

DECISION

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Stewards Mr Ricky Gordon

Delivered on: 7 August 2026

Date of hearing: 10 July 2026 and 21 July 2026

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

Appearances: Mr Ricky Gordon

Charge 1: Australian Harness Racing Rule 90A(2.10)(d):

If a trainer is unable to attend a race meeting where any horse trained by him is engaged to race:

- (i) He must nominate in writing his licensed stable representative or another licensed trainer to be responsible for such horse at the meeting.*
- (ii) The nomination must be notified to the Stewards no later than one (1) hour prior to the advertised starting time of the race.*
- (iii) The nomination must be accompanied by the written consent of the nominee accepting such nomination.*
- (iv) The nomination cannot be further delegated.*

Particulars of Charge: Prior to the race meeting on 30 June 2026, licensed trainer Mr Ricky Gordon, being unable to attend the race meeting conducted at the Albion Park Harness Racing Club where 'Western Action' was engaged to race, failed to nominate in writing a licensed stable representative or another licensed trainer to be responsible for that horse at the race meeting.

Plea: Guilty

Charge 2: 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 Ricky Gordon, 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: Reserved

Stewards' Findings on Charge 2

Stewards were comfortably satisfied that, shortly after the running of Race 6 on 30 June 2026, Mr Gordon became aware that the incorrect horse, 'Looking Down', had been presented and had competed in place of 'Western Action'.

The evidence established that Mr Gordon was aware that 'Looking Down' had been presented and had competed in place of 'Western Action' and, despite that knowledge, did not disclose those circumstances to the Stewards.

The integrity of racing depends upon participants acting promptly and candidly when events occur that may compromise the correct identification of horses, the accuracy of race results, wagering outcomes, public confidence, and the administration of the Australian Harness Racing Rules. The presentation of an incorrect horse in a race raises issues concerning the integrity of racing, the accuracy of race results, and public confidence in the sport.

The Stewards were satisfied that a reasonable participant in Mr Gordon's position would have recognised that the presentation and racing of an incorrect horse was a matter that ought to have been reported to the Stewards without delay.

In reaching that conclusion, Stewards considered that Mr Gordon's failure to notify the Stewards delayed the reporting and investigation of the matter and had the potential to undermine confidence in the integrity of the race meeting and the administration of the Australian Harness Racing Rules.

Stewards found that Mr Gordon acted improperly, not because of the mistaken presentation of the horse itself, which is dealt with under separate Australian Harness Racing Rules, but because, after becoming aware that 'Looking Down' had competed in place of 'Western Action' he failed to notify the Stewards of that fact.

Therefore, having regard to the principles in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw*, the Stewards were comfortably satisfied that between 30 June 2026 and 3 July 2026, Mr Ricky Gordon, a licensed trainer bound by the Australian Harness Racing Rules, after becoming aware that 'Looking Down' had competed in Race 6 at Albion Park Harness Racing Club on 30 June 2026 in place of 'Western Action', failed to notify the Stewards of that fact and thereby engaged in conduct which, in the opinion of the Stewards, was improper for the purposes of Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c). Accordingly, Stewards formally found Mr Gordon guilty of Charge 2.

Penalty Submissions:

Stewards considered the submissions made by Mr Gordon in mitigation of penalty. Mr Gordon submitted that he had no previous disciplinary history for breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c) and highlighted his extensive experience within the harness racing industry, during which horses trained by him had accumulated approximately 9,700 race starts. Mr Gordon further referred to the applicable penalty guidelines and submitted that a monetary fine was the appropriate penalty in respect of both charges before the Stewards.

Stewards also had regard to Mr Gordon's personal and financial circumstances, including his evidence that, although he undertakes part-time employment outside harness racing, he is effectively engaged as a full-time trainer. Stewards further noted that he has no mortgage commitments and is responsible for the care of two young children aged 6 and 9 years.

Penalty Considerations:

In determining penalty, Stewards considered the following factors:

Aggravating Factors

The participation of a horse other than the horse officially engaged 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. Recent media attention surrounding the Albion Park incident demonstrates the potential reputational harm capable of arising from such circumstances.

Stewards regarded the failure of Mr Gordon to notify Stewards after becoming aware of the incident as the most serious aspect of the offending. Once Mr Gordon became aware that 'Looking Down' had competed in place of 'Western Action', he possessed information concerning a significant integrity matter yet failed to bring that information to the attention of the Stewards.

Racing authorities rely heavily upon participants acting promptly and candidly when integrity concerns arise. Absent such reporting, the ability of Stewards to promptly investigate and address integrity issues may be significantly diminished.

In assessing culpability, Stewards considered that Mr Gordon became aware of the circumstances shortly after the race and knew that the incorrect horse had competed. Despite this knowledge, he failed to notify the Stewards and instead allowed the matter to remain undisclosed until it was identified independently of him. The offending was therefore not the result of inadvertence, but rather a decision not to report the matter after becoming aware of it.

Stewards also considered that Mr Gordon remained aware of the circumstances for several days without bringing the matter to the attention of Stewards. The offending therefore involved an ongoing failure to disclose the information rather than a momentary lapse of judgment.

Stewards considered Mr Gordon's submissions that he was not present at the race meeting, that the circumstances were beyond his control, that there was no prize money implication because the horse finished last, and that little harm had resulted. Whilst Stewards accepted that Mr Gordon was not responsible for the presentation error, those submissions demonstrated a failure to fully recognise the significance of the subsequent obligation to report the matter once he became aware of it. The seriousness of the conduct lies not in the finishing position of the horse, but in the failure to promptly disclose a matter directly impacting race integrity.

Members of the public, wagering operators and other industry participants are entitled to expect that horses competing are correctly identified and that any discrepancy is immediately reported to the Stewards. The failure to disclose such information has the potential to undermine confidence in both race outcomes and wagering activities.

Deterrence

Stewards placed significant weight upon the need for both specific and general deterrence. The Australian Harness Racing Rules depend, to a considerable extent, upon licensed participants acting honestly, transparently and proactively when matters arise that may affect the integrity of racing. Stewards cannot be present for every interaction, conversation or event that occurs within the industry and must therefore be able to rely upon participants to promptly report matters capable of affecting race integrity.

In this matter, Mr Gordon became aware that an incorrect horse had competed in a race yet failed to bring that information to the attention of the Stewards. Stewards considered that such conduct strikes directly at the integrity framework upon which the administration of harness racing depends. If participants who become aware of serious integrity irregularities choose not to disclose that information, confidence in the industry's regulatory framework would be significantly undermined.

Stewards considered that a clear message must be sent to all licensed participants that integrity concerns are not matters that may be ignored, deferred or left for others to disclose. Once a participant becomes aware of circumstances capable of affecting the integrity of a race, there is an expectation that such information will be brought to the attention of Stewards without delay.

In respect of specific deterrence, Stewards considered that the penalty imposed must reinforce to Mr Gordon the importance of immediately reporting integrity concerns whenever he becomes aware of them in the future.

In respect of general deterrence, Stewards considered that the penalty must also serve as a warning to other licensed participants that a failure to disclose known integrity issues, particularly those involving the participation of an incorrect horse in a race, will attract a serious disciplinary response. Stewards regarded general deterrence as an especially important consideration, given the potential consequences such incidents can have for race integrity, public confidence, wagering confidence and the reputation of the harness racing industry.

Stewards therefore considered that deterrence was a significant factor in determining the appropriate penalty in the matter.

Mitigating Factors

Stewards considered a number of matters in mitigation. Stewards took into account Mr Gordon's co-operation throughout the inquiry and the assistance he provided during the course of the investigation. Stewards also considered Mr Gordon's prior disciplinary history, including the absence of any previous breach of Australian Harness Racing Rule 90A(2.10)(d) or Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c). In this regard, Stewards acknowledged his lengthy involvement in the harness racing industry and the significant number of race starts he has accumulated as a trainer.

Stewards further took into account Mr Gordon's personal and financial circumstances. Stewards accepted his evidence that, whilst he undertakes part-time employment outside the racing industry, he is effectively engaged as a full-time trainer. Stewards also had regard to his family responsibilities, including his obligation to provide for and care for his two dependent children aged 6 and 9 years.

Importantly, Stewards accepted that Mr Gordon was not responsible for the presentation of the incorrect horse. The evidence did not establish that he was involved in, directed, encouraged or otherwise contributed to the circumstances which resulted in 'Looking Down' being presented and competing in place of 'Western Action'. Stewards also noted the absence of any evidence suggesting a betting-related motive, corruption, dishonesty, or deliberate involvement by Mr Gordon in the horse presentation error. The offending the subject of these proceedings arose from Mr Gordon's failure to notify Stewards after becoming aware of the circumstances, rather than any involvement in the initial presentation of the incorrect horse.

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 Gordon'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 previous breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c) concerning improper conduct. However, Stewards consider that limited assistance can be derived from those matters given the unusual and fact-specific nature of the present offending.

The circumstances of this matter involve a trainer who, whilst not responsible for the original presentation of the incorrect horse, subsequently became aware that an incorrect horse had competed in an official race and failed to notify the Stewards of that fact for a period of several days. Stewards are unaware of any directly comparable authority involving materially similar circumstances.

Stewards note that penalties imposed for breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c) have varied significantly depending on the particular conduct involved, the degree of culpability, 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 the available precedents relevant to breaches of Australian Harness Racing Rule 90A(2.10)(d). Whilst each matter turns on its own facts and circumstances, the precedents reviewed by Stewards indicate that breaches involving a failure to properly nominate a licensed stable representative or responsible person are ordinarily dealt with by way of a monetary penalty.

Consistent with those authorities, Stewards considered that Charge 1, viewed in isolation, falls within the range of offending appropriately addressed by the imposition of a fine. However, Charge 2 involves separate and more serious integrity considerations arising from Mr Gordon's subsequent failure to notify the Stewards after becoming aware that an incorrect horse had competed in an official race.

Stewards have therefore assessed penalty by reference to the particular facts and circumstances of this matter, including the seriousness of the offending, Mr Gordon's degree of culpability, the need for specific and general deterrence, his personal circumstances, 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 Gordon'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 the imposition of a suspension or disqualification may limit Mr Gordon's ability to participate in the racing industry and earn income from that participation. Stewards further acknowledge that such a penalty may limit Mr Gordon's human rights, including his right to own property, namely his racing licence, and may also impact upon his privacy, reputation and livelihood.

Stewards have taken into account Mr Gordon's personal circumstances, including that he is effectively engaged as a full-time participant in the harness racing industry, notwithstanding that he also undertakes part-time employment outside racing, and that he has responsibility for two dependent children.

Stewards have considered whether the purposes of disciplinary action can be adequately achieved by a less restrictive penalty. However, in the circumstances of this matter, Stewards are satisfied that the offending extends beyond a simple rule breach and involves a failure to disclose information concerning a significant integrity issue after becoming aware that the incorrect horse had competed in a race.

Stewards are satisfied that maintaining public confidence in racing, ensuring compliance with the Australian Harness Racing Rules and protecting the integrity of racing and wagering outcomes are all objectives of substantial importance. The obligation upon licensed participants to promptly disclose integrity concerns is fundamental to the proper administration of harness racing.

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 Gordon'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.

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:

Mr Gordon's failure to disclose the matter after becoming aware that the incorrect horse had competed in Race 6 constituted a serious breach of the obligations expected of a licensed participant. Whilst there was no evidence that Mr Gordon was responsible for, or involved in, the presentation of the incorrect horse, Stewards considered that his subsequent failure to notify the Stewards, despite being aware of the circumstances, was inconsistent with the standards of candour, accountability and cooperation expected within the harness racing industry.

The integrity of racing depends not only upon compliance with the Australian Harness Racing Rules, but also upon participants promptly bringing integrity concerns to the attention of the regulator. Licensed participants occupy a position of trust within the industry and are expected to assist in protecting the integrity of racing when matters arise that may affect race results, wagering confidence or public confidence in the sport.

The Stewards considered that Mr Gordon's failure to notify the Stewards after becoming aware that an incorrect horse had competed in a race undermined those integrity objectives and warranted a significant disciplinary response.

Having regard to all of the circumstances, including the seriousness of the offending, the degree of culpability, the need for specific and general deterrence, the mitigating factors advanced on Mr Gordon's behalf and the applicable human rights considerations, Stewards determined that the offending was of a level that could not be adequately addressed by the imposition of a monetary penalty alone.

Penalty:

Having regard to the findings set out above, including the seriousness of the offending, Mr Gordon'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 90A(2.10)(d), Mr Gordon is fined \$100.00

Charge 2: Pursuant to Australian Harness Racing Rule 240(c), Mr Gordon's licences as a Grade A Trainer and Grade A Driver is suspended for a period of three (3) months

The period of suspension will commence on the date that Mr Gordon is granted a licence upon application following the expiry of the eight-month period of disqualification imposed by the Queensland Racing Appeals Panel on 5 August 2026.

Mr Gordon 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.

**As part of this investigation and inquiry, horse identification procedures were examined by the panel. A report regarding the current horse identification procedures performed by QRIC staff has been forwarded to the Chief Steward of Harness and the Commissioner for review and consideration.*