

# **NEW SOUTH WALES HARNESS RACING APPEAL PANEL**

## **APPEAL PANEL MEMBERS**

**B Skinner  
B Judd  
G Campbell OAM**

## **DECISION**

**24 November 2025**

**APPELLANT GRACE PANELLA  
RESPONDENT HRNSW**

**AUSTRALIAN HARNESS RACING RULES  
163(1)(a)(iii)**

## **DECISION**

**The Appeal Panel makes the following orders:**

- **The appeal is dismissed**
- **The finding of the Stewards is confirmed. The penalty to commence from midnight on 24 November 2025**
- **The appeal deposit is forfeited**

- 1 Ms Grace Panella (“Appellant”) is a licensed Grade A driver with Harness Racing New South Wales (“Respondent”).
- 2 On 14 October 2025 in Race 2 at Newcastle, the Appellant was the driver of Takas Princess who finished in third position.
- 3 An Inquiry was conducted by HRNSW Stewards on 9 October 2023. A charge was then issued against the Appellant under Rule 163(1)(a)(iii), which provides inter alia:-  
*163. (1) A driver shall not-*  
*(a) cause or contribute to any*  
*(iii) interference*
- 4 The particulars of the charge were that the Appellant shortly after the start failed to establish a position to the inside of Mystical Sunshine driven by Mr Atkins and continued to drive along in an attempt to find a position along the marker pegs without the required clearance over Our Lucille where as a result, that runner was obliged to be checked and as a result broke stride.
- 5 The Appellant pleaded not guilty to the charge. Nothing of significance was submitted by the appellant other than she alleged that pressure from outside her horse had forced her due to safety concerns to go to the fence and as such did not consider herself at fault.
- 6 The Appellant was disqualified for 18 days. Given the urgency and the inability of the appeal to be heard expeditiously, a stay was ordered on 22 October 2025.
- 7 The appeal was heard on 24 November 2025. The Appellant appeared in person. Mr D. Westwood appeared for the Respondent. The Appellant asserted that her driving could be explained on the basis that she was forced to drive in such manner for reasons of safety. The Panel rejected the submission.
- 8 The Panel viewed the film of the race and was assisted by still shots identified by Mr Westwood. In short, the Panel accepted the conclusion of the stewards and submissions of Mr Westwood. Had the Appellant been focussed on issues of safety, she would, in the opinion of the panel backed off rather than driving with what was obvious vigour. The Panel was satisfied that that the driving of the

Appellant was the main contributing factor to the horse driven by Mr Hickey being checked and breaking gait.

- 9 The Stewards in considering penalty took into account that the Appellant was trying to establish herself and was a young person in the industry. The Stewards also noted two suspensions in the past twelve months. A reduction from 35 days was considered by the Panel to be generous in all the circumstances.
- 10 When invited to make any further submissions, the Appellant referred to the difficulty of finding other drivers for her horses. There being no other factors, the Panel confirmed the finding of the Stewards and the penalty imposed. The forfeiture of the appeal bond was ordered. The penalty is to commence from midnight on 24 November 2025.

Mr B. Skinner Chairman  
Mr B. Judd – Panel member  
Mr G. Campbell OAM – Panel Member

24 November 2025