

STAKEHOLDER NOTICE

Code of Racing	Harness
Description	Changes to RQ Harness Handicapping Procedure
Effective Date	January 1, 2026
Feedback/Queries	policies@racingqueensland.com.au

Racing Queensland (RQ) advises that it has approved updates to the RQ Harness Handicapping Procedure (the **Procedure**), effective from January 1, 2026.

The amendments align Queensland's local handicapping procedures with recent changes to the Australian Handicapping Rules made by Harness Racing Australia, also commencing on January 1, 2026, and incorporate additional feedback received from industry stakeholders throughout 2025.

The changes follow a period of stakeholder consultation undertaken by RQ in relation to programming and handicapping, culminating in an industry forum held at Albion Park on December 15, 2025.

The key changes to the Procedure are summarised below:

- introduction of 'divided by wins' as an additional option for race splits/allocation;
- inclusion of 'multiple stable runners' as a consideration when determining whether a programmed race should proceed or be deleted;
- 'Band drop back' to apply for Band 1 horses only, at the Handicapper's discretion;
- addition of the following races to be excluded from Band penalties:
 - all races restricted to Maidens only;
 - QBRED 4yo Features races of any value (previously capped at \$75,000);
- adjustments to Band assessments for interstate and overseas horses, including an increase to the Band threshold for New Zealand and overseas imports;
- removal of 'lifetime wins' as a factor in determining the availability of metropolitan concession claims;
- removal of the age concession, consistent with the changes to the HRA Australian Handicapping Rules effective January 1, 2026;
- introduction of preferential barrier draws based on Band assessment; and
- allowance for discretionary prizemoney reductions by one tier for races drawn with a field size of less than seven runners (excluding 2yo, 2yo only and most feature races).

A copy of the updated Procedure, which takes effect from January 1, 2026, has been published to the RQ website and is available via the following [link](#).

