QUEENSLAND RACING INTEGRITY COMMISSION

DECISION

Of

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Stewards

Regarding Apprentice Reece O'Connell

Delivered on:	9th October 2026
Date of hearing:	9th October 2026
Panel:	Mr. Alex Streckbein (Chairman), Mr. Tony Preston, Ms. Zoe Lines
Appearances:	Reece O'Connell and Wayne O'Connell (support person)
Charge:	**AR 139 Offences where riders used banned substances** (1) A rider breaches these Australian rules if: a. A banned substance under AR136(1) is detected in a sample taken from a rider.
Particulars of Charge:	Reece O' Connell a licensed apprentice jockey with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, did on the 10th of September 2026, following race rides at Warwick Turf Club at the direction of Stewards, provided a urine sample which upon analysis by Racing Analytical Services Limited (Melbourne), was found to contain substances banned under the provisions of AR136(1).
Plea:	Guilty

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Penalty Submissions:

Mr. Reece O'Connell provided the following submissions in relation to penalty:

- Mr O'Connell advised he has held a licence with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission for approximately 4 years without offence under this rule.
- Mr O'Connell's sole income is through the thoroughbred industry.
- Mr O' Connell's personal circumstances, inclusive of the fact he has a young family that relies on his income for support.
- Mr O'Connell also advised he is in the process of seeking counselling.

Stewards Finding on Penalty:

The Stewards panel gave weight and consideration to the following factors:

- Mr. O'Connell submitted a guilty plea at the earliest opportunity.
- Mr. O'Connell demonstrated remorse and provided forthright evidence throughout the inquiry.
- Mr. O'Connell record, this being his first offence under this rule.
- Mr. O'Connell's experience in the industry and the responsibility of holding an apprentice jockey licence.
- The seriousness of the breach, along with the importance of complying with the rules surrounding prohibited substances to uphold the integrity, safety and professionalism of the sport.
- The Stewards reviewed the relevant penalty precedents under the rule, including but not limited to:

  - *Jockey Brooke Mackie (Queensland Racing Integrity Commission)* – 22 June 2023
  - *Apprentice jockey Shania Smythe (Willis) (Queensland Racing Integrity Commission)* - 15 October 2025

Further to this, presenting with a banned substance constitutes a breach of AR 139(1)(a), representing a serious violation of integrity and safety protocols. The banned substance rules are implemented to ensure that all participants are fit to compete in a high-risk environment. Riding under the influence of a prohibited substance significantly heightens the risks to both riders and horses.

Human Rights

In considering this matter, proper consideration is required in respect of human rights, and it is necessary to act compatibly with human rights in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld). The Stewards acknowledge that any penalty imposed upon Mr. O'Connell may limit or prevent a person from earning a living from the racing industry and subsequently that

the imposition of such a penalty may limit a person's human rights to own property (namely a licence), as well as the human right of privacy and reputation. The Stewards further acknowledge that a limitation upon a person's ability to participate in the racing industry, and earn income from that participation, may only be imposed where it is reasonably necessary to achieve the purpose of taking disciplinary action and there is no less restrictive and reasonably available way to achieve the purposes listed above, than to suspend a licence, disqualify a person from holding a licence, or warn a person off.

In the circumstances of this case, Stewards are satisfied that there is no lesser penalty that could be imposed that enables the purposes of taking disciplinary action against a licensee for a contravention of the rules of racing, which are to:

- Maintain public confidence in the racing of animals in Queensland for which betting is lawful;
- Ensure the integrity of all persons involved with racing or betting under the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* or the *Racing Act 2002*; and
- Safeguard the welfare of all animals that are or have been involved in racing under the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* or the *Racing Act 2002.*

Penalty:

The Stewards panel believed a suspension of all of Mr. O'Connell's licences in relation to duties within the industry was warranted in the circumstances. Stewards imposed a penalty of six (6) months suspension; to be backdated to commence at midnight the 29th of September 2026, the date Mr O'Connell was stood down and conclude at midnight 29th of March 2027.

Mr. O'Connell was further advised by Stewards that if he can provide a certificate of Drug and Alcohol Prevention course completion (or similar), Stewards would wholly suspend one (1) month of his suspension for a period of two (2) years provided he does not reoffend under this rule under the provisions of AR283(5).

He was further informed that he must provide a clear sample to Stewards before being permitted to resume work.

Against this Stewards decision Reece O'Connell is advised of their rights to appeal this decision to the Racing Appeal Panel.