Australian Government
Australian Skills Quality Authority

MEDIA RELEASE

Eleven recommendations to enhance equine training

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Changes must be made to the way equine training qualifications are delivered to address critical safety and quality issues, the national training regulator announced today.

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) released the findings of its national Strategic Review of training in equine training programs, which was prompted by the tragic death of a young student in a horse riding accident whilst undertaking training.

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ASQA Chief Commissioner Chris Robinson said the subsequent coronial inquest identified concerns with the content and conduct of equine training, policies and procedures for assessing horses to be used in training. The adequacy of trainer and assessor competencies and currency of industry experience was also highlighted as an issue.

"There have been a number of actions taken in relation to vocational education and training (VET) equine programs in response to the Coroner's findings," Mr Robinson said.

"However, ASQA's review has found that the VET market for equine training is complex and confusing and there are a number of areas that require systemic responses to address ongoing safety concerns.

"While ASQA recognises the diversity of the industries relying on equine training programs and supports the role of industry in determining the appropriate training for its needs, all industries share a common requirement to ensure learner safety.
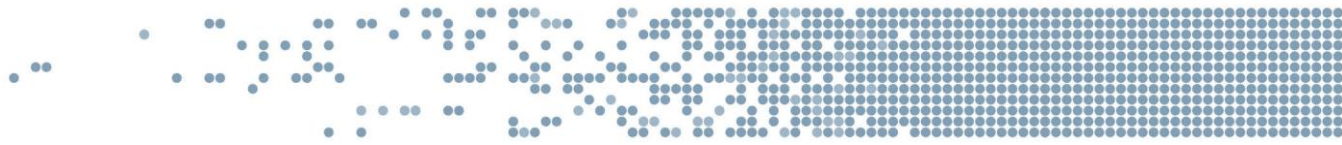
Mr Robinson said ASQA had made 11 recommendations to address the concerns it had identified.

"If a training package or accredited course unit requires access to a horse, the RTO has a responsibility under the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* to ensure the horse is fit-for-purpose and the student can safely handle and where necessary, ride the horse while training," he said.

"That is why ASQA has recommended that all RTOs delivering equine programs must demonstrate completion of a horse suitability audit and checklist as part of their compliance with the assessment requirements of the Standards.

"ASQA has also recommended that training package developers ensure there is a strong focus on safety in riding, handling, care, and in understanding of horse behaviour in units of competency (UoCs) and qualifications. Hazard and risk assessment and control measures should also be embedded in UoCs and qualifications if not already."

As part of the review, ASQA specifically audited a sample group of 20 registered training organisations (RTOs), which represented 51.3 per cent of the total number of RTOs that delivered equine programs.

Eighty-five per cent of the sample group were found to be compliant at the conclusion of the audit process. A further two RTOs have subsequently been able to demonstrate compliance in response to ASQA's regulatory action.

ASQA's review was overseen by a management committee chaired by ASQA's Chief Commissioner, which included representatives from the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority; the Western Australian Department of Education Services; Rural Skills Australia; AgriFood Skills Australia's Racing Standing Committee; Racing and Wagering Western Australia; Horse South Australia; Safety in Focus; Safe Work Australia; Service Skills Australia; and the Department of Education and Training.

A copy of the ASQA's report of findings can be downloaded from www.asqa.gov.au.