

DECISION

Of

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission Stewards

Regarding

Shania Willis

Delivered on:	15 October 2025
Date of hearing:	15 October 2025
Panel:	Clayton Warren (Chair), Tony Preston, Sharon Coulthard & Ryan Jackson
Appearances:	Shania Willis Mark Currie (Support person)
Charge:	Australian Rule of Racing 139 Offences where riders use banned substances. (1) A rider breaches these Australian Rules if: (a) a banned substance under AR 136(1) is detected in a sample taken from the rider.
Particulars of Charge:	Ms Shania Willis did on 12 August 2025, a morning which she had been riding in official trials at Gatton Turf Club, provide a urine sample which upon subsequent analysis was confirmed to contain a substance banned under AR136(1).
Plea:	Guilty

Penalty Submissions:

Ms Willis and Mr Currie made the following submissions in relation to penalty:

1. Ms Willis partook in the substance whilst socialising in the days prior
2. Ms Willis has engaged in a drug awareness and rehabilitation course
3. The personal and financial burden continued exclusion from the industry will have on Ms Willis
4. Ms Willis has never breached this rule or any similar rule previously
5. Relatively short time in the industry
6. A substantial fine in lieu of any suspension would be suitable

Stewards Finding on Penalty:

The Stewards give weight to the following mitigating factors:

- Early guilty plea and forthright evidence
- Cooperation & remorse
- Initial rehabilitation steps
- Record in relation to the rule
- Ms Willis is reliant on the industry for an income
- Relative inexperience in industry noting Apprentice status

Against these is the fact presenting with a banned substance contravenes AR 139(1)(a) and is an objectively serious integrity and safety breach. The banned substance rules are in place to ensure participants are fit to ride in a high-risk environment, and electing to ride in those circumstances elevates risks to riders and horses.

In Maynes (Racing NSW Appeal Panel, 4 November 2024), the Panel affirmed *that “riders can expect lengthy suspensions or disqualifications”* because they *“expose not only themselves but others to additional and unnecessary risks,”* and accepted that a nine-to-twelve-month starting range is generally appropriate for first offending under AR 139(1).

As such Stewards gave consideration to the following also:

- Seriousness nature of the breach – noting the sample was taken whilst Ms Willis had been riding at Official Trials
- Definite and potential negative impacts on the image and integrity of the industry
- Relevant precedent
- Level of culpability & blameworthiness
- General & Specific deterrence

In respect of comparative authorities, Stewards are satisfied that the appropriate penalty framework is one of suspension. This is consistent with penalties imposed in cases involving similar circumstances:

- *Mackie* (2023): 6 months suspension; reduced to 5 months upon completion of drug rehabilitation and awareness course – Banned substance whilst riding Trackwork
- *Creevey* (2024): 6 months suspension; reduced to 5 months upon completion of drug rehabilitation and awareness course – Banned Substance whilst riding Trackwork
- *Stritch* (2023): 6 months suspension – Banned Substance whilst riding Trackwork

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 Willis 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 pursuant to the *Racing Integrity Act 2016* (Qld) 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 suspension is warranted in the circumstances and subsequently imposed a suspension for a period of six (6) months, reduced from nine (9) months in relation to Ms Willis' disciplinary history, guilty plea and forthright evidence,

effective from the date on which she was stood down from all duties on 27 August 2025 and concluding 27 February 2026.

Stewards further ordered that one (1) month of that suspension would be wholly suspended for a period of two (2) years under the provisions of AR283(5) on the stipulation that Ms Willis provide documentation pertaining to the successful completion of a drug awareness and rehabilitation course.

Additionally, Stewards ordered that under the provisions of AR139(4) Ms Willis must provide a clear urine sample free of any banned substances prior to being permitted to return to riding or stable-hand duties.

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