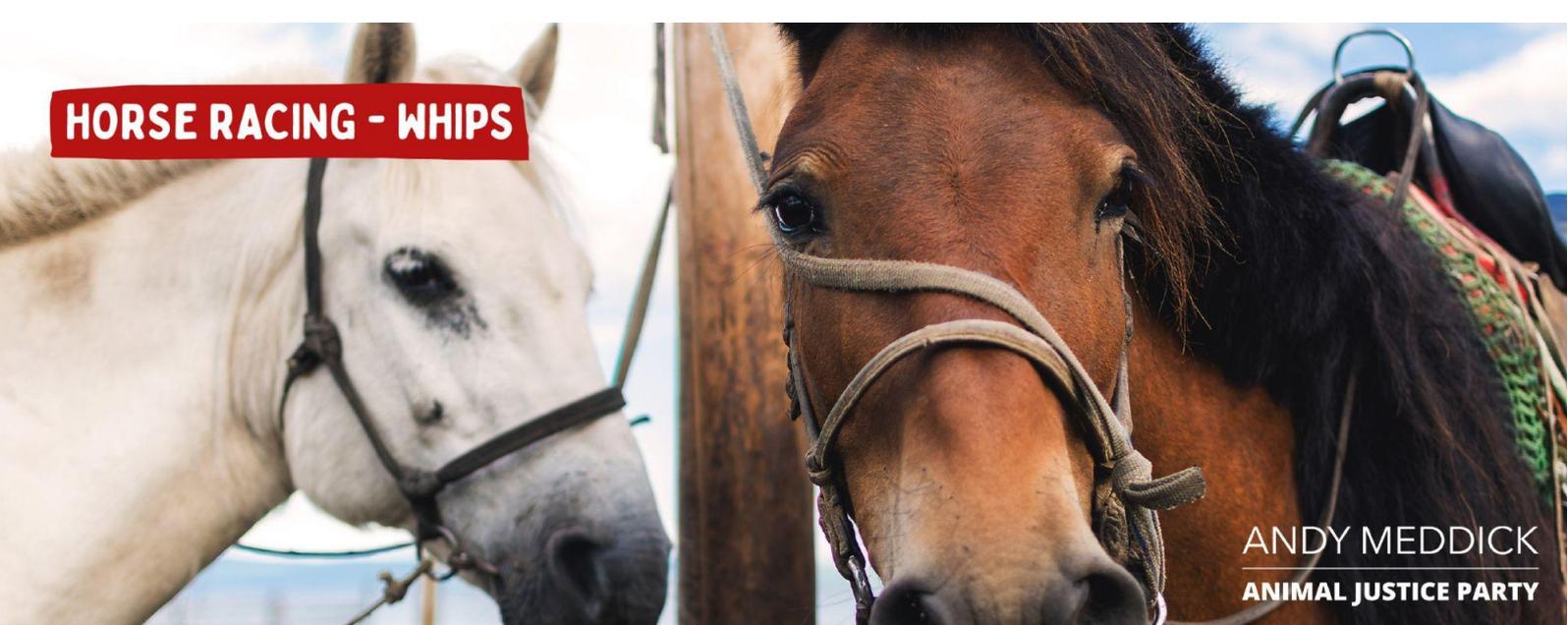


## HORSE RACING - WHIPS



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### Briefing Note

*"Society may not tolerate horse racing much longer unless racing becomes safer and kinder to the horse. [Horse racing must change to survive](#)"*

### History

In 1991 the Senate Select Committee into Animal Welfare in the racing industry determined that it [could not condone the use of the whip](#) that inflicts pain on a horse. "Competent riding of a horse using only hands and heels to urge the horse on should provide just as an exciting race and may also encourage more emphasis on improving horsemanship."

Thoroughbred racing occurs in more than 50 countries, each of which have their own rules around when and how to whip horses. [Norway is a world leader](#), with whipless races as standard in horse racing since 1986 with no repercussions to jockey safety, and fewer serious injuries to horses. "Hands and Heels" [whipping-free racing](#) has been a fixture on the British racing calendar since 1999.

Whip use is defended as being critical to thoroughbred racing integrity in Victoria, however this culturally embedded notion [lacks empirical support](#). A study in 2018 showed that at least three quarters of surveyed Australians objected to the use of the whip. Similarly, 87% of surveyed horse racing punters said they would continue to participate if the rules were changed to prohibit whipping. Bans on whip use have already been implemented in Norway, Britain, Ireland, France, Germany and some parts of the USA. In 2020, Racing Victoria declared that the current national whip rules are no longer appropriate, and that whip reform is vital for the future of the sport.

Extensive research from a 2020 [University of Sydney and University of South Australia](#) study has revealed there is no evidence that whips improve performance times in horse racing or that they make racing safer or fairer for jockeys. Furthermore, whip rules are often difficult to mandate and fines are meaningless compared to the prize money awarded to jockeys.

### Cruelty

Whips hurt. Studies have found that horses and humans [feel similar pain](#) when whipped.

In a [2012 study](#), on 64% of occasions horses were struck with the non padded section of the whip, and in 83% of occasions the whipping caused visible indentations in the horses bodies.

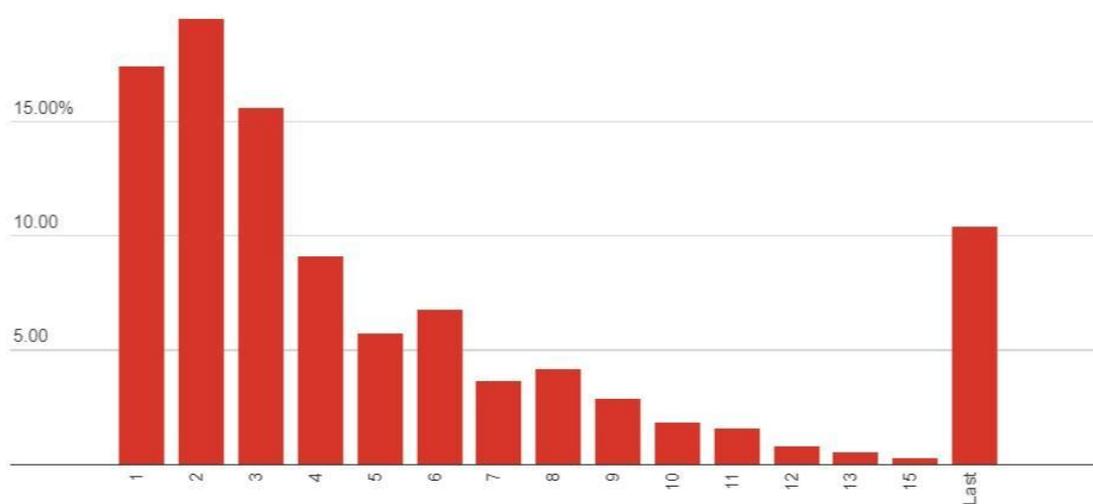
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*"Whipping horses is futile, not least because fatigued horses cannot respond, rendering the practice inhumane and fruitless."*

Current whip rules in Victoria include unlimited whip use in the final 100m, a revocation of fines for whipping if jockeys abstain from consecutive whipping in the final 100m of a race, and an increase in the amount of strikes permitted in jumps racing from five to ten. Rules are hard to navigate for jockeys, and difficult to enforce for stewards. It's time to bring the whip to an end, in Victoria.



**Figure 1.** Racing finishing positions and percentage of whip rule breaches. Credit: The Conversation

*"Whipping tired horses is becoming increasingly difficult to justify."*

## Recommendations

Permanently ban the use of whips in horse racing in Victoria.