

**NEW SOUTH WALES  
HARNESS RACING  
APPEAL PANEL**

**APPEAL PANEL MEMBERS**

**J Moore  
J Murphy  
G Watson**

**DETERMINATION**

**3 July 2026**

**APPELLANT MITCH CHAPPLE**

**RESPONDENT HRNSW**

**AUSTRALIAN HARNESS RACING RULES**

**163(1)(a)(iii)**

**DECISION**

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

- 1. The Appeal is dismissed;**
- 2. The Appellant's licence be suspended for a period of 21 days;**
- 3. Any appeal fee paid by the Appellant be forfeited by him and retained by the Respondent.**

# HARNES RACING NEW SOUTH WALES APPEALS PANEL

Mitch Chapple

**Appellant**

Harness Racing New South Wales

**Respondent**

## Determination

- 1 Mitch Chapple (**Appellant**) is a licensed Grade A harness racing driver with Harness Racing NSW (**Respondent**).
- 2 On 8 May 2026, the Appellant was the driver of the horse named **Dazzling Gems**, in race 8 of the Newcastle race meeting, named The TAB App Pace (**Race**). Dazzling Gems finished in third placing and started at \$26.00.
- 3 An inquiry was conducted by the Stewards on 8 May 2026 under the *Australian Harness Racing Rules (amendments up to and including 18 July 2025)*(**AHRR**) where a charge was issued against the Appellant under **Rule 163(1)(a)(iii)** which states:

*“163. (1) A driver shall not –*  
*(a) cause or contribute to any ...*  
*(iii) interference;...”.*
- 4 The particulars of the Stewards' charge were as follows:

*“THE CHAIRMAN: The particulars of the charge being you, Mr Mitch Chapple, the driver of Dazzling Gems here at the Newcastle meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026, have, when racing down the home straight, manoeuvred your runner wider in an attempt to gain clear running. Initially was wheel-to-wheel with Sierra Mist on your outside, shortly thereafter got an advantage and raced inside the line, checking the running of Sierra Mist, who became unbalanced and shortly thereafter broke stride, We do believe this is as a result of movement from the inside out.”*
- 5 The Appellant pleaded guilty to the charge as issued at the Steward's inquiry. The Appellants only submissions on the matter of penalty were that Ms Coney's horse, Sierra Mist, was hanging in before he attempted to shift.
- 6 The Stewards imposed a suspension on the Appellant's licence for a period of 21 days. In reaching that decision the Stewards relied on the following when announcing their decision:

- a) The *HRNSW Penalty Guidelines*, determining the appropriate penalty starting point to be a suspension of licence for 35 days;
  - b) The Appellant's guilty plea, providing a 25% discount to a suspension of licence for 28 days.
  - c) The Appellant's driving record which did not allow for any further reduction for good driving record as the Appellant had not reached the minimum threshold of 150 drives in the previous 12 months;
  - d) The overall circumstances of the incident, determining a further reduction of 7 days, resulting in a final penalty of a 21 day suspension of licence.
- 7 On 9 May 2026, the Appellant lodged a Notice of Appeal with the Respondent challenging the severity of the penalty only.
- 8 The appeal was heard on 19 May 2026. The Appellant appeared in person. Mr Brett Day appeared on behalf of the Respondent.
- 9 The material put before the Appeal Panel comprised:
- a) The Notice of Appeal;
  - b) The transcript of proceedings before the Stewards on 8 May 2026;
  - c) The Respondent's written submissions dated 15 May 2026;
  - d) Video evidence, in the form of 2 different camera angles of race footage, taken of the Race; and
  - e) The Appellant's Offence Record;
- 10 The Panel viewed the film of the race and was assisted by a number of different camera angles showing the Appellant looking to move his runner, Dazzling Gems, wider and making contact with the runner Sierra Mist, driven by Ms Jemma Coney. Immediately after making contact, Ms Coney's runner became unbalanced and broke gait.
- 11 Before the Panel the Appellant asserted that the penalty of 21 days suspension was too harsh because although he caused the interference to Ms Coney's runner, it was not the cause of the runner breaking gait.
- 12 Submissions by Mr Day which repeated the original reasoning of the Stewards. He submitted that in all of the circumstances the original 21 day suspension of the Appellant's licence was an appropriate and reasonable penalty.
- 13 The Appellant was invited to make further submissions as to penalty, however, but he was unable to assist the Panel further.

14 The Panel was satisfied that the driving of the Appellant was the main factor causing the horse being driven by Ms Coney being checked and breaking gait. There being no other factors, the Panel confirmed the finding of the Stewards and the penalty of 21 day suspension imposed by them was adopted.

15 The Appeal Panel makes the following orders:

- a) the Appeal is dismissed;
- b) the Appellant's licence be suspended for a period of 21 days;
- c) Any Appeal fee paid by the Appellant be forfeited by him and retained by the Respondent.

3 July 2026  
Jo Moore (Convenor)  
Jim Murphy  
Gordon Watson