RACING NSW – STEWARDS REPORT

INQUIRY INTO THE ANALYSTS' FINDINGS RELATIVE TO A URINE SAMPLE PROVIDED BY LICENSED JOCKEY MR LIAM BLANCH

Dubbo Stewards Room **25 September 2026**

Stewards: S D Parkinson (Chair)
D J Bucknell
D R Hadley (via teleconference)

Racing NSW Stewards today conducted an inquiry into the analyst's findings relative to a urine sample provided by licensed jockey Mr Liam Blanch at Scone Racecourse prior to fulfilling his riding engagement on 17 August 2026.

On 22 September 2026, Stewards received the certified findings of the Australian Racing Forensic Laboratory (ARFL) Analyst that the urine sample he provided was found, upon analysis, to contain metabolites of a banned substance under AR136(1), greater than the cut-off.

A brief of evidence was tendered, and oral evidence was taken from Mr Blanch and ARFL General Manager Mr John Keledjian. Stewards considered the evidence and issued a charge under AR139(1)(a) as detailed below:

Charges issued against Mr Liam Blanch

Charge: AR 139 Offences where riders use banned substances

The details of the charge being that licensed jockey Mr Liam Blanch did provide a sample of his urine on the 17 August 2026 at Scone Racecourse prior to fulfilling his riding engagement, which was found upon analysis to contain a banned substance under AR136(1), greater than the cut-off, namely benzoylecgonine the metabolite of cocaine.

Plea : Guilty

Penalty:

The Stewards considered the following matters when determining penalty.

1. Guilty plea.
2. Mr Blanch's personal and professional circumstances.
3. Industry participant for over 10 years with a clean record.
4. Lack of contrition and failure to accept responsibility for the breach.

5. Principle of specific and general deterrence and what message is sent to the industry in respect of such conduct.
6. Purpose of issuing penalties as a protective measure for the image and interests of the thoroughbred racing industry.

Stewards determined that Mr Blanch's licence in full should be suspended for a period of 12 months. Having regard to his guilty plea and other relevant considerations, Stewards varied the penalty to 9 months licence in full.

Accordingly, Mr Blanch's licence was suspended for a period to commence on Tuesday, 22nd September 2026, backdated to the date on which he was stood down, and to expire on Tuesday, 22nd June 2027, on which day he may resume duties.

Mr Blanch was notified that in accordance with AR139(4), he will be required to provide a urine sample free from any substances banned by AR136(1), prior to being permitted to resume duties.

Mr Blanch was advised of his rights of appeal.

Relevant Rule

Division 5 – Substances banned for use by riders and horse handlers

AR 136 Banned substances in relation to riders

(1) Unless otherwise stated in these Australian Rules, the following substances and/or their metabolites, artefacts and isomers are specified as banned substances in riders when detected in a urine sample at a concentration above the respective threshold level:
(i) all stimulants, including, but not limited to:
(viii) cocaine.

Division 6 – Banned substance offences for riders and horse handlers

AR 139 Offences where riders use banned substances

(1) A rider breaches these Australian Rules if:
(a) a banned substance under AR 136(1) is detected in a sample taken from the rider;
(4) If a rider incurs a penalty or is stood down by the Stewards from riding under this rule, the rider cannot resume riding horses until the period of the penalty has expired and a sample from the rider free of any banned substance under AR 136(1) has been delivered, as directed by the Stewards.

S D Parkinson
Interim Chief Stipendiary Steward WRA
Racing NSW