

DECISION

Racing Integrity Act 2016, sections 252AH, 252BM

Review application number	RAP-158	
Name	Christopher Meehan	
Panel	Mr K J O'Brien AM (Chairperson)	
	Mr E Wilkinson (Panel Member)	
	Mr K Waller (Panel Member)	
Code	Thoroughbred	
Rule	Australian Rules of Racing 131(a)	
	<i>A rider must not, in the opinion of the Stewards engage in careless, reckless, improper, incompetent or foul riding</i>	
Penalty Notice number	PN-011752	
Appearances & Representation	Applicant	Self-represented
	Respondent	R Neal - Queensland Racing Integrity Commission
Hearing Date	8 July 2025	
Decision Date	8 July 2025	
Decision	Pursuant to 252AH(1)(a) the Racing Decision is Confirmed	
	<i>(delivered ex tempore)</i>	

- [1] This is an application by licensed jockey Christopher Meehan for the review of orders made by Stewards at the North Queensland town of Laura on 28 June 2025, when the Applicant pleaded guilty to an offence of careless riding contrary to Australian Rule of Racing 131(a) and received by way of penalty a licence suspension of seven days.
- [2] The incident which led to the charge occurred during the running of Race 3, a Benchmark 60 Handicap over 1200 metres at the Laura Turf Club meeting of 28 June 2025. The Applicant had ridden the horse No love Lost in that race, and the particulars of the charge allege that when leaving the 50-metre mark whilst under riding, he had permitted his mount to shift out and take the running of Lucky Lenny, which had to be checked and lost its right for running.
- [3] The circumstances of the offence were perhaps a little unusual in that a protest had been lodged on behalf of the horse Lucky Lenny, which ultimately finished third in the race against the Applicant's mount, which had finished second. The protest was dismissed, but as a result of the inquiry, the Applicant was charged with the offence of careless riding and pleaded guilty to that charge. It is necessary that we make some brief reference to the evidence that was presented at the Stewards' hearing, in particular to the account given by the Applicant.
- [4] He said¹:
- Just obviously it was one of them things, like I really wasn't expecting it. As I said, I raced one off the rail the whole way through the race. At the 50, 40-metre mark, as soon as Ivo ahead me, my lad literally just put his ears flat back, turned his head and actually half stepped across to bite Ivo, like it was just aggressive towards Ivo's horse. I reported it to – said to the trainer when I came back in, says, oh yeah, he does that, he's real aggressive to the other horses and things. But it happened that quick in a matter of strides. Obviously my lad's stepping out. I think Ivo's rolled a very small fraction, my more so rolled out towards him, with the head turned, sort of ears pinned back and to bite him. I've actually – I was hitting him behind the saddle, but I then sort of pulled my right rein out to try my best to shape him, hit him a slap down the shoulder and that was pretty much it. I was completely unaware Shania was at my heels at the time.*
- [5] The reference to Shania, it should be noted as a reference to apprentice rider Jockey Shania Willis, who was the rider of Lucky Lenny, and the reference to Ivo is a reference to Jockey Ivo Fry, who was the rider of the eventual winner, Strategist. The Applicant at the Steward's hearing went on to say²:
- Obviously, it was completely unexpected. We were hard ridden, I feel that I have tried obviously. because No Love Lost trying to pin her ears back and go across to savage the eventual winner. It's probably cost me winning the race. I have, as I say, given it a slap on the shoulder and was more vigorous with my right hand. I possibly failed, I possibly could have done a bit more and possibly could and may have possibly done a bit more.*
- [6] As indicated above, the Applicant then pleaded guilty to the charge. At the hearing before this Panel, the Applicant has stated that the race replay facility at Laura Racecourse was of limited quality, and having had the opportunity to review the race footage on a larger screen, he considers the real position

¹ Transcript of Stewards Inquiry 2 lines 8 – 22

² Transcript of Stewards Inquiry 2 lines 71 - 78

to have been that the eventual winner Strategist had forced the third place horse Lucky Lenny across the heels of his (the Applicant's) mount, and that caused the Applicant's horse to turn its head out.

- [7] It is on that explanation which provides the basis for the Applicant's application now to change his plea to one of not guilty. This obviously was not the view taken by the Stewards, it should be said. They were satisfied that the Applicant was guilty of careless riding, although they categorise it as being low level carelessness, with level two consequences.
- [8] Again, it is incumbent upon this Panel to form its own view of the circumstances of the incident. We've had the opportunity to review the race footage on numerous occasions and to consider the submissions that have been made. The race footage which shows the angle best is race footage three, which gives the angle from the outside. It is apparent to the Panel that inside the 100-metre mark the Applicant's horse is the horse on the fence under hard riding. A length back to his outside is Apprentice Willis and further out joining in is the eventual winner Strategist written by Jockey Fry.
- [9] It appears running into the 50-metre mark that the Applicant's mount shifts out into the line of Apprentice Willis. Apprentice Willis effectively has to stop riding and check her mount off the heels of the Applicant. In the opinion of this Panel, the interference suffered by Lucky Lenny is a direct result of the Applicant's mount shifting out into that horse's running. The Applicant has his mount under extreme pressure when it shifts out, he only stops riding with the whip when his mount and the eventual winner, Strategist come together. At this point the interference has already occurred.
- [10] We consider that Strategist may have got in slightly, but it was no more than a slight inward movement and we do not see that as having been a contributing factor to the offence.
- [11] We are therefore satisfied that the Applicant is guilty of the charge of careless riding and in accordance with the appropriate principle, refused the application for a change of plea.
- [12] In relation to penalty, the Stewards took the view that the Applicant's carelessness was of low grade, with level two consequences. In the view of this Panel, that finding is clearly justifiable. Indeed, it might have been able to consider a higher range of carelessness. The penalty of seven days we consider is one of which the Applicant can have no complaint in the circumstances.
- [13] Accordingly, that penalty it should be said was ordered to be served cumulatively upon a penalty imposed for another offence, this one involving the so-called 'whip offence,' which had been imposed on 21 June in Innisfail.
- [14] In accordance with section 252AH(1)(a) of the *Racing Integrity Act 2016*, the order of the Panel is that the racing decision the subject of this Application is confirmed.