

MEDIA RELEASE

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Hoofs and hands just the start to racing careers

THERE'S much more to the racing industry than horses and jockeys, as a group of high school students found out this week.

The students from Swan Hill College, St Mary MacKillop College and Kerang Technical High School were given a glimpse into what happens behind the scenes on a racecourse and the wide variety of potential careers available in racing across Australia and around the world.

And you don't have to like, own or have experience with horses to get involved.

Indeed, Racing Victoria Apprentice Jockey Coach Matt Pumpa vividly recalls the day he took a short cut across the golf course at Swan Hill on his way to footy training.

Local trainer Austy Coffey was working a horse and spotted him.

"He saw how short I was and called me over and told me I should be a jockey and it started from there," he said.

"I was 14 and hadn't touched a horse ... I'd come in after school and on school holidays."

Mr Pumpa completed an apprenticeship and rode racehorses for 12 years – with stints in Singapore, Macau and Hong Kong – before breaking his hip in a career-ending fall during track work at Flemington two years ago.

Mr Pumpa has since become a coach and mentor to Victoria's 45 apprentice jockeys.

At the end of July he will accompany the state's leading apprentice to the sixth Asian Young Guns Challenge in South Africa. Harry Coffey, of Swan Hill, and Jye McNeil, of Kerang, are among the leading contenders for the Victorian apprentice jockey premiership.

Athlete Development and Industry Careers Adviser Melissa Weatherley said the workshop at Swan Hill was part of Racing Victoria's Community Education in Schools Program.

The program started seven years ago with visits to primary schools by 1992 Melbourne Cup winner Subzero and has been expanded to offer career-focussed information to high school students.

"After we held a visit and talks here two years ago, two students gained jobs as stablehands and started doing track work," she said.

Ms Weatherley recommended riding track work as a "great part-time job", especially for students, but said there were dozens of career possibilities in racing, breeding, medical, hospitality and racecourse administration.

"You need to think about the skills you want to develop and look at where the growth opportunities are," she told the group.

“Alternative health is a big growth area where acupuncture, chiropractics and physiotherapy are used to bring out the best in horses.”

The thoroughbred racing industry contributed almost \$2.1 billion to the Victorian economy last year, according to a recent report.

(Ends)

Issued by Sandra Godwin, Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Communications officer (03) 5033 2017

Notes:

MMLLEN is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for the area of north-west Victoria covered by Swan Hill Rural City (excluding Robinvale), Gannawarra Shire (excluding Cohuna), and Sea Lake in the Buloke Shire.

MMLLEN works to establish partnerships with local education and training providers, businesses and industries, community groups, parents and families to help young people aged 10 to 19 get involved in study, training or work, stay committed and succeed in their chosen careers.

Further information about MMLLEN is available at the website <http://www.mmlen.com.au/>