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Back injured jockeys this Melbourne Cup, say unions

Jockeys have the most dangerous land-based job in Australia, with fatality statistics over the last 25 years confirming they are the group of workers most likely to be killed at work.

The ACTU is asking all Australian workers to consider the risks jockeys take this Melbourne Cup and to back jockeys' call for State Governments to kick in to a fund to support injured jockeys.

"Australia's \$5 billion racing industry depends entirely on 840 jockeys who take extreme personal risks every time they race," said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

"Of those 840 jockeys, we can expect one or two to be killed on the track each year. The fatality rate is the highest per head of employees of any land-based job in Australia.

"Every year at least half a dozen jockeys are injured so badly they can't return to racing and several of those are permanently disabling injuries like quadriplegia or brain injury. Yet jockeys don't have many of the conditions and protections enjoyed by other Australian workers."

In addition to being extremely dangerous, jockeys' work is insecure, with no guarantee of work from week to week and regular time out for injury; and mostly low-paid, with average incomes around \$40,000 a year.

Many don't have superannuation or private health insurance, and state-based workers' compensation systems are inconsistent and mostly inadequate for meeting injured jockeys' medical and living costs.

A recent survey of Australian jockeys showed:

- 40% have had a fall in the last 12 months preventing them from riding
- 69% have struggled to pay for food and bills
- 63% say improving safety in the industry is their top priority.

The ACTU is asking all Australian workers to back jockeys as they enjoy a bet at this year's Melbourne Cup by supporting the National Jockeys Trust, established to support injured jockeys and the bereaved families of jockeys killed on the track.

State Governments – who take in more than \$600 million direct from racing in tax revenue – contribute nothing to the Trust.

"I support jockeys' call on State Governments to bring the Trust's balance up to \$5 million so injured jockeys can be properly looked after," said Ms Kearney.

"I appeal to all Australian workers to stand by jockeys this Melbourne Cup. Donate part of your winnings or your office sweep to the National Jockeys Trust and email the Racing Minister in your state to ask for action to support jockeys."

Go to www.njt.org.au to donate and take 'Email your Racing Minister' action.

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