

# MOTORSPORT NEW ZEALAND JUDICIAL COMMITTEE HEARING DECISION

## MOTORSPORT NEW ZEALAND INC

### DECISION OF THE JUDICIAL COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY MOTORSPORT NEW ZEALAND, NAMELY:

- Barry Higham (Chair)
- Chris Adams
- Craig Finlayson

### THE PARTIES CONCERNED

- Luke Smeets
- Nick Simpson (Clerk of the Course)
- MotorSport New Zealand

### BACKGROUND

During the Jackson Orchards Sprint Series Round 2 at Highlands Motorsport Park in Cromwell on 22 November 2025 there was an incident in the pits involving Luke Smeets and Howard Hinton. There are concerns about Luke Smeets conduct at the event, including reported threatening behaviour towards Howard Hinton that may constitute a breach of National Sporting Code Article 94 (3) and alleged damage to Howard Hinton's property which is understood to be subject to New Zealand police action. A hearing into this matter could not be held on the day as Luke Smeets was removed from the circuit by New Zealand Police after receiving a call from Howard Hinton. The Clerk of the Course referred the matter to the Stewards and Motorsport New Zealand, with the Stewards noting that the matter remained outstanding and unresolved and required further action by Motorsport New Zealand. The matter was referred to a Motorsport Inquiry panel who recommended a Judicial Committee Hearing be held.

### THE HEARING

The Hearing was conducted in accordance with National Sporting Code (NSC) Article 122 and held remotely via video conferencing at 6pm on Tuesday 13 January 2026. The Chairman opened the Hearing and Wayne Scott from Motorsport New Zealand outlined the reasons for the Hearing being held. Luke Smeets gave evidence and admitted that he lost his temper in the pits. He regretted his actions and was sorry that it had happened. He said he couldn't recall all his actions that afternoon.

Nick Simpson gave evidence and said that in the absence of being able to hold a Hearing into the matter he had no other option but to refer it to Motorsport New Zealand for resolution. He felt that the matter had been exacerbated by Facebook posts.

The Committee sought advice from the sport's medical assessor on the reference to concussion in the St Johns medical report.

### FINDINGS

The Committee finds that Luke Smeets actions towards Howard Hinton and his property in the pits at Highland Motorsport Park are unacceptable. It was pointed out to Luke Smeets that there are Motorsport New Zealand rules and procedures to follow if you feel aggrieved, instead of taking matters into your own hands.

### DECISION

The Judicial Committee, following consideration of the information provided, unanimously determine:

1. National Sporting Code (NSC) Part V111 94(3) and 94 (7) have been breached by Luke Smeets.
2. Appendix One Schedule P Article 5 NSC7 applies.
3. A fine of \$4000 is imposed. The Panel ruled that an amount of \$2000 be payable immediately. The balance of \$2000 is suspended as a good behaviour bond to apply until 31 December 2026. If during that period, the driver commits any breach of the code or acts in any way prejudicial to the interests of

motorsport in general then the balance shall become payable immediately. If on 1 January 2027 the driver has complied with this bond the balance of this fine (\$2000) shall be remitted.

4. Your competition licence is suspended until 30 April 2026.
5. Your competition licence is endorsed from 1 May 2026 until 31 December 2026.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Committee noted that comments on Facebook associated with this incident appear to have inflamed the situation and recommends that Motorsport New Zealand sends a general reminder to members drawing their attention to our Social Media Policy.

DATED this 16<sup>th</sup> day of January 2026



**Barry Higham**  
Chairman

## **RIGHT OF APPEAL**

The Parties are reminded of their right of appeal to the National Court of Appeal in accordance with Part XI of the National Sporting Code.