

Stewards' Report

Stewards Report: Stephen Bunz

Date: 09 Aug 2023

Panel: N. Torpey, S. Shinn & W. Barr

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (Q.R.I.C.) Stewards today concluded the inquiry into the behaviour and comments of harness trainer Stephen Bunz directed towards QRIC Official Mr Scott Heidke during a stable visit to Mr Bunz's stable complex on 3 February 2022.

It was alleged that during that visit Mr Bunz threatened Mr Heidke. Following a report made on the day to the Chief Steward the trainer's licence of Stephen Bunz was suspended under the provisions of AHR 183(d) pending the outcome of an inquiry. The conduct of the inquiry has been delayed due to Mr Bunz notifying of health issues.

After advising of his capability to now attend, an inquiry was initially held on 31 July 2023 where evidence was taken from Stephen Bunz and Scott Heidke including body camera footage from cameras worn by Mr Heidke and the other QRIC official who attended with Mr Heidke, Mr Tate Hudson.

At that hearing Mr Bunz was charged with the contravention of AHR. 231(1)(a) which reads:

231. (1) *A person shall not:-*

(a) threaten

anyone employed, engaged or participating in the harness racing industry or otherwise having a connection with it.

The specifics of the charge being that Stephen Bunz did threaten QRIC official Scott Heidke by directing unwarranted and inappropriate comments to him at Mr Bunz's Deception Bay complex on 3 February 2022.

Mr Bunz originally pleaded not guilty to the charge and sought an adjournment requesting a full copy of Mr Heidke's body camera footage from 3 February 2022 be reviewed.

Stewards today reviewed that footage following which Mr Bunz changed his plea to guilty.

In regard to penalty Stewards considered the following matters put forward in mitigation by Mr Bunz which included:

- He was medicated at the time of the incident
- He is now remorseful and has apologised for his behaviour
- His previous good record

- His personal circumstances

In approaching the matter of penalty Stewards were of the view that the purpose to be served by the imposition of penalties is at least two (2) fold:

1. Punishment, which must be proportionate to the offence and in accordance with prevailing standards;
2. Deterrence, both personal (assessing the risk of re-offending) and general (a deterrent to others who might be likely to offend)

After careful consideration of the matter Stewards suspended the trainer's licence of Stephen Bunz for period of 24 months. Stewards, acting under the provisions of AHR 256(5) suspended 18 months of that suspension for a period of 2 years on the proviso that Stephen Bunz is not found to be guilty of the breach of any behavioural issues within this period.

Mr Bunz was made aware of his rights to an appeal.