direct expenditure is defined as expenditure associated with breeding and maintenance of horses, improving property for the care of horses as well as travelling and attending equine events. Direct expenditure is counted at the point at which it leaves the sector and reaches the broader economy.
2. Value added contribution is defined as the value of sales less the value of inputs used in production, i.e. it is equal to the income (wages, salaries and profits) generated in production.
3. Household Income is defined as being wages and salaries (before tax) earned from employment generated by the sector.

NOTE: This report does not include racing Thoroughbreds or Standardbreds, nor the cost of breeding or maintaining horses in training for racing.

Of the **101,462 FTE jobs sustained** by the Australian equine sector over **53% are the direct result of horse related activity,** whilst the remainder support down-the-line industries that **produce and supply goods and services** for the equine sector.

In 2024, there are estimated to be more than 1 million horses in Australia[4]. This includes a vast array of breeds including Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds (outside of the national racing jurisdictions), Ponies, Hotbloods, Warmbloods, Stock Horses, American Western and Heavy/Cold Bloods among others. Excluded from these numbers are brumbies and other wild horses.

New South Wales (30.2%), Queensland (29.4%) and Victoria (24.4%) are home to the highest number of horses. Overall, approximately 56% of all horses domiciled in Australia are located in regional parts of Australia.

Horse carers are the lifeblood of the equine sector. They provide the investment, time, skills and passion that underpins the sector in Australia. In total, there are more than 710,000 participants engaged in the caring directly for equines. This includes people who either own or care for horses for the purpose of breeding or other equine pursuits and those who are employed or volunteer in various roles.

Of these roles it's estimated that 100,000 are heavily active in the sector and travel to events and competitions with their horses each year.

At a Glance

Key Numbers

372,800 Horse Carers

Metropolitan	195,400
Regional	177,300

339,700 Support Staff & Volunteers

Metropolitan	185,000
Regional	154,700

1,026,800 Horses

Metropolitan	451,500
Regional	575,300

There are more than **1 million horses living in Australia[4]** supported by **more than 712,000 owners and carers**

4. This figure does not include wild horses or breeding and training Thoroughbreds/Standardbreds for training


Western Australia
Horse Carers 31,608
Horses 69,317
Direct Expenditure $0.75b
VALUE ADDED $0.98b
Northern Territory
Horse Carers 3,678
Horses 9,698
Direct Expenditure $0.10b
VALUE ADDED $0.11b
Queensland
Horse Carers 87,794
Horses 301,682
Direct Expenditure $3.36b
VALUE ADDED $4.67b
South Australia
Horse Carers 19,852
Horses 52,064
Direct Expenditure $0.56b
VALUE ADDED $0.73b
New South Wales
Horse Carers 116,731
Horses 309,721
Direct Expenditure $3.41b
VALUE ADDED $4.94b
ACT
Horse Carers 4,328
Horses 6,018
Direct Expenditure $0.07b
VALUE ADDED $0.06b
Victoria
Horse Carers 96,761
Horses 250,632
Direct Expenditure $2.72b
VALUE ADDED $3.90b
Tasmania
Horse Carers 12,013
Horses 27,669
Direct Expenditure $0.31b
VALUE ADDED $0.35b

Introduction

In March 2024, the Australian Horse Industry Council (AHIC) commissioned a study into the size and scope of the Australian Equine Sector. This is the first time a size and scope study has been undertaken to understand the magnitude of the economic and social contribution in Australia.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to quantify the economic, employment and social contribution that the non racing segment of the equine sector generates in Australia. The report focuses on the national impacts as well as assessing the contribution the equine sector makes for each of the states and territories. The key focus of the study is to investigate the following outcomes attributable to the Australian equine sector:

+ To estimate the equine population in Australia for better disease and bio-security preparedness
+ The number of people involved (i.e. horse owners, carers and support staff) in the sector
+ The full-time equivalent employment generated by horse sector activities
+ The total direct expenditure contribution that the sector makes, in its current form, to the national economy
+ The value added contribution that the sector generates within the Australian economy
+ The social and community importance of participation and involvement within the equine sector – particularly in regional parts of Australia

Study Methodology

In assessing the size and scope of the equine sector in Australia, the study focuses on breeds, competition and leisure horses and excluded any horses related to the racing industry.

The data that underpins this study has been gathered from a number of sources. These are outlined below:

+ A national population study conducted with panel provider Dynata
+ A national participant study to those who own horses
+ IER also interviewed a number of sector specialists from the Australian Horse Industry Council, various equine associations and suppliers to help build an understanding of the equine sector.

Throughout the report, data has been presented at the national, state and regional level. The regional level analysis is based on the Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA) level framework.

This study also provides an estimate of the number of people involved in the sector, either as an owner or as a support person in the care for horses.

The sample for the nationally representative population study conducted through Dynata was 533 Horse Carer (owners or carers) which was derived from a national sample of 25,430 respondents.

The participant survey was promoted via the AHIC website and social media presence, alongside specific invitations sent to member organisations and breed societies. Additionally, the survey was promoted through Horse Deals and mastheads such as The Land, Farm Weekly and Stock Journal. There were 2,349 responses nationally for the participant survey.

Economic Methodology

The development of an economic model of the equine sector requires an in-depth understanding of the expenses incurred by horse owners on an annual basis.

This study measures the economic contribution made by the sector in Australia. Particular focus was made on identifying the breeds of horses that are active nationally and where the horse is domiciled, for example are they at home with the owner, or are they in another location. Additionally understanding types of activity each horse undertakes is important as expenditure can differ depending on if the horse is used for breeding, competition, working or leisure pursuits.

The final expenditure profile of the sector is based on the following key inputs:

+ the expenditure by owners on products and services such as feed, agistment, farriers, veterinary, transport etc.
+ the average annual expenditure made by owners on improvements to property in order to care for or support their equine activities
+ the expenditure made by participants on travelling to equine events and competitions each year (excluding horse racing) either with or without their horse.

The economic model used within this study follows four key steps:

1 Calculating the non racing equine population In order to estimate the number of non racing horses in Australia, IER has utilised the Australian Bureau of Statistics and panel provider Dynata to first calculate the incidence of horse carers (those that own or care for horses on their property) in each Australian state.

The number of horse carers is then overlayed with the estimated number of horses per horse carer by using the grouped median of respondents for both the Dynata population study and the national participant study.

2 Gathering Sector Expenditure Through both the population and the participant surveys, horse carers were asked to estimate their annual expenditure per horse across key spending categories defined by IER and sector experts to accurately generate the expenditure profile of the sector.

IER is aware that different breeds of horses require different levels of investment (from a breeding and maintenance perspective), and similarly some horses are retired to a paddock and others compete in national level competitions which means it was vital to overlay and understand the type of breed, and the likely activity that each horse is undertaking to derive an accurate expenditure profile.

3 Categorisation of sector expenditure into ANZSIC classifications The equine sector itself does not exist within the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification (ANZSIC) structure.

For modelling purposes, it is necessary to allocate direct expenditures to the appropriate industry sectors. The majority of expenditures are classified within their relevant ANZSIC codes.

4 Economic modelling IER has utilised an input output methodology for the calculation of economic impacts associated with the equine sector in Australia. The input output model provides direct and indirect impacts in relation to value added, income and employment.

Value added and employment are units of measurement that are based on economic multipliers derived from the national accounts. It is based on the level of value added and employment that is created within specific industry sectors in order to meet final demand expenditure.

Please note: some tables in this report may not add up due to rounding.

Case study

A HISTORY OF HORSES IN AUSTRALIA

The introduction of the horse to Australia in 1788 marked a pivotal moment in the continent's history. Beyond a mere animal import, the horse was a driving force in creating modern Australia, supporting economic development, and becoming a cultural icon.

The First Fleet's arrival at Botany Bay brought with it a small number of horses, primarily for agricultural and transportation purposes. These early horses, of diverse European breeds, were critical for establishing rudimentary infrastructure and enabling limited exploration around the fledgling settlement.

As the colony developed and spread, the horse's utility became increasingly apparent. They proved invaluable in a cast and challenging terrain where they facilitated the movement of goods, people, and livestock. Early settlers began selectively breeding horses, favouring those demonstrating hardiness, stamina, and suitability to the Australian climate which lay the groundwork for the development of a new breed of horse. Through generations of selective breeding, the Australian Stock Horse emerged as a distinct breed, renowned for its agility, endurance, and "cattle sense." This breed became integral to the management of large pastoral properties.

Throughout the late 1800s, the burgeoning pastoral industry, driven by wool production, heavily relied on horseback stockmen. These individuals, skilled in horsemanship and livestock management, became iconic figures in Australian folklore. Beyond this, horses played a vital role in the exploration of the vast Australian land. Explorers such as Burke and Wills relied on horses to traverse vast distances and map uncharted territories. Additionally, the Waler horse became very well regarded for its hardiness, and was used extensively in military operations such as the Boer War, and the First World War.

From the 1900s onwards, the horse became a key part of Australian culture. Horse racing, polo, and other equestrian sports have become integral parts of Australian sporting culture headlined by some of Australia's greatest achievements at Olympic level sport. Beyond sport the horse, particularly the stock horse, has become a powerful symbol of Australian identity, representing resilience, independence, and the spirit of the outback.

Direct Spending

In 2024, the equine sector in Australia generated $11.3 billion in direct expenditure. Spending generated by owners and horse carers directly related to their horses included:

+ the expenditure by owners on products and services associated with maintaining and caring for their horses such as feed, agistment, farrier, veterinary, transport etc.
+ the expenditure made by owners on improvements to property in order to care for horses or support their equine activities such as arena, stables or float improvements.
+ the expenditure made by participants on travelling to equine events and competitions each year (excluding horse racing) either with or without their horse.

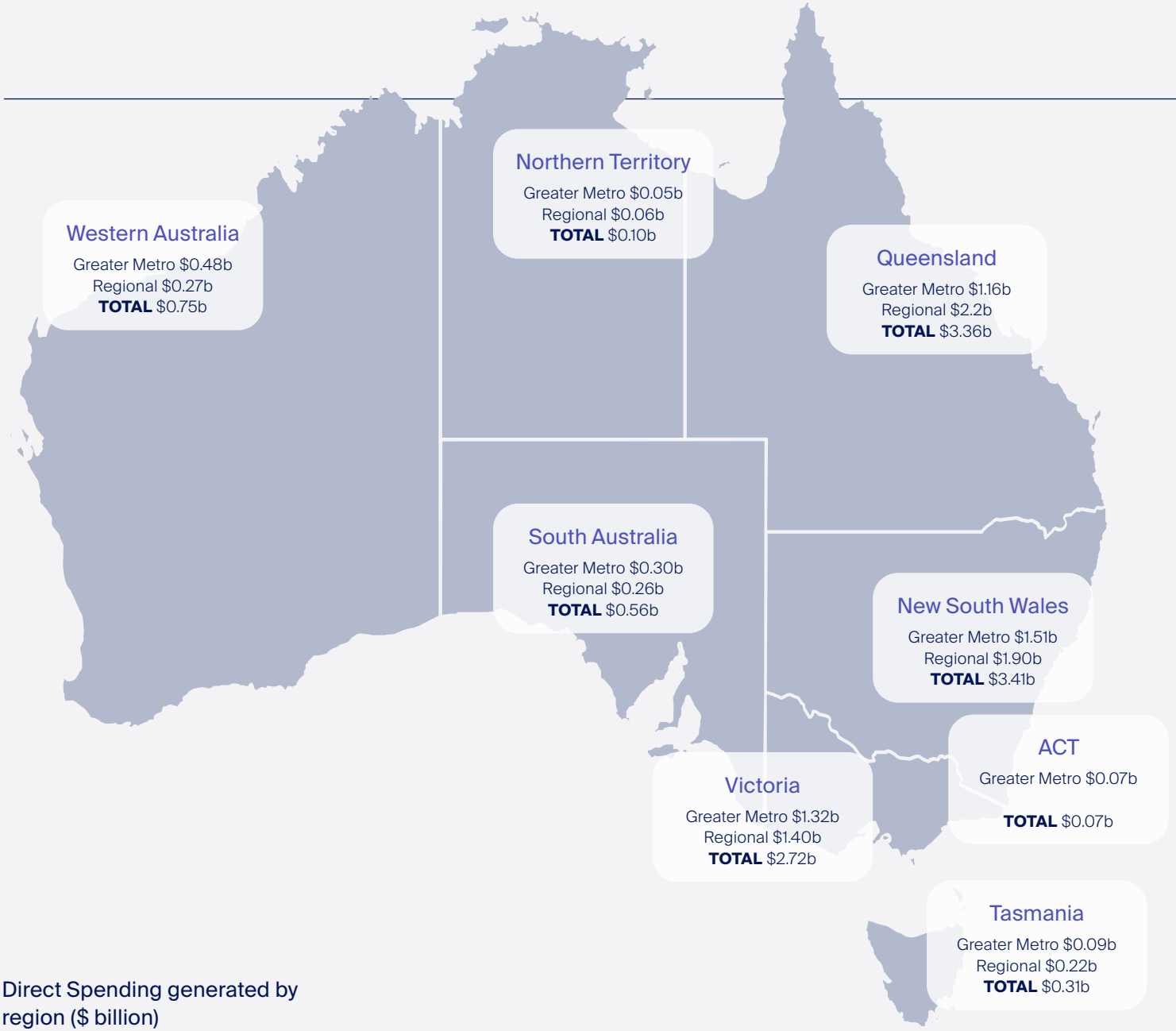
The largest share of expenditure is directly linked to the maintenance and care for horses which is responsible for creating an expenditure impact of close to $7.3 billion. Near to half of this expenditure is made on horse feed, farrier costs and veterinary care each year with the remaining derived from agistment, apparel and equipment, training and lessons and transport which are mostly necessary costs incurred by all horse owners regardless of activity or breed.

Additionally, people with horses often have specific requirements of their property to care for and maintain their horses. This means that there's often additional expenditure to improve their property such as stables or arena enhancements or upgraded truck/floats to transport the horses. It is estimated that this expenditure totals $3.7 billion on average each year with three quarters of this attributed to construction or land improvements.

Competing at events with horses, or attending horse events outside of horse racing is often a key activity undertaken by those in the sector. More than one quarter of horse carers and owners attend multiple events each year across the country. Expenditure directly related to these events totals $255 million each year which is largely derived from entry fees associated with events/competitions, transport to and from events, event related tourism at events and accommodation expenses, meals, food and beverages while away from home.

Sources of Final Expenditure

Maintenance and Care for Horses	$7.29 Billion
Capital Property Improvements	$3.74 Billion
Events and Competitions	$0.03 Billion



The Australian equine sector generated **close to $11.3** billion in direct spending in **2024**

Direct Spending generated by region ($ billion)

Note: Metro regions have been defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics SA4 regional framework which makes up the Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA).

"My horses have kept me mentally and physically fit. I particularly would not have coped without an outlet through the Victorian lockdowns."

"Having a horse in my life is like having a dance partner. Speaking a unheard language that's silly to those who've never spoken it but to us it makes sense."

"Having my first horse means friendship, joy, and a lifelong dream fulfilled. He's been my companion through every challenge and triumph since I was 13."

"Horses expand my worldview, and my understanding of myself and others. They give me joy."

Case study

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED AUSTRALIA

Madame Liz Hartel, a Danish polio survivor in a wheelchair, won a silver medal in the dressage event at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic games. Her success ledd to the rapid growth of Riding for the Disabled organisations across the western world. Riding for the Disabled in Australia celebrated 60 years of operation during 2024 after being established initially in Queensland, with South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania and the ACT all commencing in the years following. There are currently 2,000 participants, 500 horses and 4,000 volunteers involved with RDA in Australia.

The primary objective of the Riding for the Disabled Associations is to provide people with a disability of all ages and backgrounds to experience freedom and independence through equestrian activities. With centres spread nationwide supported by volunteers the focus is on providing structured riding classes and recreational horse riding alongside competitive pursuits such as games and competitions, vaulting, carriage driving, dressage and equestrian camps.

The horses involved in the RDA come from a variety of backgrounds which means they can be purchased or donated, on loan or leased. There's a specific focus on ensuring the horses that are selected for use are calm and obedient, with a temperament that aligns with working with children and people with special needs. Each centre strives to have a variety of horses and ponies of different sizes to ensure they are able to cater to the individual needs of their participants.

Economic Contribution

In 2024 the **equine economy** in Australia **contributed $15.75 Billion** to the national economy

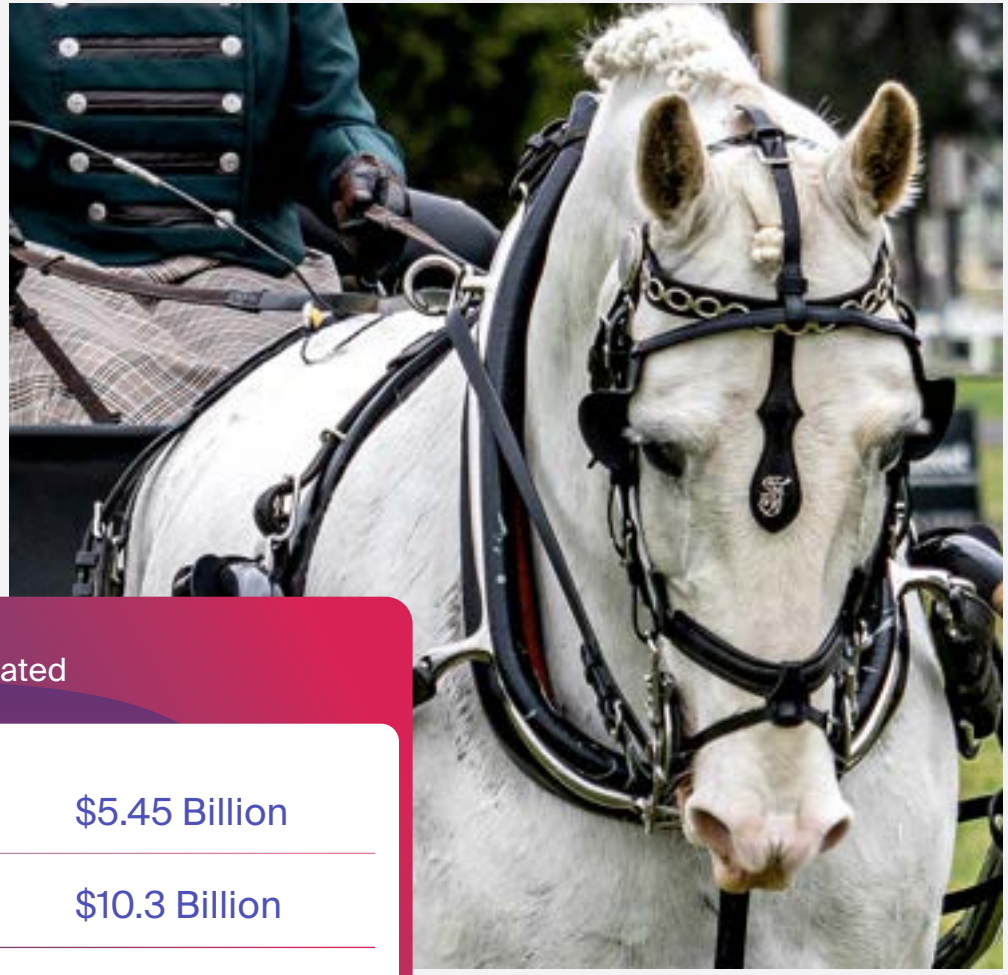
The expenditure generated by the equine sector leads to economic impacts which benefit the broader economy.

The sector is responsible for generating a direct and first round value added impact of $5.45 billion. This comprises expenditures by the sector as well as the wages, salaries and gross operating surplus of the businesses that supply goods and services directly to the equine sector.

In addition, there are induced value added impacts derived as a result of the sector activity. These induced value added impacts include production based impacts (i.e. the chain of activities when retailers transact with wholesalers, who in turn transact with manufacturers and raw material providers) and consumption impacts (e.g. when workers spend their wages and salaries earned as a result of sector activity).

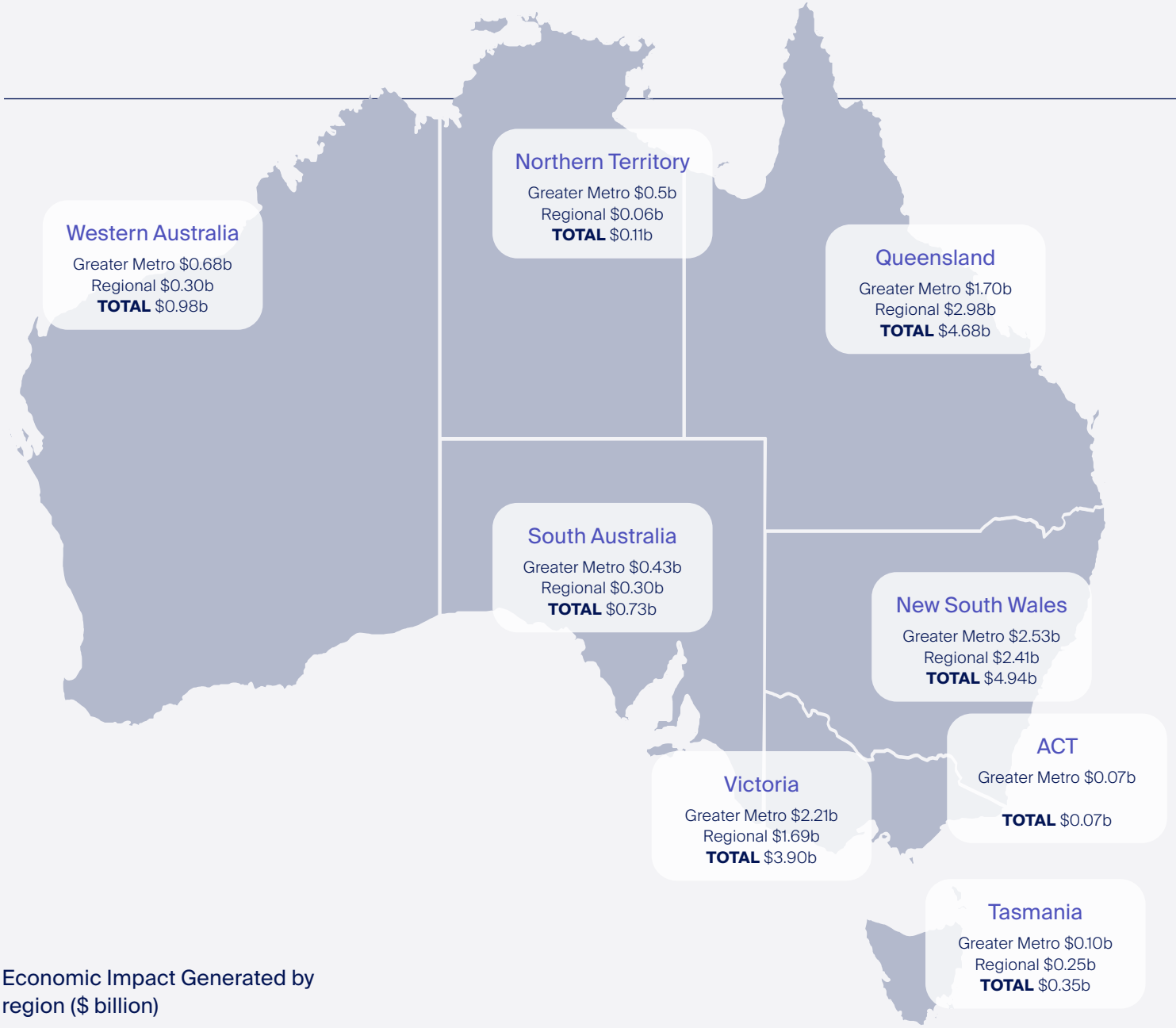
When the flow-on (induced value-added) impacts of this created demand are also considered, the total value added impact of the equine sector rises to $15.75 billion.

Generally, the level of economic activity will not always proportionally follow the origin of expenditures. Regions will have differing capacities of meeting the created demand, meaning that some will have higher import penetrations than others.



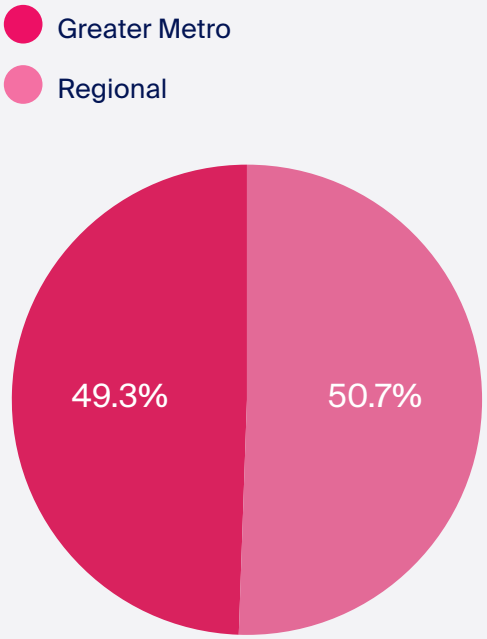
Economic Impacts Generated

Direct and First Round Value Added Impact	$5.45 Billion
Induced Value Added Impact	$10.3 Billion
Total Value Added Impact	$15.8 Billion



Economic Impact Generated by region ($ billion)

Economic Contribution by Region in Australia ($AUD)



Note: Metro regions have been defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics SA4 regional framework which makes up the Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA).

Employment Generated

In 2024, the equine economy was responsible for **supporting more than 101,000 jobs - 54,000** of which were directly involved in the sector

Jobs Supported

In 2024, the demand generated by the equine sector in Australia was responsible for sustaining 101,462 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs. The impact of this created demand generates both direct and induced employment impacts as outlined below.

The demand generated by the sector is responsible for directly supporting more than 54,000 FTE jobs. This employment impact is tied to the current footprint of the sector – with growth or decline in activity likely to have a direct impact on employment levels amongst this population.

When the flow-on (induced) impacts of this created demand are also considered, total employment rises to 101,462. Employment in this sector includes both production induced effects (i.e. employment opportunities in the supply chain of production) as well as the jobs linked to consumption induced effects (when workers spend their wages and salaries – earnt as a result of sector activity – back into the economy).

Household Income

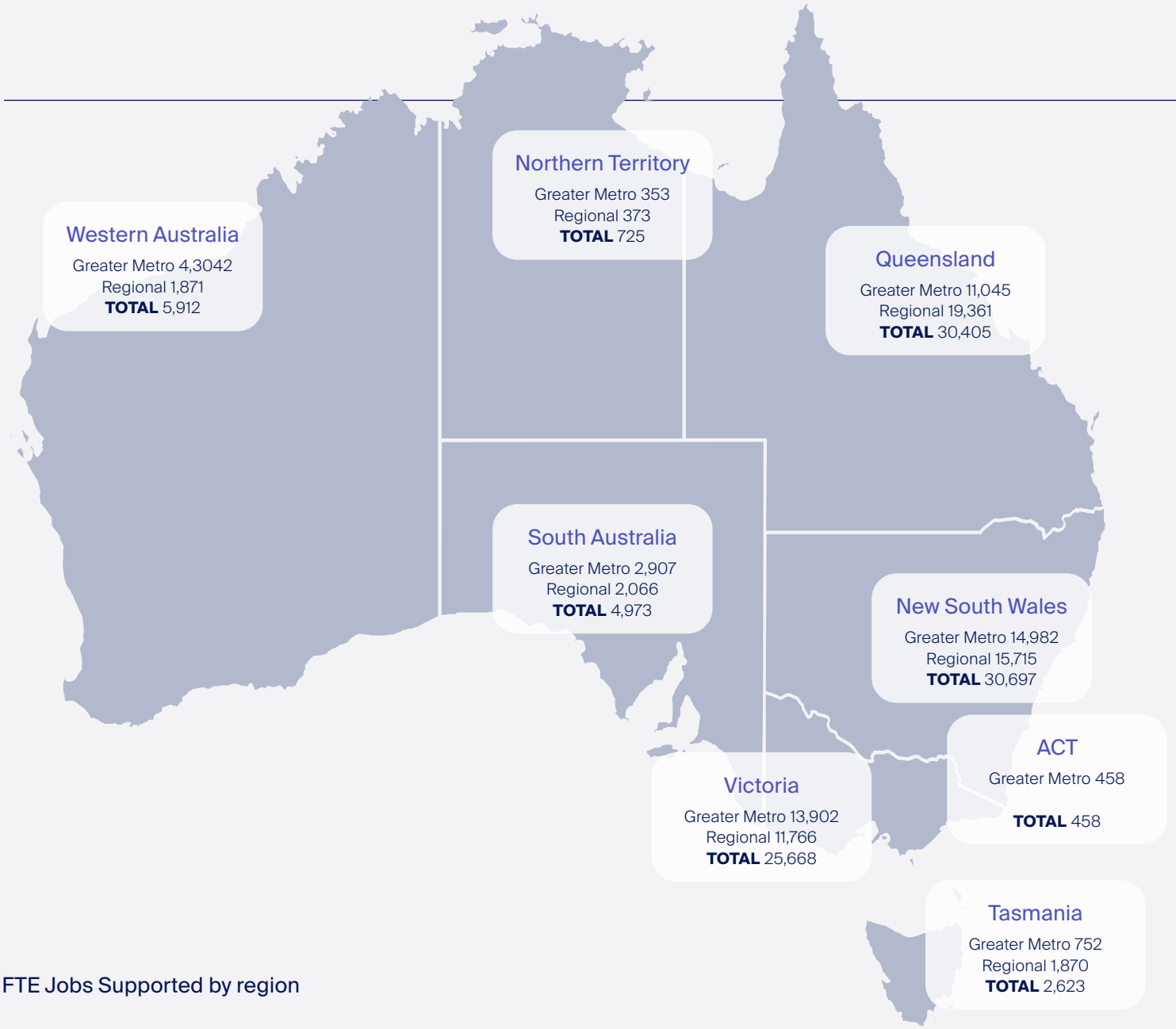
The equine sector generates extensive employment and therefore significant household income. The jobs that are directly sustained by the sector created demand resulting in more than $3.7 billion in wages and salaries. This represents the household incomes for those employed directly by the sector, or by those businesses who supply goods and services directly to the sector. Additionally, those employed as a result of the induced demand created are beneficiaries of more than $4.8 billion in household income.

Therefore, the total household income generated, as a result of equine sector created demand, amounts to $8.57 billion.[5]

FTE Employment Sustained by the Equine Sector

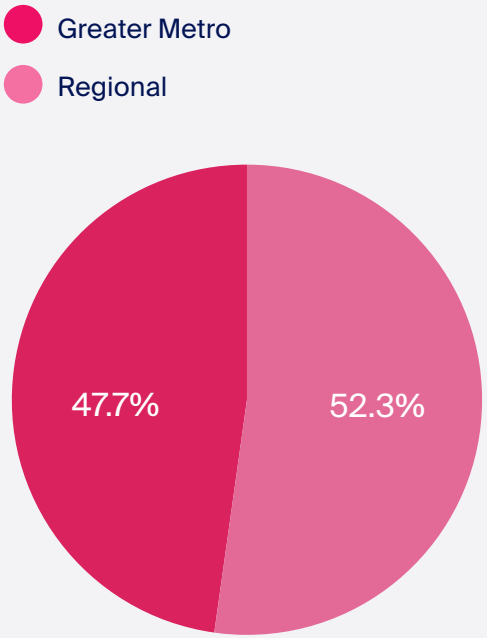
Direct and First Round FTE Employment	54,154
Induced FTE Employment	47,308
Total FTE Employment	101,462

5. Household Income is defined as being wages and salaries (before tax) earned from employment generated by the Australian equine sector



FTE Jobs Supported by region

Total Full Time Jobs Supported by the Equine Sector in Australia



Note: Metro regions have been defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics SA4 regional framework which makes up the Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA).

The Supplier Network

The equine sector is supported by a large supplier network in a mutually beneficial way. Many suppliers of goods and services offer specific skills, and customised products that are relevant only to this sector. The supplier network broadly contains those providing a direct service or product to the sector as well as those down-the-line businesses who provide the raw materials and manufacturing that drive the products on offer.

The Australian equine sector generates some of its most significant impacts in the following industry sectors:

ANZSIC Sector	Key Impacts	Driven by
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	+ Direct value added - $871.8m + Direct FTE jobs - 3,329	+ Maintenance of horses including horse feed and hay
Construction	+ Direct value added - $762.8m + Direct FTE jobs - 4,659	+ Improvements to property such as stables, fencing and arenas
Retail Trade	+ Direct value added - $347.4m + Direct FTE jobs - 3,126	+ Provision of supplies such as tack, rugs and equipment


Indirect
Local Tradespeople
Supplier Insurances
Hardware Stores
Interest rates from borrowing costs
Direct
Gear Supplies
Memberships
Insurance
Feed Suppliers
Agricultural Providers
Supplier side transport costs
Veterinarians
Training and Lessons
Australian Equine Sector
Farriers and Horse Dentists
Capital and maintenance property costs
Rents and Leases
Local Cleaners
Vehicles and floats
Agistment operators
Employees
Educational Providers
Petrol Stations, mechanics, etc
Advertising and Marketing
Water, Electricity and Gas Suppliers

"Horses are like oxygen, can't live without them. Love the athleticism and beauty and partnership you build, it's an amazing privilege."

"Horses are a cornerstone of my life. Everything is impacted - my house, my car, my partner, my job all must be compatible with horses."

"My horse is my sanity and peace. After a bad day, I just spend time with her and all my problems disappear."

"Horses are my life blood. They are responsible for my most exciting adventures since the age of six."

"Horses are my friend and therapist."

Case study

HORSES WORKING THE LAND

While the widespread use of horses for heavy farm labour has decreased significantly with the rise of technology and mechanisation, horses play a valuable role on modern farms through supporting sustainable farming, livestock management and agritourism. Horses are important for sustainable and organic farming as they are far gentler on soil than heavy machinery which means less soil compaction and preserving the structure of the soil. Horse manure is also a highly valuable natural fertiliser, enriching the soil with nutrients to improve the quality of the soil. Additionally, horses can be used for land management or targeted grazing to manage weeds and maintain the health of pastures as well as working in places that may not be accessible by heavy machinery.

To this day, horses remain essential for herding livestock, especially in large pastures or rugged terrain. The benefits of horseback herding compared to using cars or bikes are that they provide less stress on the animals, reduced chance of animal injury by not rushing the herd and have a smaller impact on the environment. Horses are extremely intelligent and very perceptive, they are able to hear and see better than the rider in many circumstances which makes a strong partnership in the outback.

Tourism activities have also become increasingly widespread across farms the land. This has led to farms using the horses in new ways such as offering horse-drawn hay rides or wagon rides alongside demonstrations of traditional farming methods which provide a look back at the history of agriculture. Whilst tractors and other machines handle most of the heavy lifting on modern farms, horses continue to be a valuable asset by offering solutions for where sustainability, tradition or where specialised tasks are required.

Involvement within the Equine Sector

The concept of 'participation' is broader than simply considering those employed in the sector. Involvement within the equine sector include employees, owners, breeders, competitors, volunteers and horse carers who have varying levels of engagement, from occasional to full-time.

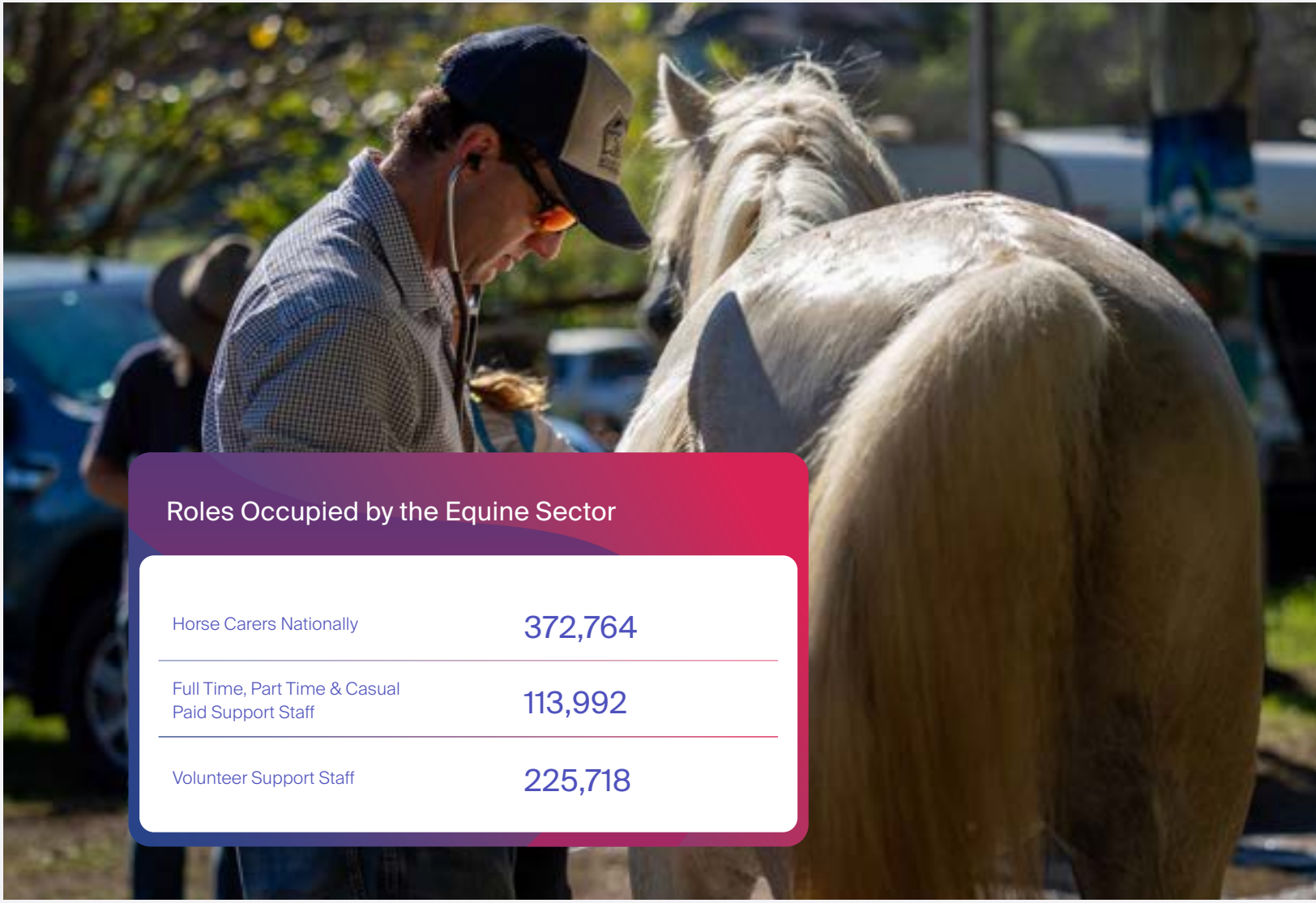
These people are the lifeblood of the sector. For the majority of these engaged horse lovers, involvement is primarily as a hobby, but also part business. Passion and a love of horses drives many to pursue the challenges and opportunities available in the sector. For many people involved in the sector it is their livelihood and occupation.

Many of these people find meaningful employment of their specific skillset where they may find it difficult in other sectors of the workforce. This is especially true in relation to specialists who are skilled in the various aspects of breeding, competing, working or simply maintaining leisure horses on a day-to-day basis. Additionally there are many supply businesses for whom the equine sector provides the market for which to sell their goods or services.

More than 370,000 horse carers or owners provide the capital and skills to maintain and care for their horses. This group drive a chain of activity which is supported directly by close to 114,000 employees, be it full time, part time or casually employed to support owners with their horses.

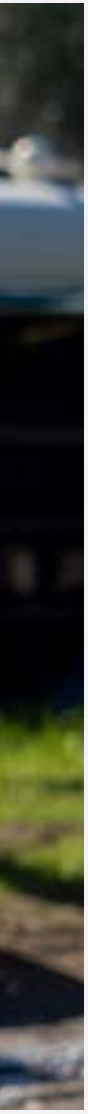
There are 226,000 roles occupied, in which individuals provide their time and skills in a variety of ways. In the participants space this often includes friends and family members - many of whom have a connection to horses going back generations.

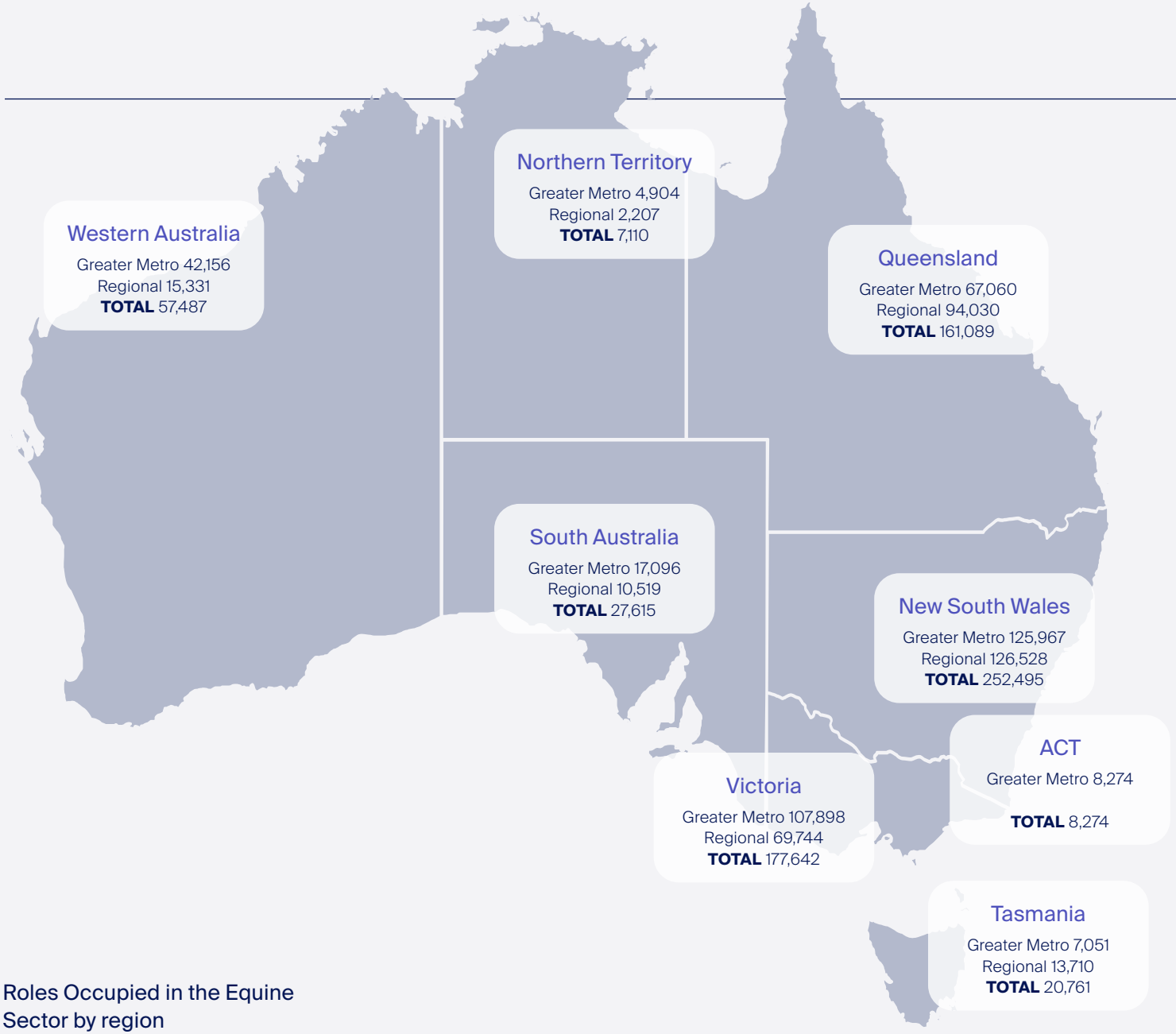
In total, there are more than 712,000 roles occupied in the equine sector.



Roles Occupied by the Equine Sector

Horse Carers Nationally	372,764
Full Time, Part Time & Casual Paid Support Staff	113,992
Volunteer Support Staff	225,718





Roles Occupied in the Equine Sector by region

Note: Metro regions have been defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics SA4 regional framework which makes up the Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA).

In 2024, **there were more than 712,000** participants engaged in the role of **caring for horses in the Australian equine sector**

National Equine Population

In 2024, there is estimated to be more than 1 million horses in Australia with 44% of these located within greater metropolitan areas and 56% located in regional Australia.

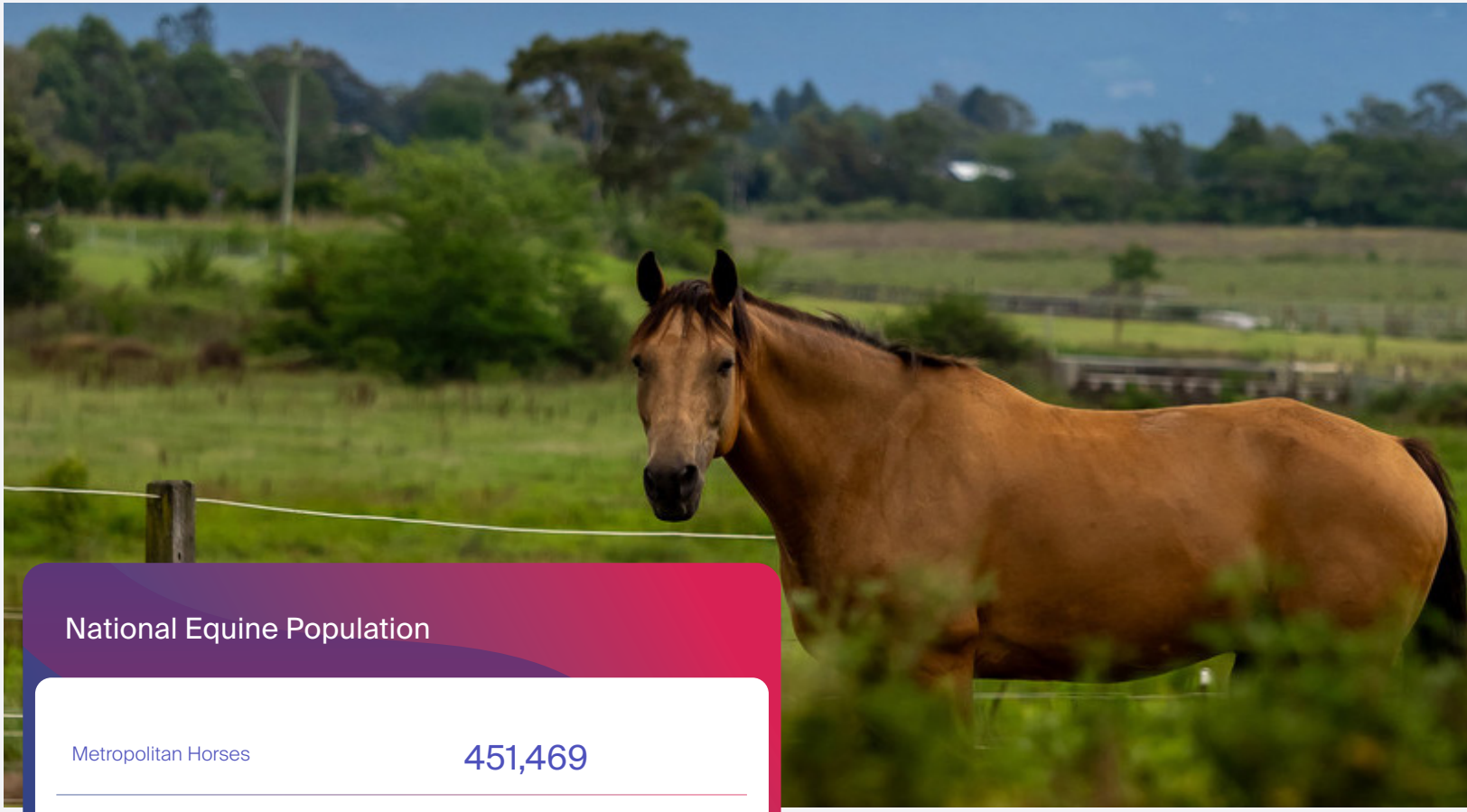
Nationally each horse carer is likely to own or care for 2.8 horses with the highest rate recorded in Queensland (3.4 horses per carer) and the Australian Capital Territory (1.4 horses per carer) recording the lowest horses per carer.

When considering the high proportion of carers in NSW, Victoria and Queensland (combined contributing 81% of carers) it follows that these are the main source of the national herd (84%). There is a marginal difference in scale between the herd in New South Wales (310,000) and Queensland (302,000) with Victoria the third most populous state (251,000).

Regional areas are the key in Queensland (198,000), New South Wales (173,000) and Victoria (129,000) home almost 50% of the national herd alone.

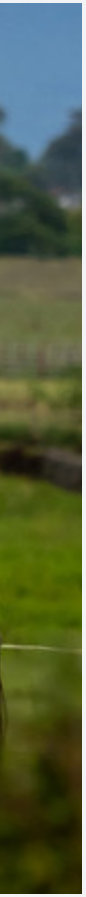
The national herd includes a vast array of breeds including thoroughbreds and standardbreds outside of the national racing jurisdictions, ponies, hotbloods, warmbloods, stock horses, American western and heavy/cold bloods among others. Excluded from this are brumbies and other wild horses, donkeys and mules as well as racing thoroughbreds and standardbreds.

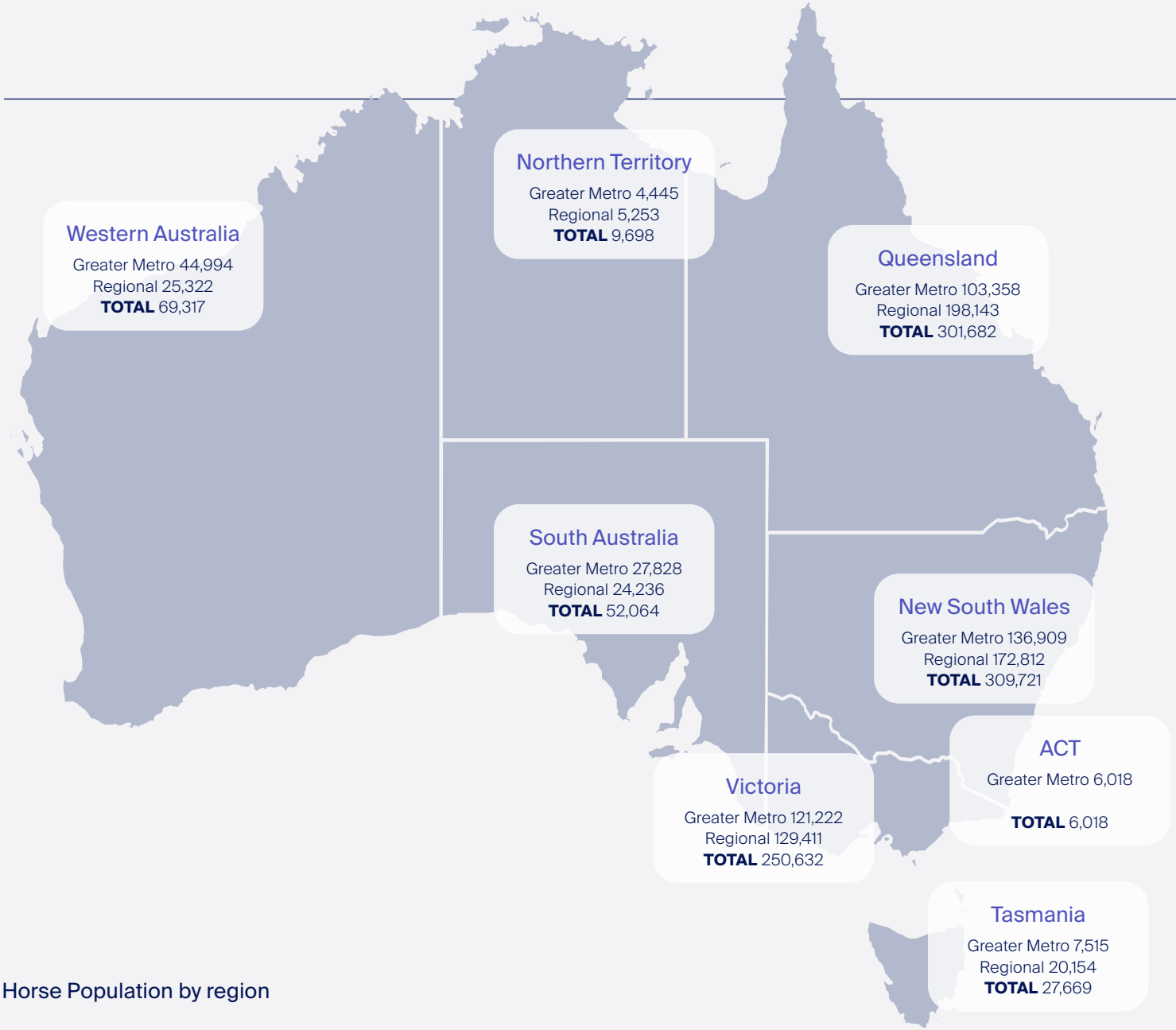
The three most common types of horses nationally contribute more than half of the horses in the herd. Hotbloods (19%), former and non racing thoroughbred/standardbreds (17%) and ponies (16%) are the three predominant horses in Australia.



National Equine Population

Metropolitan Horses	451,469
Regional Horses	575,332
Estimated Horse Population	1,026,801





Horse Population by region

In 2024, there is estimated to be **more than 1 million horses in Australia**

Note: Metro regions have been defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics SA4 regional framework which makes up the Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA).

National Herd Activity

There are a vast array of activities owners undertake with their horses, with everything available from competing at national and Olympic competitions to caring for a retired horse in a back paddock and everything in between.

Considering the primary activities undertaken by participants horses, the number one activity mentioned was competitions which accounts for more than one quarter of horses, followed by retired horses (20%) and leisure horses (16%). A further 15% are predominantly involved in breeding activities continuing long bloodlines and maintaining the genetic integrity for the wide variety of breed societies.

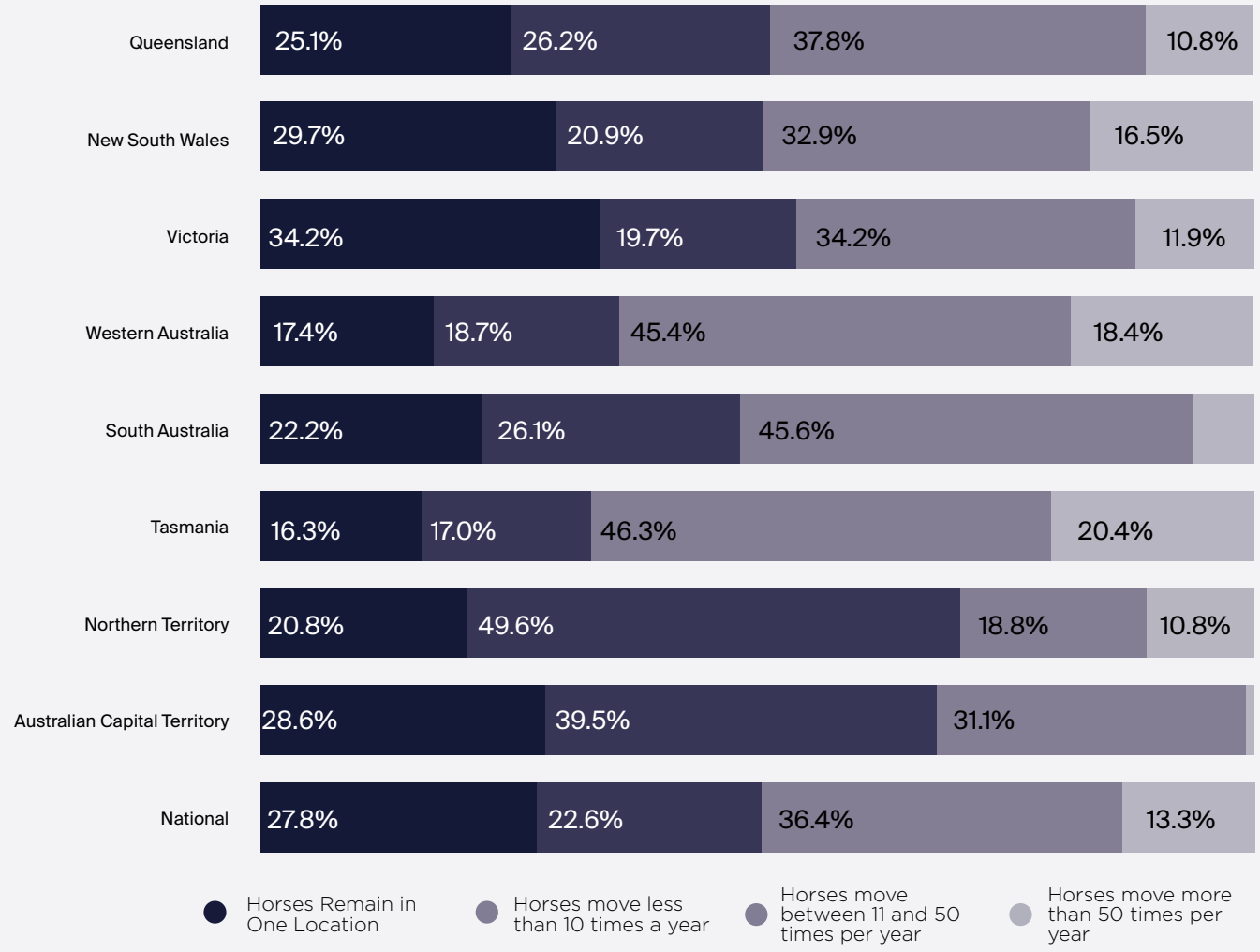
Breakdown of Horses by Activity

Competition	278,041 (27%)
Retired	204,143 (20%)
Leisure	160,110 (16%)
Breeding	151,309 (15%)
Working	134,568 (13%)
Other	98,630 (10%)

The five most popular competitions in terms of number of horses involved are dressage (23%), eventing (10%), campdrafting (10%), show jumping (9%) and pony club (9%).

The three working disciplines with the most horses are cattle/sheep properties (19%), riding clubs such as RDA (16%) and riding schools (15%).

Number of horses transported away from stables/paddock per year



28% of horses **remain in one location** year round, a further **23%** are **transported less than 10 times per year**

For many participants the practice of transporting their horse away from their usual stables or paddock is a regular occurrence. For some, it is to undertake their desired activities such as competing or for others it's attending an agricultural show or visiting a specialist. This is true for more than 72% of horses nationally, with Tasmania the most mobile state followed by Western Australia.

More than one in ten horses nationally are transported away from their paddock more than 50 times per year, or at least once per week. These represent the horses most likely to interact and engage with numerous other horses at several events over a calendar year and represent the highest risk category for biosecurity concerns.


PARIS 2024

Case study

REPRESENTING AUSTRALIA AT THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Australia first competed in Equestriansport at Olympic standard at the Melbourne 1956 Olympic Games, although the competition was held in Stockholm and not Melbourne due to quarantine restrictions. Australia would have to wait until 1960 to win their first Olympic Gold medal, with two coming in Rome for the Eventing Team and Individual events. Since the first appearance at the Olympics, Australian athletes have won a total of 24 Olympic and Paralympic medals including a recent Silver medal in Individual Eventing at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The horses involved in the sport come in a wide range of types, from retired racehorses to purpose-bred performance horses, with a diverse mix in between. This diversity is exemplified by Mary Hanna's selection for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, where she became Australia's oldest-ever Olympic competitor at the age of 66, marking her participation in a record sixth Olympic Games. The only Australian equestrian to compete in more Games is Andrew Hoy, with an impressive eight appearances.

Australia made history by winning three consecutive gold medals in Team Eventing at the Olympic Games - an unprecedented achievement that remains unmatched to this day. The victories came in Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996, and Sydney 2000, cementing Australia's dominance in the sport. Andrew Hoy, a key member of these remarkable teams, became the only athlete of his time, alongside legendary swimmer Dawn Fraser, to secure such an extraordinary feat.

There are three disciplines in the equestrian events at the modern Olympics including Dressage, Jumping and Eventing with an individual and team event in each category.

Social Impacts of Equine Industry

The economic activity generated by the equine sector complements the social impacts with the sector offering benefits to both the individual and the wider community. To fully understand these social and community benefits, it's important to first understand who is involved in the sector, and their perceptions of their involvement with horses.

The analysis of those involved in the sector leverages our participant survey to understand the:

+ Demographic profile

+ Involvement with the sector

+ Advocacy of the sector

+ Social benefits of involvement

+ Motivation for involvement

Demographic Profile

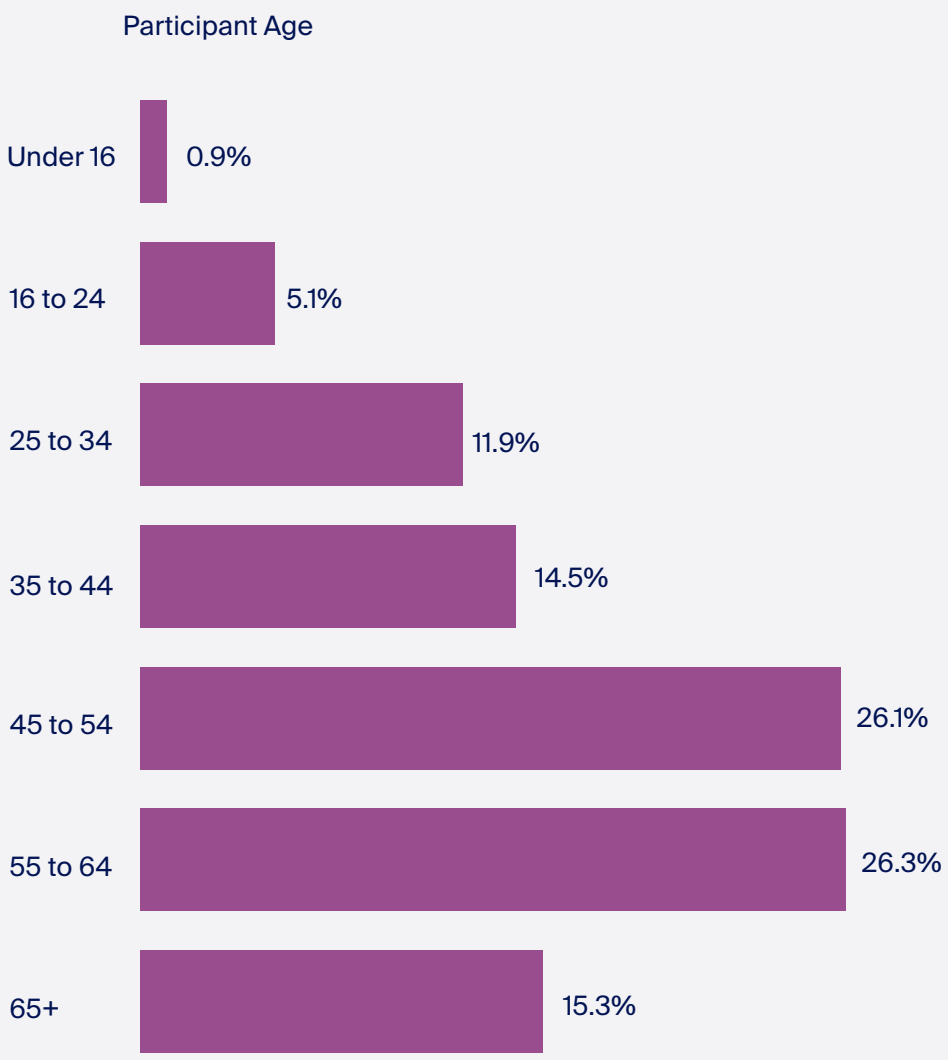
Nationally there are more than 700,000 roles occupied in the sector, engaged with the care for or ownership of a horse. These people are the cornerstone of the sector, driven by a love of horses and a desire for the physical and mental benefits associated with riding and being around horses and like minded people.

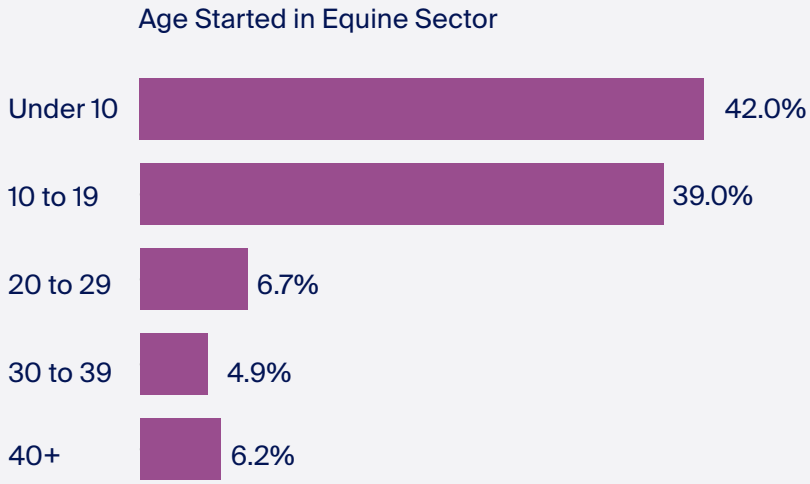
The demographic profile of the sector appealing to all ages, from those in their youth (6% under 25 years old)[6] to those in retirement (15% over 65 years old). However, the love for horses often takes root in a participant's youth, with a remarkable eight out of ten revealing that their journey in the sector began before they turned 20. What's even more striking is that half of these individuals started their equine involvement well before their 10th birthday.

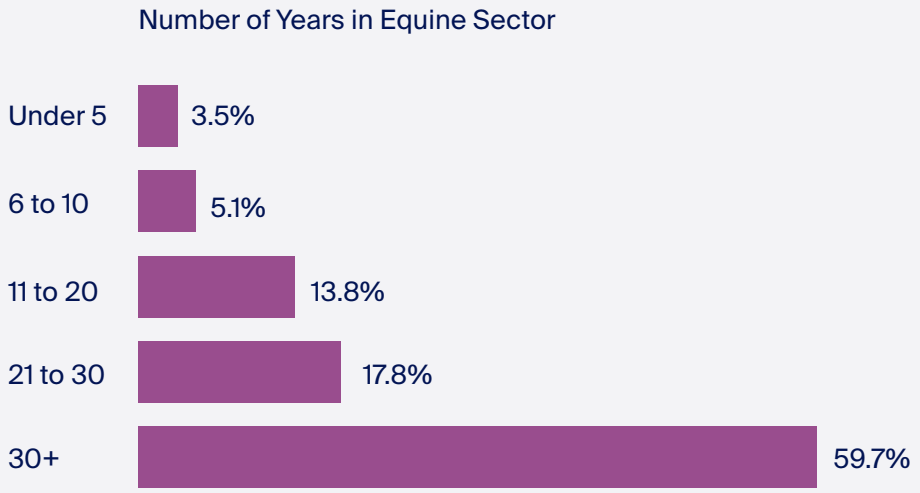
This strong connection also aligns with a long-lasting presence in the sector. Caring for and riding horses requires not just a substantial financial investment, but also a deep commitment of time and effort. Moreover, maintaining a lifestyle that complements horse ownership is a dedication that extends beyond mere participation. Once individuals immerse themselves in the industry, it often becomes a lifelong passion, with more than half of participants maintaining their involvement for over 30 years.

Encouragingly for the industry as a whole, a fresh foundation is emerging, with 5% of those involved having joined the sector within the last five years, bringing new energy and perspectives to the field.

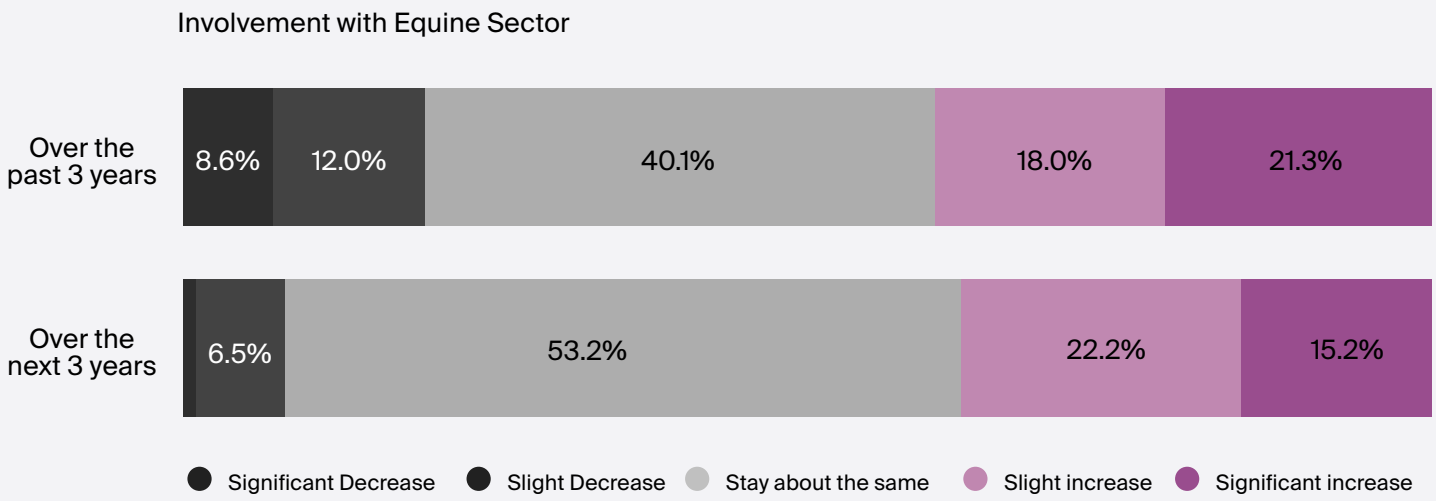
6. The participant survey did not include those aged under 15 years, so the actual percentage of participants under 25 years old is likely to be higher.

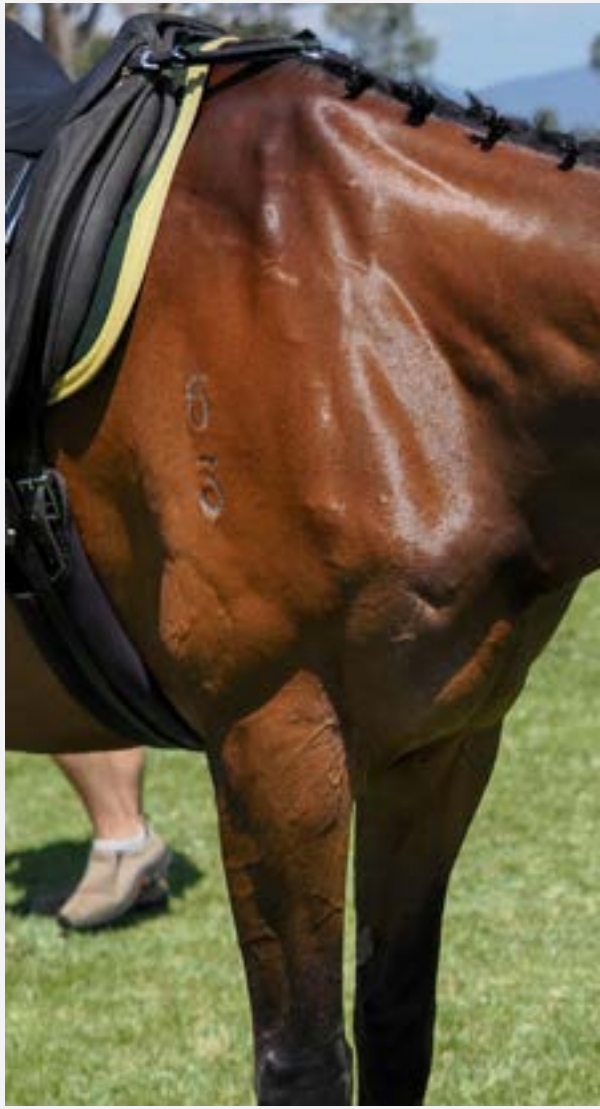

Participant Age
Under 16
0.9%
16 to 24
5.1%
25 to 34
11.9%
35 to 44
14.5%
45 to 54
26.1%
55 to 64
26.3%
65+
15.3%


Age Started in Equine Sector
Under 10
42.0%
10 to 19
39.0%
20 to 29
6.7%
30 to 39
4.9%
40+
6.2%


Number of Years in Equine Sector
Under 5
3.5%
6 to 10
5.1%
11 to 20
13.8%
21 to 30
17.8%
30+
59.7%

Social Impacts





Involvement with Sector

The equine sector is in a strong position with those participating in the sector remaining highly engaged.

Close to 40% of participants claim their involvement with horses has increased, either slightly or significantly, over the past three years. These results are largely consistent across all demographic segments of participants - a net result of 18% increase in the sector.

When looking forward, more than 37% of participants see their involvement in horses increasing to some extent - however, generating a net result of close to 30% increased involvement.

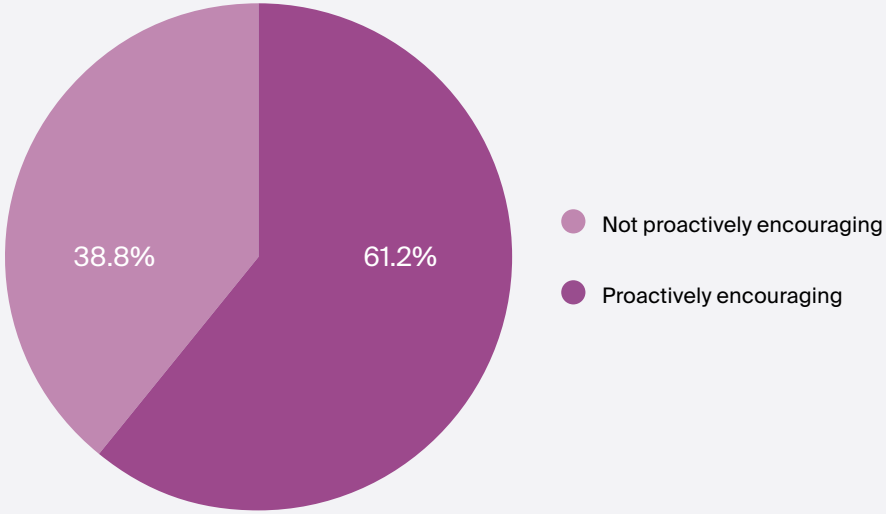
Sector Advocacy

Participants are strong advocates for the sector, with more than 60% of participants stating they proactively encouraging new people to participate in the equine sector. These are just some ways in which participants promote the industry:

+ promoting different horse and ponies breeds at local agricultural shows and allowing the public to access horses in a safe environment
+ hosting club events, open days and information days for new members and non-members to encourage them to join societies and associations
+ hosting 'come and try' days and clinics to highlight the benefits of being engaged in the horse community
+ being present in the local community to support their clubs by hosting sausage sizzles and trivia nights
+ volunteering time to coach, educate and mentor new members and non-members on skills and techniques associated with being in the sector
+ introduding others to their horses and inviting them to interact with and ride their horses to feel the sensation of being on horseback
+ posting content to social media to promote the fun, friendships and experiences they've experienced with their horses.

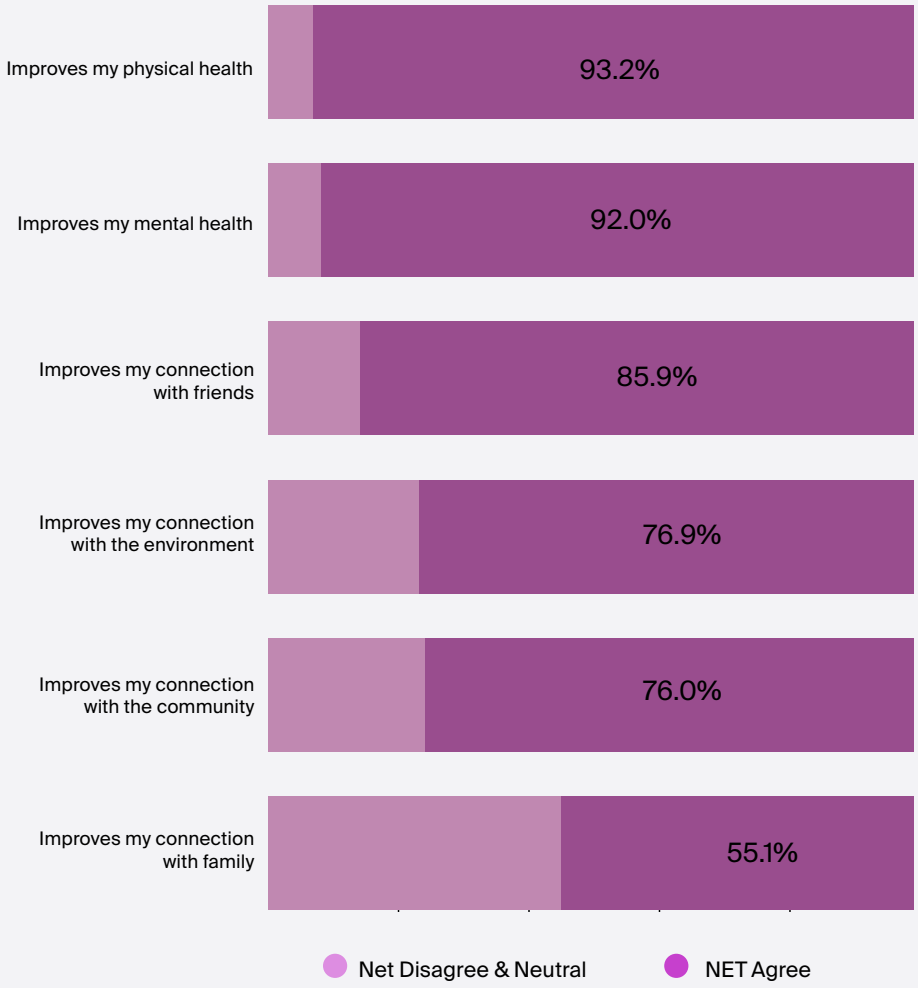
More than **60%** of those involved in the equine sector, **proactively encourage new people** to participate in the industry

Proactively encouraging new people



Social Impacts

Social benefits from participating in the horse sector



Social Benefits of Involvement

Participation in the horse sector offers a wealth of social benefits, both for individuals and the broader community. Among the most significant advantages, the mental and physical health benefits stand out, with many in the equine community highlighting how deeply these positive effects resonate with those involved.

Riding and caring for horses is an intensely physical activity that demands a solid foundation of core and leg strength to stay securely seated in the saddle. It also requires finely honed motor skills, both fine and gross to effectively guide and communicate with the horse. Horseback riding is far from a passive experience; it involves continuous engagement, which is essential for maintaining the bond between rider and horse. This dynamic interaction not only enhances balance and coordination but also promotes cardiovascular health and overall physical fitness.

Interacting with horses offers numerous mental health benefits, including a reduction in stress and anxiety. Studies have shown that spending time with horses can lower cortisol levels in the body—the hormone associated with stress. Furthermore, learning to ride and care for a horse cultivates a profound sense of accomplishment, boosting self-confidence. The level of focus and attention required for horsemanship also sharpens mental acuity, contributing to improved cognitive function.

Like many living animals, horses are prone to emotional contagion which means they can "catch" and reflect the emotional state of nearby humans. Through equine-assisted therapy individuals can become more aware of their emotions and develop strategies for managing them. An extension of equine assisted therapy is in support of trauma recovery due to the gentle and non-judgmental nature of horses which can help rebuild trust and confidence.

The improvement in the connection to friends, the environment and the community also resonated strongly with those involved in the sector. Involvement with the sector fosters a strong sense of community and belonging through shared experience and common interests which are achieved through the act of riding for leisure or in competitions or merely in caring for horses. This camaraderie often builds lifelong friendships and relationships with those in the sector.

Horses connect people to each other, and to the natural world in a meaningful and transformative way. This can manifest through a responsibility for living animals through caring for a large animal which creates a sense of responsibility and understanding of the needs of others, or through outdoor immersion which fosters an appreciation for the environment and those animals that live in it.

The barriers to horse ownership are steep, this means that often whole families become involved with horses. For example those with horses at home often leads to everyone in the household becoming involved in the sport or pastime. Similarly families will often travel together when one has entered a competition, sometimes locally or even interstate depending on the events.

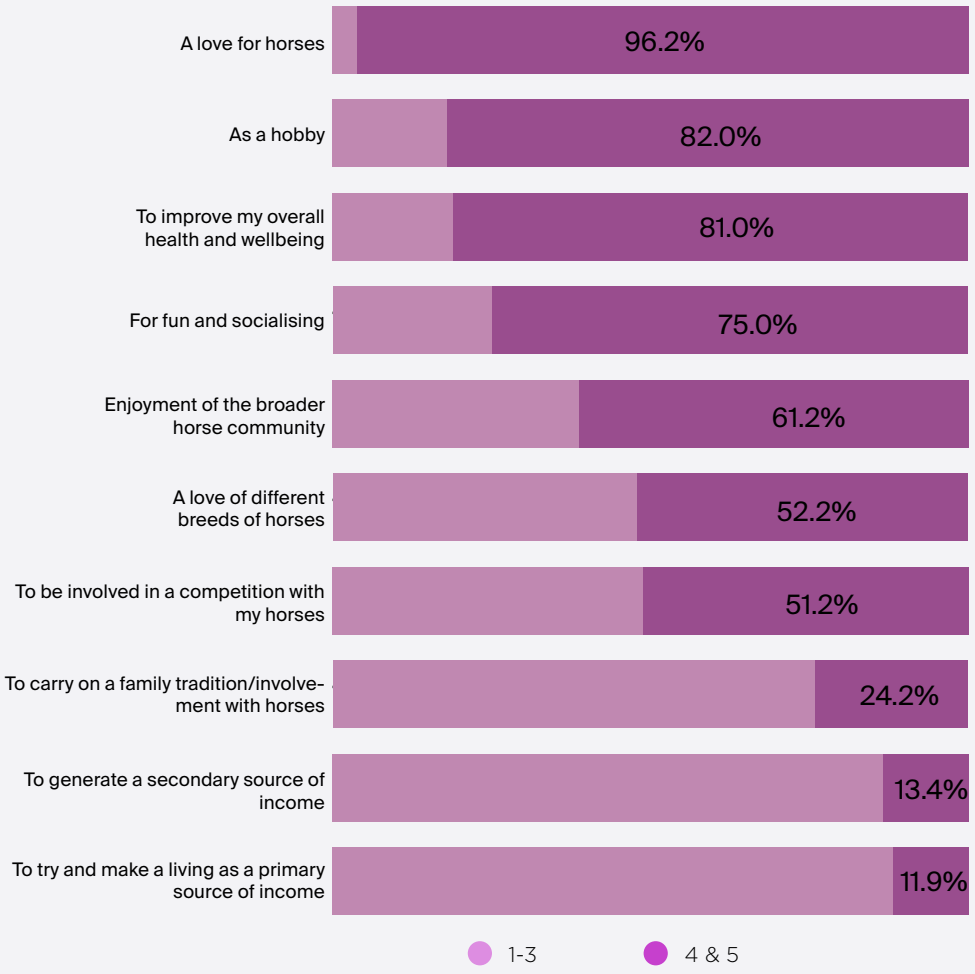
"Horses mean connection, love, fulfilled, happy to have found my one in a million."

"Horses mean the world. To connect with another living soul, who is so gentle and kind. They teach you to live in the present."

"Horses fill my bucket. Feeding and riding my horses are the best part of my day."

"It's not a hobby, it's a lifestyle. Having a horse in my life keeps me well balanced, mentally & physically fit to face life's challenges."

Motivation to continue participating in the horse sector



Motivation for Continued Involvement

Understanding the motivations of owning, riding and caring for horses is a key part of understanding what makes the sector tick.

It is clear the number one motivation for continued engagement with the horses is for the love of the animals with more than nine out of every ten involved stating it was of high importance to them.

Enjoying the horse sector as a hobby and to improve personal health and wellbeing and for fun and socialising were the next most important motivations for those in the industry.

Whether it's a hobby or a profession, there are numerous ways in which people can further their education & training in the care for horses. Official training courses available through Vocational Education and Training courses include Equine Studies or Horse Care, Horse Breeding, or Farriery. These courses help build experience and knowledge of horse handling, care and nutrition, breeding and hoof care. University level education also exists for those interested with courses such as a Bachelor of Equine Science which provides an in-depth scientific knowledge of equine health, behaviour and management.

There's no substitute for hands-on, industry knowledge with on the job training provided to many of the staff and volunteers who engage with horses on a day to day basis. This knowledge is developed and passed down through generations ensuring horses are looked after well into the future.

While not a primary motivator, parts of the industry are prioritising the pursuit of financial gain, with around one in ten surveyed claiming income, either primary or secondary, was a strong motivation for their continued involvement.

Horse owners and carers will often engage a number of specialists to provide advice and guidence in looking after horses. One such area is in equine health and care where equine veterinarians and nurses, alongside farriers, equine dentists and equine massage therapists all work together to ensure the herd remains healthy.

Additionally there are a number of professions offered to support current and future riders including horse trainers, riding instructors, jockeys and stable hands who are helping to get more people riding horses.

The breeding industry is driven by horse breeders across the many different and varied breeds currently in Australia, and these professional breeding farms often have Stud Managers and stable hands supporting the breeding activity.

There are a number of other specialist roles supporting the industry, including event managers who organise and manage events and competitions, as well as equine sales people who sell horse specific products such as feed or even horses themselves.

These roles exist to support a thriving equine industry across Australia, with the health and wellbeing of horses the number one priority.

"Brings me joy and makes me want to get up in the mornings, keeps me active."

"Having time to myself and being able to ride with my mates. Socialising with friends and nature. Enjoying the environment. Loving life."

"Unconditional love, emotional and mental well-being and happiness, genuine connection and responsibility, true friendships all come from having a horse and so much more."

"The unbreakable bond you share with you and your horse is priceless."

"When you're riding you're living, everything else is just waiting."

Appendix

About IER

IER is a leading strategic consulting business specialising in the tourism, events and entertainment industries. For over thirty years, IER has provided economic impact evaluations for both private and Government clients.

In particular, IER has specialised in consulting on a variety of projects related to the horse racing industries in Australia and New Zealand over this time. It is important to note that in this context, this study constitutes an economic and social impact evaluation of the national equine sector excluding the racing industry.

It has been developed utilising the following source data:

+ A national population study conducted with panel provider Dynata
+ A national participant study to those who own horses
+ IER also interviewed a number of sector specialists from the Australian Horse Industry Council, various equine associations and suppliers to help build an understanding of the equine sector.

An intimate knowledge of horses and the likely activity and expenditure associated with maintaining and caring for horses underpins this assessment. IER has recently prepared studies for numerous horse racing industries:

+ Australian Thoroughbred Racing Industry
+ New Zealand Racing Industry (3 Codes)
+ Northern Territory Thoroughbred Racing Industry
+ Queensland Racing Industry (3 Codes)
+ South Australian Racing Industry (3 Codes)
+ Tasmanian Racing Industry (3 Codes)
+ Thoroughbred Racing Industry in Country Victoria
+ Victorian Racing Industry (3 Codes)
+ Western Australian Racing Industry (3 Codes)

The economic modelling for this study was undertaken by Barry Burgan (B Ec (Hons)). Barry is a director of Economic Research Consultants Pty Ltd and has extensive experience in the area of economic and financial assessment and policy advice.

He has a background in the public and private sectors, academia and has worked on various projects in the area of economic policy, including in the area of economic modelling. In particular, Barry has extensive experience in the use of both computable general equilibrium and input output models, regional economic development and cost benefit analysis. He has undertaken a number of these studies and projects with the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre.

Barry has undertaken a significant range of studies on special events, with some specific examples including:

+ Size and Scope of the Queensland Racing Industry (2024)
+ Size and Scope of the South Australian Racing Industry (2024)
+ Economic and Social Impact Study of Harness Racing in Australia (2012)
+ The Economic Impact of the Melbourne Fringe Festival (2010 & 2011)
+ Analysis of economic impact (CGE modelling exercise) of 2006 Commonwealth Games on the Victorian economy (with KPMG, 2005)
+ Pre-event evaluation of impacts of the Sydney Olympic Games on NSW – with KPMG
+ Size and Scope study of the Victorian Racing Industry (2022)
+ Size and Scope study of the Tasmanian Racing Industry (2021)
+ Economic Impact assessment of the InterDominion (Sydney) 2013 - 2016
+ Annual assessment of the Adelaide Fringe, WomAdelaide and Clipsal 500 (over the last 5-10 years)
+ Size and Scope Study of Thoroughbred Racing Industry in the NT (2022)
+ Size and Scope of the Western Australian Racing Industry (2021)
+ Size and Scope of the Australian Football League (2024)

Barry provides the economic modelling and advisory services to IER.

This report (Report) has been produced independently by IER as requested by the Australian Horse Industry Council (AHIC). The report has been prepared to meet the requirements set out by AHIC within the terms of reference. The information, statements, statistics and commentary (together the 'Information') contained in this Report have been prepared by IER from a combination of publicly available material, data from various stakeholder organisations and from confidential discussions held with participants of the industry. IER has prepared this Report on the information that was received or obtained, on the basis that such information is accurate and, where it is represented to IER as such, complete. The Information contained in this Report has not been subject to an audit.

Economic Methodology

The purpose of this study is to measure the contribution made by the non racing equine sector to the National economy. In this way, it is a generalised measure of the industry's contribution to the Australian economy.

Basis of Evaluation

This study is based on a consistent methodology to that used by IER in the evaluation of the contribution of racing industry's in other studies. The modelling is based on assessing the way in which expenditures that underpin the sector impact in a 'whole of economy context' through the creation of jobs and incomes.

More specifically, the economic contribution of an industry to the region in which it operates represents the contribution that the industry makes in terms of the generation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross State or Regional product, household income and the employment these incomes support. The equine sector does this is in two ways

+ Through the employment and activity, it supports directly within the sector (including the impact on the industries that depend on it as a customer); and
+ The flow on effects of that which filters through the economy as a result of this activity

The importance of the expenditures generated by an industry, in the production process, is that they will sustain turnover in local sector, and specifically this will support local jobs and incomes. It is the jobs and incomes that are taken to be the measure of economic impact or benefit, netting out leakages such as expenditure on imports etc.

In terms of determining average costs of maintaining and caring for a horse, IER leveraged both the participant and population surveys. The focus is to determine an average cost of maintaining a horse considering location and differing activities.

In addition to the jobs created with direct suppliers of services to the sector, economic activity produces a broader effect throughout the community, due to supply chain linkages and the impact of the spend of wage - extending the spend effect and the impact through various layers of the economy. This is known as the flow on or induced impact.

To model the employment, household and value added impacts IER modelling employs an unconstrainted whole of economy (or general equilibrium model) based on the latest national input output table produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics leading to the preparation of and input output table for each state and region. This is a prominent process for translating direct created expenditure (a final demand stimulus) of industries or projects into jobs and incomes, and for establishing the extent of the flow on impact.

Used correctly, a whole of economy approach provides a more appropriate measure of economic contibution than expenditure. In short, use of input output based models allow for reporting with respect to the estimated outcomes of the industry in terms of:

+ The effect of expenditure or turnover on value-added or incomes across a State/regional economy; and
+ In terms of job creation

It should be emphasised that this analysis is not a measure of how the economy would change into the future with growth or decline in the sector. There are two reasons for this. Specifically, the economic contribution outcomes determined by this approach do not represent the value that would be lost to the national economy if the breeding sector did not exist. There are two reasons for this:

1. The modelling is a reflection of how the industry currently operates and uses average production functions and industry ratios. This is appropriate for an as is assessment and in effect the modelling reflects the economic footprint of the current operations of the sector. However to consider how the outcomes would change into the future it would be necessary to consider marginal propensities, and allow for transfer of resources between sectors. This is especially relevant in studies at the national level.

2. The methodology includes the identification and inclusion of local expenditure associated with thoroughbred breeding. Generally, when considering expenditure by locals it is often held that substitution is a significant factor in whether that spending would be lost to the economy. Taking the equine sector as an example, it is likely (under a scenario where it no longer existed) that much of the local resident spend would substitute to other activities. Depending on where this spending occurs the overall economic impact of that spending could be higher or lower than what it was when spent on the equine sector.

Linked to the above, there is some level of academic argument about appropriate models for converting increases in external expenditure (final demand) into regional economic impacts. The critics of using unconstrained models such as input output tables often argue that they overstate the value of an industry – and reference that "multiplier" impacts are taken as a method of ratcheting up the stated value (noting that this study uses an impact assessment rather than multipliers per se). This criticism would be valid when analysts applied turnover multipliers but is not the case with the more appropriate use of value-added multipliers – which translate the expenditure estimates to national accounting framework measure with a whole of economy context.

Indeed, value-added multipliers (the value-added impact (direct and induced) relative to a dollar of created expenditure) at the regional level are often less than 1. It is further noted that the constraints that are applied in more complex economic models do not tend to be substantial at the state and regional level in a longer term context (labour flows from state to state and region to region and capital can also flow freely).

What this study calculates is the level of direct and induced employment and income that is linked to people choosing to have spent their monies on the equine sector (after allowing for imports which are used in the production process). This could be considered the gross economic impact of the sector and is therefore a measure of its significance generally. If a similar gross impact was calculated for every other sector of the economy, then the sum of the impacts would be considerably greater than the size of the economy in total.

Estimates of Expenditure by the Industry

This study of the Australian equine sector is undertaken by firstly identifying the expenditures generated by the sector and then applying this expenditure to state input output model. The State input output model has been prepared using the latest ABS national input output table (2021-22) as a base and has been created using the location quotient method and using state labour force and national accounts data and updated to the relevant year for inflation. The model condenses the industry structure of the national input output table to a 26 industry sector level focusing on industries more directly impacted by activity in the sector. The approach identifies the structural context of expenditure and then applies this to industry sectors from which point it is assumed that the general industry production function can be applied.

The estimated horse sector expenditure is determined at two levels. Firstly, the sector expenditure generated within each expenditure category is identified, as well as the region in which this spend occurs. Secondly, final expenditures are allocated to the model's industry sectors. Expenditure on labour in the sector itself is allocated to the sport and recreation sector. By allocating these expenditures in this way, the imports required to support sector activity can be estimated for the production function of respective industry sectors and excluded as they represent a leakage from the state economy.

From an industry classification perspective, whilst "sport and recreation" is the dominant sector, there are significant purchases made from other sectors such as agriculture, business services, property services etc., while racing events include spend on food and beverage services and other general consumer spend.

Adjustment of Expenditures

The expenditure data is converted from purchasers' prices to basic prices, as the final expenditure data includes margins, taxes and subsidies and all monetary values in the input output model are expressed as basic values. The prime differences between purchaser prices and basic prices are that:

+ Basic values exclude the cost of transport and wholesale and retail trade embedded in the purchase price (and allocate these to the transport and trade sectors).
+ GST will be allocated to Gross Operating Surplus. In the modelling herein this is then considered to support Government expenditure (an implied revenue neutral situation).

The core assumptions to make the adjustments from purchaser price distributions to basic values are:

+ The average value added in each of the industry sectors is extracted and then the GST component (at 10% - which is only paid on the value added) is deducted and separately identified. It is assumed that the value added coefficient for the arts and recreation sector understates that of the spend for the racing industry as the cultural industry will be dominated by public sector institutions and not for profits – whereas the recreation sector is more commercial.
+ The purchaser price is adjusted for the average margin for wholesale, retail and transport sectors, as identified in the national input output tables.

Distribution to Regions

The final expenditures outlined within this study has been allocated to regions across Australia. The level of economic activity will not proportionally follow the expenditure, as regional areas generally have higher import penetrations than metropolitan areas (i.e. regional areas have a higher likelihood of needing to import products and services from the metropolitan area).

This study develops a regional input output model for each of the nominated regions. These regional models are created from the underlying state table and again using the location quotient method based on regional employment estimates for each region from the latest data available through the ABS Census. Outcomes for the regions are adjusted for feedback impacts to be consistent with the state level modelling results, with much of the feedback being assumed to occur within the greater metropolitan areas.

Acknowledgments

IER would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following organisations and individuals:

+ Arabian Horse Society of Australia
+ Australian Horse Industry Council
+ Australian Stock Horse Society
+ Commonwealth Clydesdale Horse Society
+ Donkey All Breeds Society of Australia Inc.
+ Equestrian Australia
+ Equitana
+ Horse Deals
+ Horse Riding Clubs Association of Victoria
+ Jo Arblasters
+ Lisa J Photography
+ Miss Print Images
+ National Campdraft Council of Australia
+ Participants who provided detailed financial data on maintaining and caring for animals
+ Pony Club Australia
+ RDA Australia
+ The Australian Farmer
+ The many associations and suppliers who promoted the participant survey through their channels
+ Victorian Clydesdale Horse Society
+ Welsh Pony & Cob Society of Australia

Definitions

The following terms have been used throughout the study and are defined as follows:

+ **Direct Expenditure** - is defined as expenditure associated with maintaining and caring for horses, capital improvements linked to horses and attendance at horse related events excluding racing events. Direct expenditure is counted at the point at which it leaves the racing industry and hits the broader economy
+ **Direct Economic Impact (value added)** - represents the amount of income included in the direct in-scope expenditure, and therefore is the amount of wages and salaries plus gross operating surplus directly created in supply these services and product, which is also equal to the direct in scope expenditure less the purchases the provider of the goods and services makes in providing the goods and services
+ **Indirect Economic Impact (flow-on) –** represents the value added activity generated to support the purchases made in providing the inputs to the providers of the direct services, along with the value added impact in providing households with goods and services as they spend their wages, and the trickle on effect of this
+ **Total Value Added** – is the sum of the direct value added plus the flow on impact. It therefore represents the contribution to Gross State Product resulting from the events and activities of the non racing horse sector
+ **Full-time Equivalent Employment** - is a unit that indicates the workload of an employed person in a way that makes workloads or class loads comparable across various contexts. An FTE of 1.0 is equivalent to a full-time worker (i.e. 38 hours), while an FTE of 0.5 signals half of a full work load (i.e. 19 hours)
+ **Household Income** - is defined as being wages and salaries (before tax) earned from employment generated by the racing industry
+ **Participants in Horse Sector** - is defined as being the number of employees (full-time, part-time and casual), participants and volunteers directly involved in the horse sector outside of racing. Does not include down-the-line suppliers of goods and services
+ **Input Output Modelling** – is the economic modelling used to determine the economic outputs within this study. It is an economy wide model, which shows the inter-linkages between industry sectors in the economy. Therefore, the change in economic circumstances (specifically a change in final demand), for one sector of the economy can be traced though to its effect on other sectors