

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Pakula MP**  
Minister for Industry Support and Recovery  
Minister for Trade  
Minister for Business Precincts  
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events  
Minister for Racing



Thursday, 26 August 2021

## BACKING RESEARCH FOR SAFER THOROUGHBRED RACING

The Victorian Government is investing to make thoroughbred racing safer and reduce the risk of injury to horses through an important research project.

Minister for Racing Martin Pakula today announced \$2.7 million from the *Victorian Racing Industry Fund* to support the second phase of the *Equine Limb Injury Prevention Program*, taking the Government's total investment in equine injury prevention research to \$5 million.

The Equine Limb Injury Prevention Program is a joint initiative with Racing Victoria and the University of Melbourne, with each contributing \$1.35 million to fund the next stage of research.

The program is improving the understanding of limb injuries and informing animal welfare policies and training practices to reduce the risk and frequency of injuries in thoroughbreds.

The second phase will build on the gains of foundation studies, improve diagnostic imaging methods, enhance protocols for managing international horses travelling to Australia, and develop technology to test the mechanical properties of surfaces to better understand their effects on limb injury and how to reduce risk.

The first phase of the program has led to recommendations to the racing industry on training methods, farrier techniques and risk identification, including changes in stride length and differing track surfaces.

These recommendations resulted in the commissioning and installation of a standing computed tomography (CT) system that allows efficient three-dimensional imaging of the lower limb of horses and identification of otherwise unseen bone damage.

The program also led to the development and application of a racehorse injury risk analysis profiling system that has been used for the Melbourne Cup since 2018.

Racing Victoria earlier this year introduced a series of reforms to guard against injury to international horses competing in the Melbourne Cup and other Spring Racing Carnival features following a review of incidents over the past decade.

These include greater veterinary oversight and screening of international horses seeking to compete in the Spring Racing Carnival and of all horses – local and international – in the Melbourne Cup.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Racing Martin Pakula

*"It's important we do this work so we can advance the science of injury prevention and continue to identify and reduce risk factors."*

*"We welcome the industry's commitment to improving horse welfare and its partnership in this program."*

### Quote attributable to Racing Victoria Chair Brian Kruger

*"Animal welfare is our top priority and racing has never been more committed to improving outcomes for all horses. This program will build on a significant bank of knowledge that benefits horses and all participants."*

### Quote attributable to Head of the Melbourne Veterinary School Professor Anna Meredith

*"This research has identified new ways to monitor and significantly reduce limb injury and now we have a platform to extend this expertise and take welfare measures to the next level."*

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