

DECISION

**The Rules of Racing of Racing Queensland – Greyhounds
Part 9 - Misconduct/Offences; Division 1: General Offences**

Inquiry Number: G-27-008

Participant: Tarquin Neal

Stewards: Wesley Maher (Chairperson)
Paul McLean (Panel)

Code: Greyhounds

Rule: Greyhounds Australasia Rule 156(f)(ii)
An offence is committed if a person (including an official): (f) has, in relation to a greyhound or greyhound racing, done something, or omitted to do something, which, in the opinion of a Controlling Body or the Stewards: (ii) constitutes misconduct or is negligent or improper;

Penalty Notice: PN-013495

Hearing Date: 26 August 2026

Decision Date: 26 August 2026

Charge: Mr Tarquin Neal, at the Q1 Lakeside meeting on the 14th of July 2026, misconducted himself when making verbal threats and using offensive language in an aggressive manner towards another licenced participant.

Plea: Guilty

Penalty: 3 months suspension, with 2 months conditionally suspended for 2 years, and \$500 fine.

Background

1. This Stewards' inquiry was convened following an incident that occurred on the 14th of July 2026, at the Q1 Lakeside, between Mr Tarquin Neal, and licensed trainer Mr Andy Graham.

2. This incident was reported to the Stewards panel on the day, which led to the opening of an investigation into the matter. During this investigation, the Steward's interviewed both mentioned parties, as well as various witnesses, and gathered CCTV footage to gain an understanding of the series of events.
3. During the inquiry, the Stewards considered the circumstances surrounding the altercation, Mr Neal's submissions, witness evidence, the relevant rules of racing, the QRIC Greyhound Penalty Guidelines, the Human Rights Act, and penalty precedents. The Stewards noted Mr Neal's cooperation throughout the inquiry process.

Charge

4. The Stewards determined that Mr Neal had a charge to answer under Greyhounds Australasia Rule (GAR) 156(f)(ii), which states:

An offence is committed if a person (including an official):

(f) has, in relation to a greyhound or greyhound racing, done something, or omitted to do something, which, in the opinion of a Controlling Body or the Stewards:

(ii) constitutes misconduct or is negligent or improper;

5. The specifics of the charge were:

That Mr Tarquin Neal, at the Q1 Lakeside meeting on the 14th of July 2026, misconducted himself when making verbal threats and using offensive language in an aggressive manner towards another licenced participant.

6. Mr Neal pleaded guilty to the charge.

Penalty Submissions

7. Mr Neal made submissions concerning the circumstances of the incident, his conduct during the confrontation, and the matters he asked the Stewards to take into account in mitigation of penalty.
8. Mr Neal submitted that his conduct was reactionary rather than unprovoked. He accepted that his behaviour, viewed independently, was inappropriate, but maintained that it followed conduct by Mr Graham which caused him to react as he did.

9. In relation to the allegation of physical contact, Mr Neal consistently denied initiating any physical contact with Mr Graham. He accepted that he was animated during the confrontation but maintained throughout the investigation and inquiry that he did not touch Mr Graham.
10. Mr Neal also provided an explanation for the comments directed towards Mr Graham. He submitted that the meaning he intended differed from the meaning reasonably conveyed by the words used. Mr Neal accepted, however, that he did not express that alternative meaning during the confrontation.
11. Mr Neal denied deliberately threatening Mr Graham but acknowledged that, in the context of the confrontation, his words and manner were capable of being perceived as threatening. He expressed remorse for his conduct and relied upon his guilty plea, cooperation, personal circumstances, industry experience and disciplinary record in mitigation.

Penalty Considerations & Findings

12. In determining penalty, the Stewards considered the evidence obtained during the investigation and inquiry, including the CCTV footage, witness accounts and Mr Neal's submissions. The Stewards also had regard to the nature and seriousness of the misconduct, Mr Neal's culpability, his plea and cooperation, his disciplinary record and personal circumstances, relevant penalty precedents, the need for general and specific deterrence, and the requirement that the overall penalty be proportionate.
13. The Stewards accepted that Mr Neal was candid and cooperative throughout the inquiry and conducted himself appropriately during the disciplinary process. His early guilty plea, cooperation and acknowledgement that his behaviour was inappropriate demonstrated a measure of insight and were treated as mitigating factors.
14. The Stewards considered Mr Neal's submission that he acted in response to conduct by Mr Graham. Having reviewed the CCTV footage and witness evidence, the Stewards were not satisfied that the available evidence substantiated that explanation to the extent advanced. In any event, even if Mr Neal considered himself provoked, that circumstance did not excuse the use of offensive language and threats in an aggressive confrontation with another licensed participant. The submission was therefore afforded limited mitigating weight.

15. The Stewards separately considered whether Mr Neal initiated physical contact. The CCTV footage and witness evidence did not permit the Stewards to reach the required level of satisfaction that physical contact had occurred as alleged. No finding of physical contact was therefore made, and that allegation did not form part of the charge or penalty assessment. The Stewards nevertheless found that Mr Neal's admitted animated manner, together with the words used and the surrounding circumstances, objectively conveyed intimidation and threat.
16. The Stewards also considered the personal circumstances identified by Mr Neal, including his workload on the evening and the incident involving his greyhound shortly before the confrontation. The Stewards accepted those matters as contextual background and noted that Mr Neal did not advance them as an excuse. They did not, however, materially reduce his responsibility to maintain appropriate standards of conduct at a race meeting.
17. The Stewards considered Mr Neal's asserted alternative meaning for the comments. As that meaning was not conveyed at the time, the comments were assessed objectively in their full context, including the language used, Mr Neal's animated manner and the circumstances of the confrontation. On that basis, the Stewards were satisfied that the comments were reasonably capable of being understood as intimidating and threatening.
18. Mr Neal acknowledged that he understood GAR 156(f)(ii), the particulars of the charge and the conduct alleged. His guilty plea was accepted. Having regard to that plea and the evidence supporting it, the Stewards were comfortably satisfied that Mr Neal's verbal threats, offensive language and aggressive manner constituted misconduct within GAR 156(f)(ii).
19. The Stewards regarded the conduct as objectively serious. Threatening and offensive conduct at a race meeting has the capacity to compromise the safety and orderly conduct of racing operations, undermine respect between participants and officials, and diminish public confidence in the administration of greyhound racing. The conduct therefore required a penalty which denounced it and promoted future compliance.
20. The Stewards considered that Mr Neal bore direct responsibility for his words and conduct. Although the incident was confined to a single confrontation and no physical contact was established, the conduct was deliberate in the sense that the words were spoken and the aggressive manner was adopted by Mr Neal. His subsequent remorse and insight moderated, but did not remove, the need for specific deterrence.

21. The Stewards treated Mr Neal's guilty plea at the earliest opportunity as a mitigating factor. The plea avoided the need for a contested hearing, demonstrated acceptance of the disciplinary process and, when considered with his cooperation and remorse, justified a meaningful reduction from the penalty that would otherwise have been imposed.
22. The Stewards further considered Mr Neal's approximately ten years of participation in greyhound racing, including approximately seven years as a registered trainer. His satisfactory disciplinary record and absence of any prior breach of GAR 156(f)(ii) were treated as mitigating considerations.
23. Consideration was also given to Mr Neal's reliance on the greyhound racing industry as his primary source of income and to the financial and professional consequences of suspension. Those consequences were acknowledged but could not outweigh the need for a penalty that reflected the seriousness of the conduct, promoted safe and professional behaviour, and protected confidence in the regulatory framework.
24. General deterrence carried substantial weight. Licensed participants must understand that verbal threats, offensive language and aggressive conduct towards others at race meetings will not be tolerated. A penalty was required to reinforce acceptable standards of conduct, maintain a safe racing environment and uphold the integrity, image and orderly administration of greyhound racing.

Penalty Precedents

25. The Stewards reviewed relevant misconduct precedents, recognising that comparative decisions provide guidance rather than fixed outcomes and that each matter must be determined according to its own facts. The matter of Steven Swift involved verbal threats to another licensed participant and resulted in a three-month suspension, with two months conditionally suspended for two years. The Stewards noted the guilty plea, absence of relevant prior offending and nature of the conduct in that matter.
26. The Stewards also considered Joshua Brand, where wilful verbal threats, offensive language and aggressive conduct towards another licensed participant resulted in a six-month suspension, with three months wholly suspended for two years, and a \$1,000 fine, of which \$500 was wholly suspended for two years. The prior disciplinary history and seriousness of the conduct distinguished that matter from the present case.

27. Further reference was made to Felicia Guymer, where a threat directed towards a racing supervisor resulted in a six-month suspension, with three months conditionally suspended for two years, and to Alan Dargusch, where offensive language towards another participant resulted in a \$500 fine. The Stewards considered the present matter more serious than an offensive-language matter warranting a fine alone, but less serious than matters involving more aggravated conduct or relevant disciplinary history.
28. Having balanced the objective seriousness of the conduct against Mr Neal's guilty plea, cooperation, remorse, satisfactory disciplinary record, industry experience and personal circumstances, the Stewards concluded that an immediate period of suspension, a substantial conditionally suspended component and a monetary fine represented a proportionate response. That structure marked the seriousness of the misconduct while recognising the mitigating features and giving Mr Neal a strong incentive to maintain appropriate conduct during the operational period.

Human Rights

29. The Stewards considered their obligations under the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld), including Mr Neal's right to property under section 24 insofar as the suspension and fine may affect the privileges associated with his trainer's licence and his livelihood. The Stewards accepted that the penalty limits those interests.
30. The limitations pursue legitimate purposes under the Racing Integrity Act 2016 (Qld) and the Rules of Racing, including maintaining public confidence in racing, preserving the integrity and orderly administration of the industry, promoting compliance with the Rules, and protecting participants and officials from threatening and aggressive conduct. The Stewards were satisfied that there is a rational connection between those purposes and a disciplinary response comprising suspension and a monetary penalty.
31. The Stewards considered less restrictive outcomes, including a caution, reprimand, fine alone, or a wholly suspended suspension. Those outcomes would not adequately reflect the objective seriousness of verbal threats and offensive language delivered in an aggressive manner at a race meeting, nor would they sufficiently achieve general and specific deterrence. Conversely, the Stewards considered a disqualification to be more restrictive than necessary given Mr Neal's guilty plea, cooperation, remorse, satisfactory disciplinary record and the absence of any finding of physical contact.

32. Having balanced the nature and extent of the limitation against the importance of the statutory and regulatory purposes, the Stewards were satisfied that the penalty imposed was reasonable, demonstrably justified and proportionate. The conditionally suspended component reduced the immediate impact upon Mr Neal while preserving an effective deterrent against further similar conduct.

Penalty Decision

33. Having regard to all relevant circumstances, the Stewards determined that the appropriate penalty was a suspension of three (3) months, of which two (2) months is conditionally suspended for a period of twenty-four (24) months on the condition that Mr Neal does not commit a further breach of GAR 156(f)(ii), or a similar conduct rule, during that period, together with a fine of \$500. Accordingly, Mr Neal is required to serve one (1) month of the suspension immediately.

Right of Review

34. Mr Neal was advised that pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Racing Integrity Act 2016 (Qld), provides the right for a review of a racing decision of a steward, noting any application for review must be made within three (3) business days of this decision