

A TRAUMA-INFORMED GUIDE FOR PARTICIPATION

Independent Review into Victorian Racing Industry Victim Support and Complaint Processes

What is the Review about?

The Review was established following a joint referral by the three Victorian racing controlling bodies – Racing Victoria Limited, Harness Racing Victoria and Greyhound Racing Victoria – to the Racing Integrity Commissioner.

The aim of the Review is to ensure that worker wellbeing is at the forefront of the Victorian racing industry. It will not investigate or make findings about individual allegations of physical and sexual abuse, physical and sexual assault and sexual harassment.

The Review will hear about the lived experiences and expectations of victims, inquire into systemic issues, and examine the industry's processes and systems to prevent and respond to physical and sexual abuse, physical and sexual assault and sexual harassment to ensure they are effective and appropriate.

The Review will also provide clear referral and access pathways to counselling and other supports for all who need it, including specialist trauma counselling, and to law enforcement and other agencies, as appropriate for those who seek it.

Who can participate?

To take part in the Review, you must be aged 18 years or older and fall within at least one of the following categories:

- people who work* or have previously worked in thoroughbred, harness or greyhound racing in Victoria
- people who volunteer or have previously volunteered in thoroughbred, harness or greyhound racing in Victoria
- organisations and experts that have direct experience or expertise in areas under the Review.

For more information on who can be involved in the Review, see the separate Review *Participant Information Sheet*.

What is involved if I take part?

There are different ways to participate in the Review. You can contribute by:

- completing an online survey
- making a written submission, and/or
- participating in an in-person or online interview.

To be involved in the Review, you will need to give your consent by completing the form at the end of the Review *Participant Information Sheet*.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked questions about:

- your experience in the Victorian racing industry
- your experience of physical and sexual abuse, physical and sexual assault and sexual harassment in Victorian racing industry workplaces, including as a witness or bystander, and/or your knowledge of someone who has experienced these behaviours in the Victorian racing industry
- your knowledge of relevant industry policies, practices and processes
- your insights about the culture of the Victorian racing industry generally and any suggestions you have about the industry can improve how it deals with allegations of sexual or physical abuse, assault or sexual harassment in future.

The Review is interested in hearing about both positive and negative experiences.

It is your choice to share as much or as little of your knowledge and experiences as you want. You can also share your experiences with the Review even if you are not sure that your experience is abuse, assault or harassment.

Participating in the Review will not involve you having to substantiate or prove what happened to you – you have the right to share your experiences and be believed.

For more information on how to be involved in the Review, see the separate Review *Participant Information Sheet*.

Purpose of this Guide

The Racing Integrity Commissioner expects to hear about a broad range of experiences during the Review. The Commissioner understands that sharing information about very personal events can be difficult for anyone, but that this may have particular impacts for those who have experienced trauma.

This guide has therefore been developed to provide information to people who may have experienced trauma about:

- how your privacy and information will be protected
- how you can make an informed choice about participating
- how participating may impact you if you have experienced trauma
- things to consider prior to, during or after participating in the Review.

How will my privacy and personal information be protected?

Personal information

By giving your consent to participating in the Review, you agree to the Review team collecting and using the information you provide for the purposes of the Review.

The information you share with us, including your name and personal information, will be treated confidentially by the Review team. Your name and other personal or identifying information will not be published.

The Racing Integrity Commissioner will produce a report on the findings and recommendations of the Review which will be aimed at ensuring the Victorian racing industry is free from abuse, assault and harassment, and a safe and respectful place to work.

The information you provide to the Review may be drawn upon, quoted or referred to in the final report and other resources produced by the Commissioner in connection with the Review, but will not be attributed to you, and will not be used if its use could identify you or others. These documents and materials will be published on the Commissioner's website.

The Commissioner is committed to keeping secure the information you provide and will take all reasonable precautions to protect your personal information from unauthorised access, loss, misuse, or alteration in accordance with our obligations under the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and the *Public Records Act 1973* (Vic). Personal information held by us is protected by several physical and electronic safeguards including restricted access to storage areas and computer databases.

Reporting obligations

In certain circumstances, the Commissioner may be required to disclose to the Review if:

- there is a legal obligation to do so, for example in relation to mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse
- concerned about the immediate safety and risk of harm to you, or someone else
- a court order requires it.

The Commissioner may also be required to report to relevant authorities in other limited circumstances.

If the possibility of disclosure worries you, then you can provide an anonymous submission through the confidential Review Survey.

Making an informed choice

It is important that you make an informed decision about whether participating in the Review is right for you.

The Review is being conducted by the Racing Integrity Commissioner who is supported by a dedicated Review team of suitably experienced and qualified experts to ensure it is conducted with the required sensitivity, confidentiality and independence. The Review team can offer you support throughout the process, and access and referral to ongoing support and specialist counselling.

If you are not sure if you want to participate, you can talk to someone from the Review team who can provide you with more information to help you decide, and also let you know about the supports that are available to you.

Information about how to contact the Review team and access to counselling and support is available at the end of this guide.

How might my participation in the Review impact me if I have experienced trauma?

If you have experienced trauma, sharing your experiences in person or in writing may be an important step for you to take as part of your recovery.

Some people find sharing their experiences can be empowering by helping them to take action that they weren't able to take at the time, voicing their experience and breaking the silence. Others discover it can also be an opportunity to realise that they are not alone, and others have shared their experience.

Some people may also want to be part of a change to create workplaces that are safe and respectful for everyone.

However, it is important to be aware of the potential impacts of participating, and to seek support to assess, make decisions and manage them.

Many people feel nervous sharing their experiences, especially if they have previously not been believed, or have had bad experiences reporting what has happened to them in the past.

It is also possible that impacts of trauma related to your experience of abuse, assault and harassment may come to the surface, and it is OK if you don't feel safe to share your experiences right now.

What should I consider prior to, during and after participating in the Review?

In deciding whether to participate or in preparing to participate, you may like to consider a number of things.

Your choice, not your responsibility

People who have experienced trauma sometimes feel like they have to speak up to protect others from the same thing happening to them, or they can feel guilty that they didn't speak up at the time.

It is important to remember that you are not responsible for what happened to you – the person who did it to you is always responsible. You are also not responsible for creating a safe workplace – your employer is.

Not everyone is ready to speak up, now or perhaps ever, and that is OK.

Impacts of trauma

Physical and sexual abuse, assault and harassment commonly result in trauma.

Trauma occurs when our ability to cope is overwhelmed. Trauma can have a significant effect on your physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

The impacts of trauma can surface at any time and often show up when survivors tell or repeat their experiences.

Impacts include:

- panic and anxiety
- fear about the world being dangerous and unsafe
- nightmares
- insomnia
- mood swings
- hyper vigilance and heightened stress response
- difficulty concentrating
- emotional numbness
- depression
- low mood and changes in cognition
- intrusive thoughts and memories
- avoidance of certain people and situations.

Do you have support?

It is important to build in a good support network—friends, family, and professional support. A good support person will be available when you need them and can advocate on your behalf.

You may want and need different types of support at different stages of the Review. For example, if you are participating in an interview, you may wish to bring a trusted friend, colleague, or family member as a support person. If you are making a written submission, you can have a support person with you as you write it. You also might like to arrange access to a counsellor, either privately or through the Review team) before, during and after your participation.

What stage are you in your recovery?

Recovery from traumatic experience happens in stages.

Some people may have never spoken about what happened to them. Speaking for the first time is often very difficult. Before participating in the Review, you may prefer to speak about your experience to friend, family member or trained professional to help you decide what is best for you at this particular time.

If you have already told someone about what happened to you, you may feel ready to share your experiences.

However, even if you feel completely ready to speak up, it may be helpful to seek additional professional support to help you manage the impacts of re-telling your experiences because, often, some of the impacts of trauma are likely to emerge (or re-emerge) when we re-tell what happened to us.

Remember, you are the expert in your own needs and your own wellbeing. It is important to have a range of self-care and safety strategies in place that you know you can rely on.

What are you hoping to get out of participating in the Review?

It can be helpful to take some time to reflect on what you want from participating and if the Review can meet those expectations.

The Review is an opportunity to make your voice heard and be part of a change process to make Victorian racing industry workplaces safe and respectful by improving how the industry prevents and responds to abuse, assault and harassment.

It is also important to remember that the Review will not be investigating or making findings about your individual allegations. However, we can assist you to report what happened to you to the police and other appropriate bodies.

Do you feel safe to share your experiences?

If you felt unsafe at work and unsafe to report your experiences when they happened, you may feel nervous and unsafe about participating in the Review now.

Cultural, historical and other experiences and factors can also impact how safe you feel to share what happened to you.

If you are making a written submission, do you want to remain anonymous or do you want to be identified?

Publishing your written submission with your name may be empowering. However, it is worth considering:

- Do you have any family or friends who don't already know about your experience and who you would like to tell first?
- Will you be able to respond to people who may contact you if they read about your experiences? For example, family members, friends, work colleagues, other victims/survivors who may disclose their own experiences – what supports will you need if that happens?
- What are your strategies to manage any intrusive questions or comments from people you do and don't know?
- Are you comfortable with your name being attached to what you have shared in the public domain, both now and in the future?

It's OK to choose to remain anonymous. It will allow you to share your experiences and maintain your privacy. If you choose to have your experiences published anonymously, the Commissioner will remove any identifying information

Where to from here?

Read the Review *Participant Information Sheet* to find out more

Talk to a trusted friend, family member or counsellor

Take the time to make the best decision for you.

How do I access support and assistance or ask questions about the Review?

If you want to be involved in the Review and–

- would like to discuss how we can support your involvement by providing appropriate supports and/or adjustments
- need help to complete the survey or make a written submission
- want to book in for an interview
- want to access support or counselling
- need help to report what happened to you to the police or other appropriate authority–

please contact the Review team via our dedicated hotline on **1300 896 049** or email review@racingintegrity.vic.gov.au.

The Review team includes expert counsellors and psychologists who can offer you support throughout the process, and access and referral to ongoing support and specialist counselling. A list of other services that provide counselling and support is available below.

Where to get other support

If your situation is urgent

If you or anyone you know is in immediate danger, or a crime is currently occurring, please call police on Triple Zero (000) or contact [your local police station](#).

Report a criminal offence

For non-urgent matters, you can report a crime by contacting the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 or, if you wish to remain anonymous, contact [Crime Stoppers](#) on 1800 333 000.

Sexual assault, harassment and violence support services

1800 Respect

A confidential counselling, information and support service that operates 24-hours a day, 7 days a week for people who have experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment

Ph: 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

Website: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

Sexual Assault Crisis Line

Crisis Line: 1800 806 292 (free call)

Email: ahcasa@thewomens.org.au

Website: www.sacl.com.au

CASA

Website: www.casa.org.au for a list of Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault

Mental health support services

Lifeline

24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention

Ph: 13 11 14

Website: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

beyondblue

Mental health support

Ph: 1300 224 636

Website: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Headspace

Supports young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age

Ph: 1800 650890

Website: <https://headspace.org.au/>

Kids Helpline

Counselling service for those aged between 5 and 25 years of age

Ph: 1800 55 1800

Website: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Suicide Call Back Service

Ph: 1300 659 467

Website: <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/>

This Review is being conducted under Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee approval. If you have any concerns about the Review, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne VIC 8001, email Researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781/4461, or you can raise your concerns with a Review team member.