

DECISION

Of

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Stewards

Regarding

Ms Paige Johnston

Delivered on: 23 September 2025

Date of hearing: 18 September 2025

Panel: Mr Joshua Adams (Chairperson), Mr Paul Zimmermann and Alexander Dowsett

Appearances: Ms Paige Johnston (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: Ms Paige Johnston a licensed Trackwork rider with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, in contravention of Australian Rule of Racing AR229(1)(a) engaged in fraudulent behaviour in connection with racing.

1. Ms Johnston was at all relevant times a licensed Trackwork rider with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission.
2. As a requirement of Ms Johnston's Trackwork rider license with the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, she submitted a fraudulent Health Assessment Results Form for the 2024/2025 season by altering the name on a Health Assessment Results Form obtained by another licensed person.

3. Ms Johnston's conduct in submitting an altered Health Assessment Results Form was fraudulent and accordingly in breach of AR229(1)(a).

Plea: Guilty

Penalty Submissions:

Stewards were presented with detailed written submissions from Ms Paige Johnston.

The Stewards received written submissions from Ms Johnston, who:

1. Expressed remorse and apologised for her actions.
2. Emphasised her early guilty plea, full cooperation, an exceptional disciplinary record, and that she now holds a current medical certificate.
3. Submitted that riding/trackwork is her sole income; that she faces significant financial strain and limited alternative employment options; and that a harsh penalty would adversely affect her family's long-standing involvement in racing.
4. Sought consideration of a monetary fine and/or a suspension (wholly suspended).

Stewards Finding on Penalty:

The Stewards accept Ms Johnston's guilty plea, cooperation, remorse, record, and acknowledge the personal and financial consequences of any penalty. These mitigating factors have been properly weighed.

Notwithstanding mitigation, falsifying medical documentation is a serious integrity breach. The annual licensing and medical clearance regime exists to ensure all licensed participants are medically fit to safely undertake their roles. Trackwork riders exercise thoroughbreds at speed, often in company, and are entrusted with the preparation of horses for trainers and owners, core industry stakeholders who must have confidence that riders are properly licensed and medically cleared. Dishonesty in this process undermines that safety framework and the public's trust in racing.

An aggravating feature in this matter is the extent of unlicensed activity undertaken while not medically cleared. On Ms Johnston's own admissions and the evidence before the Stewards, she rode approximately eight to twelve horses each morning, six days per week, over a period of twelve months without a current medical. This represents a substantial and sustained exposure of herself, other riders, horses and stable staff to elevated risk. The offending differs from recent decisions such as *RAP-165 Queensland Racing Integrity Commission v McKay*, where the falsification was detected without trackwork being conducted. The protracted nature

and volume of riding here materially elevate the seriousness of the conduct and the need for deterrence.

Consistent with established appellate authority, penalties for dishonest conduct must protect public confidence in the industry and deter like conduct. The comparative authorities advanced by the Stewards and considered by the Panel support a period of disqualification for falsification of licensing/medical documentation, with uplift where sustained unlicensed activity has occurred.

Consistent with well-established authorities, penalties must protect public confidence in the sport:

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:

- *Marshall* (2025): 8 months disqualification for falsification of a medical.
- *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 Ms Johnston 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*.
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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 Ms Johnston's disciplinary history and guilty plea, effective from the date of this decision commencing 23 September 2025 concluding 23 January 2026.

Further, stewards draw to the attention of Ms Paige Johnston Australian Rule of Racing AR 263 and the prohibitions on persons and their conduct while disqualified.

Against this Stewards decision Ms Johnston is advised of her rights to appeal this decision to the Racing Appeal Panel.