NEW SOUTH WALES

HARNESS RACING

APPEAL PANEL

APPEAL PANEL MEMBERS

W Haylen KC
G Campbell OAM
B Judd

DETERMINATION

20 October 2026

APPELLANT TRENT PILON

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 Appeal Deposit is forfeited.**

1. Mr Trent Pilon has appealed against a finding of HRNSW Stewards that he was in breach of AHRR 163(1)(a)(iii), a provision that a driver shall not cause or contribute to any interference. The particulars of the charge were that Mr Pilon, as driver of the horse Miss Ardlethan, in race 2 at Leeton on 1 September 2026, when approaching the first turn, made insufficient effort to straighten his runner, placing Ms Jones runner, Orsino Bell, into restricted room, causing that runner to contact the marker pegs before being checked and to break gait. Mr Pilon pleaded not guilty.

2. The Stewards imposed a 9 week suspension on Mr Pilon, noting that the Penalty Guidelines on interference matters commenced with a penalty of 35 days where a horse is checked and broke on the first turn. Consideration was also given to his overall driving record of 37 drives, with 6 suspensions and 10 drives and four suspensions in his last 10 drives. The Stewards considered those matters to be an extremely poor driving record, resulting in an increase of the Penalty Guideline for a further 2 weeks. In addition, the Stewards referred Mr Pilon's driving licence to the Licensing Review Committee, asking for a review of his future or his licence for the near future.

3. Mr Pilon applied for a stay of proceedings but was unsuccessful. In his notice of appeal he stated that the Stewards had failed to review all available camera angles of the race, specifically the head -on-footage, which was said to clearly demonstrated that he had made a significant, active, and immediate effort to steer and correct his runner. He also relied upon 6 cases in 2026 where 4 matters had a 7 day suspension, 1 had 10 days suspension and 1 had a suspension of 21 days. These 6 matters were not raised at the hearing of the Appeal.

4. At the hearing of the Appeal, HRNSW presented 7 screenshot stills showing the movement of Mr Pilon's horse and the effects on Ms Jones horse. During the hearing the actual replay footage was also presented. The first screeenshot displayed the head of Mr Pilon's horse being directed towards the inside left while Ms Jones remained a significant distance from the marker pegs. The second shot showed that Mr Pilon was positioned with an advantage over Ms Jones, to his inside. Therefore, he was positioned to dictate her running should he continue to shift in. Screenshot 3 was a head on photo of the second screen shot and demonstrated that Mr Pilon had shifted in significantly when his positioning relative to the marker pegs, compared to that shown on screenshot 1. The head of Mr Pilon's horse remained turned from the inside. Screenshot 4 displayed Ms Jones inside sulky wheel contacting the marker peg to her immediate inside. Mr Pilon was positioned extremely tight to her outside and Mr Pilon's horse's head was not turned to the outside. Screenshot 5 was captured at approximately the same point as screenshot 4. Here, Mr Pilon is certainly not clear of Ms Jones to his inside and never has been at any stage to rightfully commence to shift in. Screenshot 6 shows that the horse driven by Ms Jones is now contacting a further marker peg. The first occasion Ms Jones contacted a marker peg was with her inside sulky wheel (no.4) and this has now worsened to

her horse making contact. This image depicted the first occasion Mr Pilon made any discernible action to alleviate the tightening which had occurred to Ms Jones. Unsurprisingly, the horse driven by Ms Jones breaks gait a short distance later as a result of being checked. Screenshot 7 is captured at approximately the same point as screenshot 6 and depicts the first occasion Mr Pilon takes any discernible action to alleviate the tightening to Ms Jones. It is clearly established that Mr Pilon is not clear of Ms Jones and has not been in any of the earlier screenshots.

5. At the hearing of the Appeal, Mr Pilon Snr spoke on behalf of his son. He used the available replay footage of the race to make the following submissions: there were two places where the driver held the horse out; he made sufficient efforts to keep the horse away from Ms Jones but the horse did not respond; the horse should be blamed for the interference; the driver made sufficient attempts when Ms Jones called out for room; and that there were sufficient attempts made to keep off the other horse.

6. The Appeal Panel is unable to accept the submissions put forward for Mr Trent Pilon. When he came to drive Miss Ardlethan on 1 September 2026, he had driven that horse 30 times. At the 31st start Mr Pilon must have had a complete understanding of his way of driving that horse.

7. The Appeal Panel has closely considered the submissions from HRNSW Stewards in this application and is comfortably satisfied that the screenshots and the replay footage have shown that the particulars of the AHRR 163 (1)(a)(iii) charge in this case is fully made out.

8. The Panel also noted from the lateral video that Mr Polin was continuing to urge his horse forward just prior to the winning post and the head on view confirmed significant tightening to Ms Jones at that point. It was only after the winning post that Mr Pilon commenced any action to pull his horse up the track and by that time the interference was inevitable. His actions at that point could reasonably be described as too little too late.

9. The Appeal is dismissed and the Appeal fee is forfeited.

Hon Wayne Haylen KC – Principal Member
Mr Graeme Campbell OAM – Panel Member
Mr Brian Judd - Panel Member

20 October 2026