11 September 2025

**DECISION**

**RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**CRAIG WILLIAMS**

**Date of hearing:** 7 February 2025

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**Panel:** Judge John Bowman (Chairperson).

**Appearances:** Mr Darren Triandafillou appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Matthew Hyland represented Mr Craig Williams.

**Charge:** Australian Rule of Racing (“AR”) 131(a) states:

 A rider must not, in the opinion of the Stewards:

(a) engage in careless, reckless, improper, incompetent or foul riding.

**Particulars of charge:** Rider Craig Williams (Cloisters) pleaded guilty to a charge of careless riding under the provisions of AR131(a), in that near the 900m he permitted his mount to shift in when insufficiently clear of Yankee Beau, placing that filly in restricted room for a number of strides and as a result had to be steadied to avoid the heels of Cloisters. C Williams had his licence to ride in races suspended for a total of 8 race meetings, with the period to commence on Sunday 9 February 2025 and expire on Saturday 15 February 2025. Accordingly, C Williams will be able to return to ride on Sunday 16 February 2025. In assessing penalty, account was taken of his guilty plea, good record and that the incident was in the low-range category.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Mr Craig Williams, you have pleaded guilty to a charge of careless riding a charge pursuant to Australian Rule of Racing (“AR”) 131(a). This charge concerns your ride on “Cloisters” in Race 2 at Pakenham on 30 January 2025. The race was over 1,100 metres.

The interference the subject of the charge occurred near the 900 metre mark. The other horse involved was “Yankee Beau”, which was ridden by Ms Celine Gaudray. Your mount was the only horse in the race that had started previously, having had one run.

I have watched the video of the race several times, particularly the Stewards footage. This includes the footage of the entire race. Your mount may have had a previous start, but it was quite apparent that it was not a particularly easy horse to ride. Subsequently, in the straight it had to be straightened a number of times. Further, I accept that the conditions were windy to the extent that you had difficulty in hearing and could not hear any calls from other jockeys.

These factors do not excuse the interference, which was caused to Ms Gaudray’s mount, but they are matters to be considered. As stated, you are pleading guilty to the charge.

I would agree with the Stewards that on the scale of the interference, it was very much at the lower end. However, it did cause Ms Gaudray to take hold of her mount.

For a jockey that is in demand as much as you are, with multiple top class rides in this state and elsewhere, I would regard your record as very good. You have had some four suspensions prior to this case over a period of a year, including two suspensions in the last six months. However, overall, with the demand for your services, including high class races, I would consider your record to be very good.

The amount of interference caused in this case was low, although any interference carries the risk of the bad result of injury. I also take into account that you pleaded guilty from the outset.

The Stewards position has been put forward very fairly by Mr Triandafillou and he maintained that the original penalty of eight meetings should stand. However, in my opinion the appropriate penalty in this particular case is suspension for seven meetings.

This was very low level interference and, as stated, your record is very good. You have accepted responsibility of what occurred from the outset and, bearing in mind decisions in other cases and the particular circumstances of this case, a seven meeting suspension seems to me to be fair and appropriate.

The appeal is upheld, and the penalty is varied to one of a suspension for seven meetings.

Mark Howard

Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal