

DECISION

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Stewards Mr Warren Hinze

Delivered on: 7 August 2026

Date of hearing: 10 July 2026 and 21 July 2026

Panel: Mr Geoffrey Gould (Chairperson), Mr Paul Zimmermann, Ms Aleisha Turner

Appearances: Mr Warren Hinze

Charge 1: Australian Harness Racing Rule 45(5):

A person shall ensure that the correct horse is presented to start in a race.

Particulars of Charge: On 30 June 2026, at the Albion Park Harness Racing Club, licensed trainer Mr Warren Hinze failed to ensure that the correct horse was presented to start in Race 6, in that 'Looking Down' was presented to start in place of the correctly nominated horse 'Western Action'.

Plea: Guilty

Charge 2: Australian Harness Racing Rule 43A(1):

A driver, trainer or person in charge of a horse engaged in a race and the horse shall remain on the racecourse for at least 30 minutes after the race unless permission to leave is granted by the Stewards.

Particulars of Charge: On 30 June 2026, at the Albion Park Harness Racing Club, licensed trainer Mr Warren Hinze, being a person in charge of a horse engaged in Race 6, failed to remain on the racecourse for at least 30 minutes after that race, without permission to leave having first been granted by the Stewards.

Plea: Guilty

Charge 3: Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c):

A person shall not, whether alone or in an association with others, do, permit or suffer anything before, during or after a race which in the opinion of the Stewards or Controlling Body, is improper.

Particulars of Charge: Between 30 June 2026 and 3 July 2026, licensed trainer Mr Warren Hinze, after becoming aware that the mare 'Looking Down' had competed in Race 6 at Albion Park on 30 June 2026 in place of the correctly nominated gelding 'Western Action', failed to notify the Stewards of that fact which, in the opinion of the Stewards, was improper.

Plea: Guilty

Penalty Submissions:

Stewards considered the submissions made by Mr Hinze in mitigation of penalty. Mr Hinze submitted that he had no previous disciplinary history for breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c), or indeed any disciplinary history during his involvement in the harness racing industry. Mr Hinze highlighted his longstanding participation in harness racing and submitted that the circumstances giving rise to the offending were entirely inconsistent with his previous conduct within the industry.

Mr Hinze further submitted that the events of 30 June 2026 occurred whilst he was experiencing diabetic episodes, which affected his health, concentration and decision-making throughout the day. Mr Hinze provided information from his diabetic monitoring application in support of those submissions and maintained that he never intended for the incorrect horse to be presented to race.

Mr Hinze also submitted that, upon becoming aware of the error, he was shocked, embarrassed and overwhelmed by the seriousness of the situation. He stated that these factors contributed to his failure to notify the Stewards after becoming aware that the incorrect horse had competed.

Stewards also had regard to Mr Hinze's personal and financial circumstances. Mr Hinze gave evidence that he is a hobbyist harness trainer and derives considerable personal enjoyment from his involvement in the industry. Stewards accepted his evidence that training and racing horses is his primary recreational pursuit and a significant part of his lifestyle.

Stewards further considered that any penalty imposed would have a substantial impact upon Mr Hinze's participation in an activity that has formed a longstanding and important part of his life.

Penalty Considerations:

In determining penalty, Stewards considered the following factors:

Aggravating Factors

The presentation of a horse other than the horse officially engaged in a race strikes at the fundamental integrity requirements of harness racing. The correct identification of horses is a cornerstone of race integrity, wagering confidence and the administration of the Australian Harness Racing Rules.

Stewards considered that Mr Hinze was the person responsible for the horse on race day. Notwithstanding the unusual circumstances that arose, the incorrect horse was ultimately presented and competed in Race 6 at Albion Park Harness Racing Club in place of the correctly nominated horse 'Western Action'.

Stewards further considered that, after becoming aware of the error, Mr Hinze failed to notify the Stewards of the circumstances for a period of several days. Whilst the evidence did not establish any corrupt or betting-related motive, or any deliberate attempt to orchestrate the horse identification error, the failure to promptly disclose the matter to the Stewards had the potential to delay the investigation of a significant integrity issue and undermine confidence in the administration of racing.

Members of the public, wagering operators and industry participants are entitled to expect that horses competing are correctly identified and that any discrepancy is promptly reported to the relevant authorities. The failure to report such matters has the potential to adversely affect public confidence in racing and wagering.

Mitigating Factors

Stewards considered a number of matters in mitigation.

Stewards gave significant consideration to the medical evidence advanced by Mr Hinze. Stewards accepted Mr Hinze's evidence that he suffers from diabetes and experienced diabetic episodes on 30 June 2026. Stewards were provided with information obtained from Mr Hinze's diabetic monitoring application which corroborated his evidence regarding fluctuations in his condition during the course of the day.

Stewards accepted that Mr Hinze was experiencing the effects of a diabetic episode at or around the time the horse was collected from his property, and that his condition contributed to the circumstances in which licensed participant Mr Jurgen Strohschon, the person assisting him that day, was requested to collect the horse from the yard.

Stewards further accepted that Mr Hinze did not personally load the horse onto the float, unload the horse at Albion Park, strap the horse or present the horse to the parade ring. Those tasks were undertaken by Mr Strohschon.

Stewards also accepted that Mr Hinze was experiencing further health issues during the race meeting and had formed an intention to leave the venue shortly after Race 6 because he was unwell. Stewards considered that those circumstances were relevant to Charge 2 and substantially mitigated the seriousness of his departure from the racecourse before the expiration of the required 30-minute period.

Stewards further accepted that Mr Hinze's reaction after becoming aware of the error was influenced by a combination of shock, panic, embarrassment and concern regarding the seriousness of the incident. Whilst those matters do not excuse the offending, Stewards considered them relevant in assessing his degree of culpability. Stewards did not regard the offending as part of any deliberate plan to conceal the original horse identity error.

Stewards took into account Mr Hinze's cooperation throughout the inquiry and the assistance he provided during the investigation.

Stewards accepted that Mr Hinze did not deliberately arrange for the incorrect horse to be presented to race and that the evidence did not establish any dishonest motive, corrupt conduct, or attempt to gain an improper advantage.

Stewards further accepted that the circumstances giving rise to the presentation error occurred whilst Mr Hinze was experiencing a diabetic episode and that his medical condition materially contributed to the events that followed.

Stewards further took into account Mr Hinze's prior disciplinary record, personal circumstances and contribution to the harness racing industry, which extends over a number of years.

Deterrence

Stewards considered the need for both specific and general deterrence.

The Australian Harness Racing Rules rely upon licensed participants exercising appropriate care and diligence in the management and presentation of horses. The requirement that the correct horse be presented to race is a fundamental integrity obligation and participants must understand the importance of ensuring appropriate procedures are in place to prevent identification errors from occurring.

Stewards considered that a clear message must be sent to the industry that failures resulting in the presentation of an incorrect horse are not matters that can be treated lightly. Such incidents have the potential to affect race integrity, wagering confidence, public confidence and the administration of the Australian Harness Racing Rules.

Stewards further considered that, once a participant becomes aware that an incorrect horse has competed in a race, that information should be brought to the attention of Stewards without delay. The ability of Stewards to promptly investigate and address integrity issues depends upon licensed participants acting honestly, transparently and proactively when such matters arise.

In relation to specific deterrence, Stewards accepted that the circumstances of this matter were unusual and were materially affected by Mr Hinze's medical condition on the day in question. Stewards further accepted that there was no evidence of any dishonest motive, corrupt purpose or deliberate attempt to facilitate or conceal the original presentation error. Those matters reduce the need for specific deterrence when compared with cases involving deliberate misconduct.

Nevertheless, Stewards considered that a penalty must reinforce to Mr Hinze the importance of maintaining appropriate controls over horses in his care and ensuring that any significant integrity concerns are promptly reported to Stewards when they become known.

Stewards also regarded general deterrence as an important consideration. Licensed participants who become aware of serious integrity irregularities must understand that they are expected to immediately bring those matters to the attention of Stewards. A failure to do so may attract disciplinary consequences irrespective of whether the original incident arose through mistake, negligence or inadvertence.

Stewards therefore considered that deterrence remained an important factor in determining the appropriate penalty, although its significance must be assessed in the context of the substantial mitigating circumstances present in this matter.

Penalty Guidelines

Stewards had regard to the QRIC Harness Racing Penalty Guidelines, including the need to balance the seriousness of the offence, the degree of culpability, the need for specific and general deterrence, Mr Hinze's offence record, frequency of participation within the industry and personal circumstances. Stewards also considered the overriding objectives of maintaining public confidence in the racing industry and preserving the integrity of harness racing.

Precedents

Stewards have considered available precedents concerning breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rules 45(5), 43A(1) and 240(c). However, Stewards consider that limited assistance can be derived from previous matters given the unusual and fact-specific circumstances of the present offending. The circumstances of this matter involve the presentation and participation of an incorrect horse in an official race, the subsequent departure of a participant from the racecourse without permission, and a failure to notify the Stewards after becoming aware of the error. Stewards are unaware of any directly comparable authority involving materially similar circumstances and the combination of offences presently before the Stewards.

Stewards note that penalties imposed for breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c) have varied significantly depending upon the nature of the improper conduct, the degree of culpability involved, the presence or absence of aggravating and mitigating factors and the need for specific and general deterrence. Such penalties have ranged from reprimands and monetary fines through to periods of suspension and disqualification.

Stewards also considered available precedents concerning breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rules 45(5) and 43A(1). Whilst each matter turns upon its own facts and circumstances, the authorities reviewed by Stewards indicate that such offences are ordinarily dealt with by way of monetary penalty where there are no significant aggravating features present. Stewards considered those authorities in assessing the appropriate penalty for Charges 1 and 2. However, Stewards considered that Charge 3 gives rise to separate integrity considerations. The failure to notify the Stewards after becoming aware that an incorrect horse had competed in an official race is conduct which has the potential to undermine confidence in the administration of racing and impede the timely investigation of a significant integrity matter.

Stewards have therefore assessed penalty by reference to the totality of the offending, including the seriousness of the conduct, Mr Hinze's degree of culpability, the significant medical circumstances advanced in mitigation, the need for both specific and general deterrence, his personal circumstances and disciplinary history, and the applicable human rights and penalty guideline considerations.

Human Rights

In determining an appropriate penalty, Stewards have given proper consideration to Mr Hinze's human rights in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld) and the human rights considerations contained within the QRIC Harness Racing Penalty Guidelines.

Stewards acknowledge that any suspension or disqualification may limit Mr Hinze's ability to participate in the racing industry and earn income from that participation. Stewards further acknowledge that such a penalty may impact upon Mr Hinze's right to own property, namely his racing licence, and may affect his privacy, reputation and livelihood.

Stewards also took into account Mr Hinze's medical circumstances and the practical impact any period of suspension or disqualification may have upon his ability to continue participating in the racing industry.

Stewards are satisfied that the maintenance of public confidence in racing, the enforcement of the Australian Harness Racing Rules and the protection of racing integrity are matters of substantial public importance. Having regard to the nature of the offending, the degree of culpability involved, the need for both specific and general deterrence, and the importance of maintaining confidence in the integrity of harness racing, Stewards are satisfied that any limitation upon Mr Hinze's human rights occasioned by the imposition of a suspension or disqualification is reasonable, necessary and demonstrably justified.

Stewards are further satisfied that there is no less restrictive and reasonably available penalty that would adequately achieve the purposes of disciplinary action, namely:

- maintaining public confidence in the racing of animals in Queensland for which betting is lawful;
- ensuring the integrity of all persons involved in racing and wagering under the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* (Qld) and *Racing Act 2002* (Qld); and
- protecting the integrity and proper administration of the Australian Harness Racing Rules.

Having regard to the nature of the offending, Mr Hinze's culpability, the significant mitigating circumstances identified above and the need for both specific and general deterrence, Stewards are satisfied that any limitation upon Mr Hinze's human rights occasioned by the penalty imposed is reasonable, necessary and demonstrably justified.

Accordingly, Stewards are satisfied that the penalty imposed is proportionate to the offending and is compatible with the human rights protected by the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld).

Stewards' Findings on Penalty:

The circumstances giving rise to the offending are highly unusual and arose from a series of events which culminated in the incorrect horse, 'Looking Down', competing in Race 6 at Albion Park Harness Racing Club on 30 June 2026 in place of the correctly nominated horse, 'Western Action'.

Stewards accepted that Mr Hinze suffers from diabetes and experienced diabetic episodes on the day in question. Stewards further accepted that his medical condition materially contributed to the circumstances surrounding the collection and presentation of the horse to the race meeting and influenced his actions and decision-making throughout the course of the day.

Stewards also accepted that Mr Hinze did not personally load the horse onto the float, unload the horse at the racecourse, strap the horse or present the horse in the parade ring. The evidence established that those tasks were undertaken by another licensed participant.

Nevertheless, Stewards considered that Mr Hinze retained responsibility as the person in charge of the horse and was required to ensure that the correct horse was presented to race.

In relation to Charge 2, Stewards accepted that Mr Hinze's departure from the racecourse was influenced by his medical condition and his desire to return home because he was unwell. Whilst those circumstances significantly mitigate the offending, they do not excuse the requirement to remain on the racecourse for the period prescribed by the Australian Harness Racing Rules unless permission to depart has first been granted by the Stewards.

Stewards further accepted that, after becoming aware that the incorrect horse had competed in the race, Mr Hinze reacted with shock, panic and embarrassment. Stewards accepted that those factors influenced his subsequent failure to notify the Stewards of the circumstances. Whilst Stewards did not find that Mr Hinze deliberately orchestrated or sought to conceal the original presentation error, they nevertheless considered that he should have brought the matter to the attention of Stewards once he became aware of it.

The integrity of racing depends not only upon compliance with the Australian Harness Racing Rules, but also upon licensed participants acting openly and candidly when matters arise that may affect race integrity, wagering confidence or public confidence in the sport. Participants occupy a position of trust within the industry and are expected to assist regulators in identifying and addressing integrity concerns as they arise.

Having regard to all of the circumstances, Stewards considered that Mr Hinze's medical condition, his personal circumstances and the absence of any dishonest, corrupt or betting-related motive substantially reduced his culpability. However, Stewards also considered the seriousness of presenting an incorrect horse to race, the requirement to comply with raceday obligations and the importance of promptly reporting significant integrity issues once they become known.

In determining the appropriate penalty, Stewards balanced the seriousness of the offending against the substantial mitigating circumstances present in this matter, including the corroborated medical evidence, the absence of any improper motive, Mr Hinze's cooperation during the inquiry and his personal circumstances. Stewards further considered the need for both specific and general deterrence, whilst recognising that this matter is materially different from cases involving deliberate misconduct or intentional deception.

In all of the circumstances, Stewards were satisfied that the penalties imposed appropriately reflect the seriousness of the offending, Mr Hinze's reduced degree of culpability, the need to maintain public confidence in the integrity of harness racing and the importance of ensuring compliance with the Australian Harness Racing Rules.

Penalty:

In determining penalty, Stewards carefully balanced the seriousness of the offending against the significant mitigating circumstances present in this matter.

Having regard to the findings set out above, including Mr Hinze's degree of culpability, the need for specific and general deterrence, the applicable QRIC Harness Racing Penalty Guidelines and the human rights considerations, Stewards determined that the following penalties be imposed:

Charge 1: Pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule 45(5), Mr Hinze is fined \$1,000.00.

Charge 2: Pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule 43A(1), Mr Hinze is fined \$200.00.

Charge 3: Pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c), Mr Hinze's licence is suspended for period of three (3) months with one (1) month wholly suspended for a period of two (2) years pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule 256(5)(a) pending no further breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c) during this period as prescribed by Australian Harness Racing Rule 256(5)(c).

The suspension is effective as of 14 August 2026 and will conclude at midnight on 13 October 2026.

Mr Hinze is advised of his rights to review this decision to the Queensland Racing Appeal Panel, with any application for review to be made within three (3) business days of the decision.

Further, Stewards direct that 'Western Action' be disqualified from Race 6 at Albion Park Harness Racing Club on 30 June 2026.