

DECISION

Of

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Stewards

Regarding

Mr Cody Button

Delivered on: 10 September 2025

Date of hearing: 05 September 2025

Panel: Mr Joshua Adams (Chairperson), Mr Paul Zimmermann

Appearances: Mr Cody Button (self-represented).

Charge : Australian Rule of Racing ("AR") 229(1)(a) states:

(1) A person must not:

(a) engage in any dishonest, corrupt, fraudulent, improper or dishonourable action or practice in connection with racing;

Particulars of Charge: Mr Cody Button a licensed Track Work Rider with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, in contravention of Australian Rule of Racing AR 229(1)(a) engaged in fraudulent behaviour in connection with racing.

1. Mr Button was at all relevant times a licensed Track Work Rider with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission.
2. As a requirement of Mr Button's Track Work Rider licence with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, he submitted a fraudulent Health Assessment Results Form for the 2025/2026 season by altering the name and date on a Health Assessment Results Form obtained by another licensed person.
3. Mr Button's conduct in submitting an altered Health Assessment Results Form was fraudulent and in breach of AR 229(1)(a).

Plea:

Guilty

Penalty Submissions:

Stewards were presented with detailed written submissions from Mr Cody Button.

In summary Mr Button submitted that:

1. Operates a business based 90% on racehorses at Brisbane and Deagon training centres.
2. Sole income derived from working with racehorses.
3. Has financial commitments dependent on his ability to ride trackwork.
4. Requested consideration of a 6-month suspension and a fine, with permission to continue other forms of work at the racecourse

Mitigating Factors

1. Guilty plea at the earliest opportunity.
 2. Cooperation with Stewards during the inquiry.
 3. Expressed remorse and understanding of the seriousness of the offence.
 4. No prior offences of this nature.
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Stewards Finding on Penalty:

The Stewards accept Mr Button's guilty plea and note his cooperation, his candid acknowledgment of the breach, and his remorse. These factors are genuine and have been considered.

However, the falsification of medical documentation is a serious offence. The annual licensing and medical clearance system is a safeguard designed to ensure that all participants in racing are medically fit to safely undertake their licensed roles. Owners, trainers, and the industry must have confidence that riders are properly licensed. Trackwork riders are entrusted with the responsibility of exercising thoroughbreds at speed, often in company with other horses, under conditions that carry inherent risks.

Dishonesty in this process undermines the safety framework that protects riders, horses, and the broader industry.

As stated by McGill DCJ in *Wallace v Queensland Racing* [2007]:

"Public confidence in racing is easily damaged, and must be protected by imposing penalties when conduct is shown to be prejudicial to the image of the sport."

In *Waterhouse v Racing Appeals Tribunal* [2002] NSWCA 195, the Court emphasised: “Dishonest conduct in racing is conduct which is blameworthy and capable of undermining confidence in the industry.”

Further, in *Pollett v Racing NSW* (2021) NSWCATAD 152, the Tribunal observed: “It is sufficient if the conduct has a tendency to diminish public confidence in the integrity of racing, whether or not actual prejudice can be shown.”

In respect of comparative authorities, Stewards are satisfied that the appropriate penalty framework is one of disqualification. This is consistent with penalties imposed in cases involving dishonesty and falsification of medical documents:

- *Ross* (2021): 8 months disqualification for falsifying a medical certificate.
- *Sharrock* (2025): 9 months disqualification for repeated falsifications
- *McKay* (2025): 9 months disqualification for multiple falsifications
- *Wright* (2023, VRT): 12 months disqualification for forging a doctor’s signature
- *Schembri* (2025, VRT): 3 years disqualification for repeated falsification and false evidence

Human Rights

In considering this matter, proper consideration is required in respect of human rights, and it is necessary to act compatibly with human rights in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld). The Stewards acknowledge that any penalty imposed upon Mr Button may limit or prevent a person from earning a living from the racing industry and subsequently that the imposition of such a penalty may limit a person’s human rights to own property (namely a licence), as well as the human right of privacy and reputation. The Stewards further acknowledge that a limitation upon a person’s ability to participate in the racing industry, and earn income from that participation, may only be imposed where it is reasonably necessary to achieve the purpose of taking disciplinary action and there is no less restrictive and reasonably available way to achieve the purposes listed above, than to suspend a licence, disqualify a person from holding a licence, or warn a person off.

In the circumstances of this case, Stewards are satisfied that there is no lesser penalty that could be imposed that enables the purposes of taking disciplinary action against a licensee for a contravention of the rules of racing, which are to:

- Maintain public confidence in the racing of animals in Queensland for which betting is lawful;
- Ensure the integrity of all persons involved with racing or betting under the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* or the *Racing Act 2002*; and
- Safeguard the welfare of all animals that are or have been involved in racing under the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* or the *Racing Act 2002*.

Penalty:

Stewards are of the view that a disqualification is warranted in the circumstances. A disqualification for a period of six (6) months reduced to four (4) months in relation to Mr Button's disciplinary history and guilty plea, effective from the date of this decision commencing 10 September 2025 concluding 10 January 2026.

Further, stewards draw to the attention of Mr Cody Button Australian Rule of Racing AR 263 and the prohibitions on persons and their conduct while disqualified.

Against this Stewards decision Mr Cody Button is advised of his rights to appeal this decision to the Racing Appeal Panel.