



QRIC Regulator Performance Report 2023-24

Introduction

This report has been prepared to meet the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission's ("QRIC") reporting obligations under the Queensland Government's Regulator Performance Framework, which is a key element of the Better Regulation Strategy.

QRIC is an independent statutory body established under the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* which oversees the integrity of racing in Queensland and safeguards the welfare of racing animals.

The purposes of the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* are to:

- maintain public confidence in the racing of animals in Queensland for which betting is lawful; and
- ensure the integrity of all persons involved with racing or betting under this Act or the *Racing Act 2002*; and
- safeguard the welfare of all animals involved in racing under this Act or the *Racing Act 2002*.

Model practice1:

Ensure Regulatory Activity is Proportionate to Risk and Minimises Unnecessary Burden

Supporting principles:

- a proportionate approach is applied to compliance activities, engagement and regulatory enforcement actions.
- regulations do not unnecessarily impose on regulated entities.
- regulatory approaches are updated and informed by intelligence gathering so that effort is focused towards risk.

Evidence to support alignment with regulator model practices

QRIC's Regulatory Strategy and Framework (the Strategy) is based on five guiding principles:

- nurture voluntary compliance;
- evidence-based decision-making;
- risk-based approach;
- transparent governance;
- professional workforce.

The Strategy has an emphasis on education, engagement and then enforcement as a best-practice regulatory approach.

The Strategy is driven by the implementation of intelligence-led, risk-based decision-making to ensure that regulatory responses are proportionate and meet the QRIC's resource model.

The QRIC, through the Strategy and its principles, is committed to adopting a voluntary compliance approach, which ensures that resources and effort to consult through engagement and education are paramount when promoting the concepts of operating with integrity and safeguarding the safety welfare of racing animals and participants.

The QRIC's Appropriate and Proportionate Enforcement Policy guides staff in determining how and when enforcement action is utilised, and the most appropriate enforcement action to be taken in any given circumstances when voluntary compliance fails. Any enforcement action taken by the QRIC will be based on the level of harm presented by the breach and the culpability level of the participant.

The QRIC has standards in place for racing bookmakers and licensees of each code of racing. The standards explain how the QRIC assesses applications from persons seeking to participate in the Queensland racing industry and how the QRIC audits the ongoing suitability of licensed/registered animals and participants.

The number of stable and kennel inspections conducted by Stewards has increased 224% from 2016-17 to 2023-24. The QRIC has also seen an increase in the number of samples tested with an increase of 88% from 2016-17 to 2023-24.

In March 2023, the QRIC established the 'Equine Traceability Enforcement Standard'. The purpose of the Standard is to ensure the effective enforcement of the traceability rules so that the QRIC can safeguard the welfare of horses that are or have been involved in racing under the Racing Integrity Act.

Model practice 2:

Consult and Engage Meaningfully with Stakeholders

Supporting principles:

- formal and informal consultation and engagement mechanisms are in place to allow for the full range of stakeholder input and Government decision making circumstances.
- engagement is undertaken in ways that assist regulators develop a genuine understanding of the operating environment of regulated entities.
- cooperative and collaborative relationships are established with stakeholders, including other regulators, to promote trust and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework.

Evidence to support alignment with regulator model practices

The QRIC's three key elements of its regulatory approach are engagement, education, and enforcement. They are deliberately presented and communicated in this order to emphasise the value the QRIC places on working with industry and other stakeholders to build a better industry.

In March 2024, the QRIC created a comprehensive complaints management framework to better identify issues and themes, improve service delivery and strengthen the QRIC's commitment to improve the integrity of racing and animal welfare in Queensland.

QRIC's anonymous Report Something portal plays a crucial role in enabling the QRIC to fulfill its statutory responsibilities, including investigating complaints relevant to the three racing codes, such as those involving license holders. In the 2023-24 period, the QRIC received 353 intelligence reports from the industry, as defined by section 10(1)(d) of the *Racing Integrity Act 2016 (Qld)*, with an average report turnaround time of 31 business days. In addition to intelligence gathering, Report Something also handled and resolved 77 customer (public) complaints.

The Thoroughbred Industry Meeting started in early 2023. This forum provides an opportunity for thoroughbred industry stakeholders to discuss emerging and current issues and share information.

In 2023-24, the QRIC engaged with stakeholders through the publication of various media releases and media responses, released campaign emails to industry regarding industry related topics, published information in *Race, Pace and Chase* (which are monthly Thoroughbred, Harness and Greyhound industry magazines), as well as the hosting of a series of greyhound adoption events in southeast Queensland.

In 2023-24, the QRIC released a number of media releases, detailing positive activity to ensure animal welfare and the integrity of the racing industry.

The positive impacts of the QRIC's compliance activities and efforts to educate the broader community are seen in the QRIC 2023-24 Community Perceptions Survey, in which 2,000 Queenslanders were polled on racing integrity, with the following results:

1. Across the Queensland population, 66% believe the integrity of Queensland racing has improved in the past 12 months. This is a significant improvement compared to 2023.
2. There is an increase in community confidence that racing is conducted with integrity in Queensland. In 2024, 63% agree with this sentiment compared to 55% in 2023.
3. Four out of ten (42%) are satisfied with the QRIC's activities around education, engagement and compliance and 73% are confident that the QRIC operates with integrity.

Model practice 3:

Provide Appropriate Information and Support to Assist Compliance

Supporting principles:

- clear and timely guidance and support is accessible to stakeholders and tailored to meet the needs of the target audience.
- advice is consistent and, where appropriate, decisions are communicated in a manner that clearly articulates what is required to achieve compliance.
- where appropriate, regulatory approaches are tailored to ensure compliance activities do not proportionately burden particular stakeholders (e.g. small business) or require specialist advice.

Evidence to support alignment with regulator model practices

QRIC delivers educational material to support and promote the integrity of racing by ensuring consistent and fair administration of the Rules of Racing, and to promote best practice in safeguarding animal welfare. The use of education and awareness nurtures voluntary compliance and allows the QRIC to make best use of its enforcement resources. This approach also aims to enhance public confidence in the Queensland racing industry.

In August 2023, a diverse new team of investigators with backgrounds in racing, law enforcement and animal welfare started in the QRIC to strengthen the organisation's offensive on misconduct in the racing industry. The Compliance Assurance Team (CAT) are a team of Stewards tasked with investigating allegations of misconduct including animal welfare concerns and non-compliance of the *Racing Integrity Act 2016*, *Racing Integrity Amendment Act 2002* and the Rules of Racing.

The number of investigations underway and completed for the 2023-24 period increased by 741% compared with 2022-23.

The QRIC continues to expand its oversight of the racing industry, adjudicating on approximately 30 race meetings every week, with almost 50,000 participants across the state, and 19,986 calls responded to by the Customer Services team throughout the year. Through ongoing improvements, the QRIC is working to raise the standard of animal welfare, participant safety and integrity in Queensland racing. In the 2023-24 financial year, QRIC processed 18,028 new licensing applications.

Through a calendar of formal education campaigns, industry notices and the already established professional associations our staff have with industry participants and groups representing industry participants, the QRIC ensures participants have the information they need to comply with our regulatory framework.

Existing education and awareness materials published on the QRIC's website includes, but is not limited to, content on:

- Licensing Standards for each code of racing
- Rules of Racing for each code of racing (national and local)
- Biosecurity requirements
- Prohibited substances
- Greyhound socialisation and rehoming
- Identifying and treating heat stress.

Model practice 4:

Commit to Continuous Improvement

Supporting principles:

- regular review of the approach to regulatory activities, collaboration with stakeholders and other regulators to ensure it is appropriately risk-based, leverages technological innovation and remains the best approach to achieving policy outcomes.
- to the extent possible, reform of regulatory activities is prioritised on the basis of impact on stakeholders and the community.
- staff have the necessary training and support to effectively, efficiently and consistently perform their duties.

Evidence to support alignment with regulator model practices

The QRIC continues to employ a full-time Internal Auditor that provides the QRIC, the Executives and the Audit and Risk Committee with independent, objective assurance on the QRIC's risk management, control, and governance processes. The Internal Auditor conducts reviews of the QRIC's regulatory activities in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure compliance with regulatory obligations and implement best practice processes. In 2023-24, the internal audit function completed reviews into Regulatory practices self-assessment, Payroll (bi-annually) and Betting accounts.

The QRIC's Stewards play a critical role in empowering the compliance of racing participants, with significant investment in building a highly skilled Stewarding team.

In conjunction with Racing Queensland, the QRIC's Cadet Stewards program offers a Certificate III qualification for those seeking on-the-job training in a dynamic and rewarding industry. The program is growing rapidly, welcoming five new cadets in the 2021-22 financial year, with 13 new cadets in 2023-24. The program provides competencies in communication, disciplinary decisions, procedural fairness, workplace health and safety and investigations, inquiries and appeals.

The QRIC also collaborates with the Australian Industry Trade College to educate high school students interested in vocational study on career and training pathways within the racing industry, with a view to future-proof the state's integrity operations.

Model practice 5:

Be Transparent and Accountable in Actions

Supporting principles:

- where appropriate, regulatory frameworks and timeframes for making regulatory decisions are published to provide certainty to stakeholders.
- decisions are provided in a timely manner, clearly articulating expectations and the underlying reasons for decisions.
- indicators of regulatory performance are publicly available.

Evidence to support alignment with regulator model practices

The QRIC's website outlines its priorities, including the publication of the Strategic Plan 2024-2028, Annual Report and the Regulatory Strategy and Framework 2021-2025.

The QRIC provides transparency into its enforcement activities by publishing Stewards' Reports and Internal Review outcomes on its website.

The QRIC also publishes key documents on the website including:

- proactive industry announcements and media releases, providing detail of significant policy decisions and enforcement outcomes for the industry.
- Directions from Chief Stewards as to the interpretation and application of Rules of Racing and regulations/policies.
- Elevated TCO2 levels detected in equine racing animals.
- Greyhound breeding, race injury and retirement reports.
- Thoroughbred and Standardbred Race Related Injuries.

When decisions are made on licensing matters, clear reasons for the outcome are provided in writing to the relevant party. Licensing decisions are subject to a right of internal review and a right of external review.

The QRIC provides details around performance through the publication of its Annual Report. Specific data relating to the QRIC's Service Delivery Statement and effectiveness and efficiency measures are recorded as part of this process.