26 April 2021

**DECISION**

**HARNESS RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**MATTHEW CRAVEN**

**Date of hearing:** 22 April 2021

**Panel:** Judge John Bowman (Chairperson) and Mr Josh Bornstein.

**Appearances:** Mr Andrew Cusumano appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Matthew Craven represented himself.

**Charge:** Australian Harness Racing Rule AR 231(1)(a) states “A person shall not threaten anyone employed, engaged or participating in the harness racing industry or otherwise having a connection with it”.

**Particulars of charge:** 1. You were, at all relevant times, licensed by HRV and bound by the Australian Harness Racing Rules.

2. On 10 October 2020, you attended Tabcorp Park Melton and engaged in a conversation with licensed trainer and driver Mr Michael Bellman in or around the drivers’ room**.**

3. In the course of that conversation, you threatened Mr Bellman, in that you directed the following comments to him:

a. “You will keep cunt”

b. Words to the effect of: “*I will back myself in any day to beat the fuck out of you”*

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Matthew Craven, you have pleaded guilty to a breach of AR 231(1)(a). That breach occurred at Tabcorp Park Melton on 10 October 2020. It involved threatening words delivered to another driver.

In this matter, the parties effectively have agreed upon the appropriate penalty, namely a fine $500. Of course, the ultimate decision remains ours, but we are of the opinion that this is a completely appropriate penalty.

You voluntarily informed the Stewards of what had taken place and you have pleaded guilty at the earliest possible opportunity.

We accept, as did the Stewards, that there was perceived provocation and that you issued the threat, which, in essence, related to possible fisticuffs, the outcome of which would be a victory for yourself.

Behaviour of this nature clearly breaches the Rule and is behaviour that warrants a penalty. Without going into detail, there appears to be strong mitigating factors.

We find the agreed penalty of a $500 fine to be appropriate. We congratulate the parties on the sensible approach that has been taken and a $500 fine is imposed.

Mark Howard
Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal