



TASMANIAN
RACING INTEGRITY
COMMISSIONER

TASMANIAN RACING INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER'S SUMMARY PUBLIC REPORT

Investigation into the incorrect placement of starting barriers for the 2026 Hobart Cup

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Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner

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A. Functions and powers of the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner

1. The *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) (the **Act**) provides for the regulation of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing, ensuring the integrity of persons involved in each of the racing codes, as well as the safeguarding and welfare of animals.
2. The Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner (the **Commissioner**) is established under section 7 of the Act, with its prescribed functions set out in section 9. These functions include:
 - a. investigating allegations made and other matters relating to integrity in racing and animal welfare, including with respect to Tasracing and the performance and the exercise of its functions and powers;¹ and
 - b. making recommendations following an investigation of any matter, as the Commissioner considers appropriate.²
3. Division 3 of the Act sets out the Commissioner's investigation powers, procedures for investigation and its completion, allowing the Commissioner to investigate any matter relating to racing including those relating to integrity in racing and animal welfare.³
4. In conducting an investigation, the Commissioner may exercise powers under the Act requiring any person (including but not limited to Tasmanian racing participants, Tasracing directors, employees, contractors or other volunteers) to provide

¹ *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) s 9(1)(p).

² *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) s 9(1)(t).

³ *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) s 15.

information (including any record, information, material or thing) or explanation as required by the Commissioner.⁴

5. Under the Act, a person must not make a statement or provide a document that is false or misleading or omit any matter from a statement knowing that without that matter the statement is false or misleading.⁵
6. The nature of the Commissioner's functions and powers means that the conduct of any investigation is necessarily inquisitorial. The Commissioner's role is to identify any shortcomings in racing integrity functions, processes and systems and make recommendations about how they may be addressed.
7. On 10 February 2026, Tasracing requested that the Commissioner investigate the placement of the starting barriers for the 2026 Ladbrokes Hobart Cup – 2400m (the **Investigation**).
8. Given the public interest in the Investigation, this report is issued, summarising the findings and recommendations made by the Commissioner to Tasracing under section 12 of the Act.
9. In releasing this report, the Commissioner has also had regard to disclosure of information as required by section 19(2) of the Act, limiting publication to matters that are in the public interest or are in the interest of justice and that do not unreasonably disclose information relating to the personal affairs of a person (among other considerations).⁶

B. Background

10. First run in 1875, the Hobart Cup is a historic Tasmanian Group 3, 2400m handicap horse race held annually at Ladbrokes Park, Elwick Racecourse, Hobart (the **Venue**). The Hobart Cup has been run uninterrupted each year for 152 years and is the centrepiece of the Tasmanian Summer Racing Carnival.
11. Originally a 2-mile (approximately 3200m) race (from 1875 to 1877), the Hobart Cup has been shortened over time, including periods where the distance varied between 2600m and 2400m, before settling on its current 2400m distance from 2013 onwards.
12. Tasracing is the Principal Racing Authority in Tasmania for thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing. As the Principal Racing Authority, Tasracing

*oversee[s] the growth of racing and breeding, market[s] Tasmanian racing to local, national, and international audiences, fund[s] race clubs, provide[s] stakes and prize money, manage[s] racing venues, and ensure[s] the smooth operation of race day activities.*⁷

⁴ *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) s 18(1).

⁵ *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) s 174.

⁶ *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) s 19(2).

⁷ Tasracing, *About Tasracing* (webpage) <<https://tasracing.com.au/corporate/who-we-are-at-tasracing>>.

13. Relevant to this report, Tasracing is responsible for operational race staff, including track staff, Stewards, Barrier Attendants and Starters.
14. The racing clubs (in this instance, the Tasmanian Racing Club) are responsible for the delivery of race day events, including ticketing, hospitality and other event activities.
15. On 8 February 2026, the Tasmanian Racing Club's 2026 Hobart Cup was held at the Venue.
16. Race 9 of the 2026 Hobart Cup was the 'Ladbrokes Hobart Cup – 2400m', featuring a field of 13 runners, with a scheduled start time of 4:45pm AEDT (the **Race**).
17. The Race was won by the Imogen Miller-trained mare Blonde Star in a time that was recorded as 2 minutes 29.67 seconds. This time was declared a race record for the Hobart Cup (at the 2400m distance) at the completion of the Race.⁸
18. Shortly following the Race, the Chief Steward declared correct weight and the official placings were declared.
19. In the hours and days following the Race, there was growing speculation that the Race had been run over a shorter distance than advertised. On 10 February 2026, following the receipt of a number of complaints, the Commissioner's office became aware of the issue.
20. As a result of receiving these complaints, the Commissioner contacted Tasracing. The Tasracing CEO confirmed that he believed the Race had been run over the incorrect distance and that racing officials became aware shortly before the running of the Race that the starting barriers were placed at the incorrect position (approximately 37 metres forward of the 'True Starting Position' marker).
21. The Commissioner accepted Tasracing's position that the Race was not run at the advertised distance of 2400m, with the Race being run at a distance that was short by approximately 37m (the **Error**).

Stewards' Reports

22. The Stewards' Report for the 2026 Hobart Cup, 8 February 2026 (incorrectly dated 8 January 2026) was published by Tasracing on 9 February 2026, with no reference to any irregularity with the race distance (the **Original Stewards' Report**).
23. At the Commissioner's request, version 2 of the Stewards' Report was published on 12 February 2026 (the **12 February Stewards' Report**) with the following updated information

Subsequent to the event Tasracing became aware that the Hobart Cup may have been run over a marginally shorter distance than that of the 2400 metres advertised. Tasracing is conducting an

⁸ The Race record was subsequently retracted by Tasracing and advised to the Trainer and Racing Australia.

internal investigation into the matter and it has been referred to the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner.

24. A further and subsequent Stewards' Report was published on 16 April 2026 to correct the date of the Original Stewards' Report and the 12 February Stewards' Report (the **16 April Stewards' Report**).

Relevant Rules and Policies

25. The Australian Rules of Racing (the **ARRs**) apply to the conduct of the Race, and powers of Stewards.

26. AR 20 of the AARs grant general powers to Stewards. Importantly, Stewards are granted powers

(a) to regulate and control, investigate, inquire into, hear and determine matters relating to the conduct of all officials, licensed persons or registered persons, persons connected with a horse, persons attending a racecourse, and any other person connected with racing;

(b) to make or vary any of the arrangements for the conduct of a race meeting under their control;

...⁹

27. In the course of the Investigation, the Commissioner also considered a number of Tasracing internal policies, including the Tasracing Integrity Unit Barrier Management Policy (1 February 2025) (the **Barrier Management Policy**), the Tasracing Critical Incident Response, Classification and Communication Protocols (Undated) (the **Critical Incident Response Protocols**) and the Tasracing Policy Review and Approval Procedure (March 2023).

Media Reports

28. Following the Race, Tasracing issued an Industry Notice on its website in relation to the matter.¹⁰ Several media outlets also published articles regarding the setting of incorrect distance of the Race, scrutinising how the Error had occurred and the actions of Tasracing, as well as attracting the attention of other Principal Racing Authorities in Australia and internationally.
29. In the course of the Investigation, the Commissioner's office identified and considered similar instances at Avoca (2021, Racing Victoria), Tuncurry-Forster Jockey Club (2024, Racing NSW) and Mudgee (2024, Racing NSW) where errors had been made with the placement of the barriers.

⁹ Racing Australia, *Australian Rules of Racing* (1 November 2025), AR 20.

¹⁰ Tasracing, *Industry Notice: Hobart Cup Start* <<https://tasracing.com.au/industry-notice-hobart-cup-start>>.

Tasracing Investigation

30. On 10 April 2026, the Commissioner received a copy of the Tasracing investigation report.
31. The scope of the Tasracing investigation was limited to the issue of the incorrect placement of the starting barrier. It is acknowledged that the Tasracing investigation report, and its findings and recommendations have been tabled with the Tasracing Board.
32. The Commissioner has reviewed the Tasracing investigation report and has noted its findings and recommendations and does not make any further comments in respect of the Tasracing investigation.

C. Investigation Summary

33. Between 18 February 2026 and 26 March 2026, the office of the Commissioner conducted 21 interviews. All persons were offered the opportunity to have a support person in attendance and Employee Assistance Program (**EAP**) support was offered through Tasracing.
34. Noting that it is the role of Stewards to enforce the Rules of Racing, the nature of the Investigation required technical consideration of the Australian Rules of Racing (the **ARRs**), Stewards' powers and race operations. Given his extensive experience and reputation in the industry, Mr Robert Cram (retired Racing Victoria Chairman of Stewards) was engaged by the Commissioner to assist in the interpretation of the ARRAs and findings made in respect of the conduct of the Race. The Commissioner thanks Mr Cram for his guidance and assistance with the Investigation and its report.
35. Relevantly, the functions of the Commissioner permit an examination of Tasracing's functions, processes and systems, including in relation to integrity in racing, animal welfare, governance and finances and the related actions of Tasracing personnel.¹¹
36. Importantly, the Investigation did not purport to make any findings or recommendations that fall within the jurisdiction of Stewards under the ARRAs, including but not limited to the Race result or official race records.

D. Findings

37. The findings outlined in this report do not purport to identify all aspects of the evidence obtained in the course of the Investigation. The absence of reference to any particular aspect of the evidence does not infer that it was not considered.

¹¹ *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* (Tas) s 9(o).

The Race

38. The starting barriers for the Race were placed at the incorrect position for a 2400m race at the Venue with the inside rail 6 metres out. The starting barriers for the Race were placed at a position of 37.71m forward of the “True Starting Position” marker (the **True Position Marker**), which was located under the outside rail of the chute, causing the Error.

Tasracing personnel background

39. In late 2025, two key Tasracing track operations staff with significant knowledge and expertise in track operations and the placement of starting barriers at the Venue, resigned from their roles at Tasracing.
40. Given the expertise of these staff, Tasracing facilitated an extended handover and ‘on the job training’ to support the transfer of knowledge to the new role holders (the **Handover**).
41. The Chief Steward for the Race has over 32 years of stewarding experience across roles in Tasmania and Western Australia. The Chief Steward held roles of Acting Chairman of Stewards (Greyhounds) in 2022 and Chairman of Stewards (Greyhounds) in 2025, and more recently, Chairman of Stewards (Thoroughbreds).

Adjustments to Starts Spreadsheet

42. A spreadsheet entitled ‘Elwick Racecourse – Adjustments to Starts when rail is out’ (the **Spreadsheet**) was used to assist track operations staff in marking the starting barriers for each race.
43. The Spreadsheet set out incorrect information and adjustments for a 2400m distance race at the Venue.¹²
44. Former Tasracing track operations staff were aware of the errors in the Spreadsheet, and disregarded the measurements detailed in the Spreadsheet in determining and marking the location for the starting barriers for the 2400m distance races at the Venue from 2021 to 2025, while they were employed by Tasracing. There is no evidence to suggest that any 2400m race held at the Venue between 2021 to 2025 was not run over the correct distance.
45. Those that were aware of the error in the Spreadsheet failed to take any steps to rectify the incorrect information or escalate the error to management for further action at any stage during their employment.

¹² Tasracing has undertaken a recent track survey, and a new Spreadsheet has been created, reflecting the correct adjustments for all races, including the 2400m race.

46. While there were conflicting versions of conversations, on the evidence before the Commissioner, the Commissioner was satisfied that the new role holders were not advised of the errors in the Spreadsheet in the course of the Handover.
47. Accordingly, the track operations staff responsible for marking the starting position for the Race were unaware that the Spreadsheet contained incorrect information for the 2400m chute, and relied on the information detailed in the Spreadsheet in marking the starting barrier location for the Race.
48. The lack of Tasracing document controls and audit review processes, coupled with a lack of accountability by former Tasracing staff (or management) to conduct regular reviews of official Tasracing documents or audit processes, resulted in the Spreadsheet containing incorrect information from at least 2021 to 2026, when the Race took place.

Marking and placement of the starting barrier position

49. On the morning of the Hobart Cup, prior to any races commencing, track operations staff walked the racetrack to mark the starting barrier positions for each race.
50. In line with the Spreadsheet, the track operations staff believed that the starting barrier marker for the Race was to be placed 37.71m forward of the True Position Marker when the inside rail was in a position of six (6) metres out, and accordingly marked the position for the starting barrier for the Race.
51. It was reasonable for track operations staff to rely on the Spreadsheet in marking the starting barrier position for the Race. There are no adverse findings made in respect of the current track operations staff regarding the Error.

Pre-Race actions and communications

52. After Race 8, the barrier attendants placed the starting barriers in the position marked by the track operations staff earlier that day for the Race.
53. Almost immediately after the starting barriers were placed for the Race, the assistant starter and barrier attendants conferred on their belief that the starting barriers were in the incorrect position, believing that they were too far forward, based on where the barriers had been placed for previous Hobart Cup races (the **Potential Error**).
54. At 4:40pm, the starter for the Race telephoned a former track operations staff member who was in attendance at the Hobart Cup as a spectator, where it was confirmed that the starting barrier was placed incorrectly, as it was too far forward.
55. At 4:42pm, the starter telephoned the Chief Steward, advising of the Potential Error and that he believed that the starting barriers were approximately 30 metres forward of the correct position. The Chief Steward advised that the race would proceed.

56. The starter and the Chief Steward did not notify any Tasracing personnel prior to the Race regarding the Potential Error.
57. The Race proceeded at a delayed start time of 4:47pm.
58. The Chief Steward was aware of the Stewards' powers and discretion under the ARRs to delay a race as he had exercised such discretion earlier this year. As such, there were avenues known to the Chief Steward to require the checking and re-placement of the starting barriers prior to the Race being run (see findings below under the heading Rules of Racing).
59. Notwithstanding the finding at paragraph 58, as a consequence of the Chief Steward deciding to proceed with the Race under amended race conditions, as he was entitled to do under the ARRs (see findings below under the heading Rules of Racing), at the time of making the decision, and prior to the Race, it is the opinion of the Commissioner that there was sufficient time for the Chief Steward to have notified, or ensured notification, of the Potential Error to the following stakeholders:
 - a. Tasracing executive;
 - b. trainers, owners and jockeys;
 - c. representatives from the Tasmanian Racing Club;
 - d. Wagering Service Providers;
 - e. the Broadcaster; and
 - f. the public.
60. However, in the absence of standard operating procedures for Stewards, or communications protocols, it is acknowledged that there was no clear framework or guidance as to what action was required by the Chief Steward in the circumstances.

Post-Race Actions and Communications

61. After the Race, the starter and the Chief Steward advised various members of the Tasracing executive of the Potential Error.
62. The Tasracing Chief Racing Integrity Officer (**CRIO**) was made aware of the Potential Error by the starter and the Chief Steward after the Race.
63. In the course of the Investigation, concerns were raised as to the CRIO not intervening in the decision of the Chief Steward. The CRIO was not a member of the Stewards' Panel for the Race, and as such, had no authority under the ARRs to intervene or override any decision of the Chief Steward.

64. It was not until approximately 6:30pm that the Tasracing CEO was advised of the Potential Error. A decision was made by Tasracing management that they would need to survey the track to confirm the distance for 2400m races.
65. Various informal discussions regarding the Potential Error took place at the post-event staff gathering held at the Venue that evening.
66. It is the opinion of the Commissioner that members of the Tasracing executive, upon becoming aware of the Potential Error, should have immediately escalated the matter to the CEO. However, in the absence of clear Critical Incident Management Protocols or Communications Protocols, it is acknowledged there was no clear framework or guidance as to what action was required by Tasracing personnel in the circumstances.
67. Similarly, upon becoming aware of the Potential Error post-Race, Tasracing executive failed to:
 - a. escalate the matter and advise the Tasracing Board, the Minister for Racing's office, the Commissioner's office, the Tasmanian Racing Club, or any other stakeholder of the Potential Error;
 - b. take any actions immediately following the Race (or at the conclusion of the event) to confirm, by measurement, the actual distance that the Race was run on the day;
 - c. consider the ARRs, policies and procedures as to whether any further actions were required as a result of the Potential Error or, once confirmed, the Error; or
 - d. make any public statement regarding the Error.
68. These failures by the Tasracing executive were not intended to conceal the Potential Error, rather, these failures were as a result of a lack of foresight (or judgement) as to the potential consequences (or impact) that the Potential Error (if confirmed) would have on the integrity of the Race, and the reputation of Tasmanian racing.

Training, Management and Supervision

69. The Commissioner identified failings and areas for improvement in respect of the training, management and supervision provided to Tasracing staff, especially relevant for race day or operational roles where technical skills and knowledge of racing are essential to role delivery.

Rules of Racing

70. This report reiterates that it is not the role of the Commissioner to make findings on the application of the ARRs.

71. Stewards have full power to control and regulate race meetings.¹³ They may give any direction necessary to ensure compliance with the ARRs.¹⁴
72. Upon becoming aware of the Potential Error (which was approximately three (3) minutes prior to the scheduled start time for the Race), in accordance with AR 21(f)(i), the Chief Steward had powers to postpone the Race or take any other actions that he deemed necessary to resolve the issue.
73. Noting the short time between identification of the Potential Error and the Race start time, it is the opinion of the Commissioner that had this rule been applied, the Chief Steward could have delayed the start of the Race to confirm distance and to make adjustments (as required) to the starting barriers and proceed with the Race at the advertised distance of 2400m.
74. Having properly turned his mind to the Potential Error and Stewards' powers under the ARRs, it is acknowledged that the Chief Steward may still have determined to run the Race at the shorter distance due to the circumstances at the time, recognising that time pressures were a consideration of the Chief Steward in determining to proceed with the Race.
75. Notwithstanding the above, the Chief Steward was entitled to proceed with the Race as scheduled under the amended race conditions (change of distance) and declare correct weight, exercising the discretionary powers of Stewards under AR 20 and AR 201 to do so.
76. It is the opinion of the Commissioner that in making the decision to proceed with the Race, there is an implied obligation under the ARRs that the Chief Steward make notifications as detailed in paragraph 59. The Chief Steward did not take any steps to make such notifications.
77. As a consequence of the Chief Steward deciding to proceed with the Race under amended race conditions, it is the opinion of the Commissioner that post Race, and prior to declaration of correct weight, the Chief Steward should have commenced a Stewards inquiry in accordance with the ARRs. In expressing this opinion, it is noted that there was no obligation on the Chief Steward to conduct a Stewards inquiry, however, by conducting a Stewards' inquiry:
 - a. the Stewards' panel would have been afforded the opportunity to confer on the Race prior to correct weight being declared; and
 - b. there would have been a greater sense of transparency and process in the decision to declare correct weight, notwithstanding the amended race conditions.

¹³ Racing Australia, *Australian Rules of Racing* (1 November 2025), AR 20.

¹⁴ Racing Australia, *Australian Rules of Racing* (1 November 2025), AR 20.

78. AR 158 requires that '[a]fter a race meeting, the Stewards of the race meeting must provide a report to [Tasracing] which records observations and actions taken by them during the race meeting'.¹⁵ The Original Stewards' Report did not refer to the Potential Error in the distance of the Race and was subsequently updated by way of the 12 February Stewards' Report and the 16 April Stewards' Report.

Policies and Procedures

79. Significant failings and areas for improvement were identified in Tasracing's policies and procedures, including deficiencies in documentation standards, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and the absence of adequate escalation, verification, and critical incident management processes.
80. While Tasracing personnel acted in accordance with existing policy requirements, relevant Tasracing policies were found to be insufficient to support consistent and effective operational decision-making, particularly the escalation of matters that may cause significant harm to Tasracing personnel or participants, including racehorses, or racing greyhounds, Tasracing's business operations or reputation.

Conduct

81. No conduct by any Tasracing personnel amounted to a breach of conduct, employment, policies, rules or otherwise.

E. Conclusions

82. It is the expectation of the Tasmanian racing industry and broader public that all races conducted by Tasracing are held to the highest standard of integrity. Where these standards fall short, the reputation and standing of the Tasmanian racing industry is significantly impacted. The Commissioner shares these expectations and standards with the racing industry.
83. It is therefore incumbent upon Tasracing that its race day systems and procedures are immediately reviewed and improved, with a greater focus on supporting staff to deliver their roles effectively and to the highest standard, to ensure that such incident does not happen again.

F. Recommendations

84. Recommendations were made by the Commissioner pursuant to section 12 of the Act. Under the Act, Tasracing is to advise the Commissioner:
- a. the steps that have been, or are proposed to be, taken to give effect to the recommendations, including timelines for implementation; or

¹⁵ Racing Australia, *Australian Rules of Racing* (1 November 2025), AR 158.

b. if no such steps have been or are proposed to be taken, the reasons why they have not been taken or, as the case may be, are not proposed to be taken.

85. In the event that Tasracing fails to comply with a recommendation given to it by the Commissioner under the Act, the Commissioner may then issue a direction to Tasracing requiring compliance with the recommendation.

86. In making the recommendations, the Commissioner was mindful of similar recommendations previously made in respect of the management of critical incidents and actions presently being undertaken by Tasracing management and its Board to address those matters. The Commissioner is satisfied that Tasracing management and its Board are responding to these matters seriously.

87. A summary of the recommendations made by the Commissioner is detailed below.

Recommendation 1:

Tasracing issue a media release, confirming the finalisation of the Tasracing investigation, including the confirmed distance of the Race as well as the result of the Race, and the retraction of the race record.

Recommendation 2:

Tasracing establish a procedure to support the application of the adjustments in the Spreadsheet which complies with the Tasracing Policy Review and Approval Procedure (March 2023) and Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 3:

To support the Tasracing Policy Review and Approval Procedure (March 2023), Tasracing establish a Records Management, Retention and Disposal Policy (or equivalent), with accompanying policy register to formalise the creation, storage, use, update and destruction of information.

Following approval by the Tasracing Board, Tasracing is to provide a briefing to all relevant staff on the Records Management, Retention and Disposal Policy.

A review of all Tasracing policies must be undertaken to ensure alignment with the Records Management, Retention and Disposal Policy and the Policy Review and Approval Procedure, particularly in respect of document and version control.

Recommendation 4:

Tasracing review and update the Barrier Management Policy, consistent with the Commissioner's findings.

Recommendation 5:

Tasracing establish a Race Day Manual or Standard Operating Procedures across all race day roles, consistent with the ARRs and the Commissioner's findings.

Recommendation 6:

Tasracing establish a Stewards' Manual or Standard Operating Procedures for all codes (race day and trials), consistent with the ARRs and the Commissioner's findings.

Recommendation 7:

The TIU conduct face to face training for all Stewards on the preparation of Stewards' Reports to address:

- a. standard and quality of Stewards' Reports; and
- b. accuracy of reporting of observations and actions taken by the Stewards during race meetings, including the expectations of matters that must be detailed.

The TIU implement systems for review of Stewards' Reports to assess the standard and quality of reports in the future.

Recommendation 8:

Tasracing undertake a review of roles and responsibilities for all race day positions (including but not limited to operational and integrity roles).

Recommendation 9:

Tasracing introduce role specific induction programs for all race day positions (including but not limited to operational and integrity roles), that incorporates 'on the job training' as well as documented processes, policies, standard operating procedures, manuals or checklists.

In addition, Tasracing establish an off-boarding process whereby staff departing key roles in the organisation are required to review and update relevant processes, policies, standard operating procedures, manuals or checklists prior to departure, with sign off by their manager.



Sean Carroll
Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner
4 May 2026



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**Tasmanian Racing
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