23 August 2019

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**DECISION**

**HARNESS RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**MR MATTHEW CRAVEN**

**Date of hearing:** 19 August 2019

**Panel:** Judge John Bowman (Chairperson), Magistrate John Doherty (Deputy Chairperson) and Mr. Robert Abrahams

**Appearances:** Mr Nicholas Murray and Mr Neale Conder appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

 Mr Damien Sheales appeared on behalf of Mr Craven.

 Mr Matthew Craven appeared as a witness.

**Charge:** Australian Harness Racing Rule 149 (2) states “A person shall not drive in a manner which in the opinion of the stewards is unacceptable”.

**Particulars of charge:** The particulars of the charge being after driving forward from barrier 5 from the start on Bou Chard and after initially being obliged to race three wide to the outside of Goodtime Junior (Jackie Barker) and Huli Nien (Greg Sugars) into the first turn, Mr Craven then continued to persevere in obtaining the lead until near the 1200m which resulted in an exceptionally fast first quarter of 26.3 seconds being recorded. Thereafter, Mr Craven allowed Bou Chard to stride whilst in the lead, which resulted in the first half of the last mile being recorded in 55.6 seconds. In the opinion of the Stewards, the driving tactics employed by Mr Craven during the early and middle stages of the event were unacceptable and was the main contributing factor in Bou Chard being placed under pressure from the 400m and giving ground to be beaten into last position approximately 47 metres from the eventual winner.

**Plea:** Not guilty

**DECISION** Having viewed the video of the race and having heard the evidence of Mr. Craven and the submissions on behalf of the parties, the tribunal found Mr. Craven guilty of the charge. In particular, it found the driving tactics of Mr. Craven in failing to give the horse a "breather" after a long and hard battle to get to the front were unacceptable. Bearing in mind Mr. Craven's very good record and the impact of a suspension upon him at this particular time, the Tribunal set aside the period of suspension that had been imposed and ordered that he be fined $2,500.

Mark Howard
Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal