



ANRPB

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9 May 2020

The Editor
Australian Racing Pigeon Journal

Dear Sir
Re: Article in the May edition by Dr Colin Walker

The Australian National Racing Pigeon Board is concerned by the many errors of fact and misleading information contained in Dr Walker's depiction of "**Board decides not to give fanciers their money back**" and formally requests a *Right of Reply* as Dr Walker was made aware of those errors prior to publication and chose not to correct them.

The article states "*However, in a recent Board meeting it was unanimously voted (nb the Victorian representative, Neil Machar was not in attendance) that the Board would not give this money back to fanciers*".

At the request of Neil Machar, the issue of donated moneys to the ANRPB Disease Management Fund was placed on the Agenda for the October 2019 meeting.

At the time Treidlia Biovet had refunded \$10,000 of the \$60,000 interest free loan.

Neil's proposal was for large individual donors to be repaid.

Due to medical reasons Neil was unable to participate in that meeting, and although a lively discussion took place, NO VOTE was taken due to Neil's absence. It would be fair to say that there was a strong viewpoint amongst Board members that a small donation from someone with a low income was just as worthy as a large donation from someone with a high income, and that the smaller donations were equally worthy of repayment should that be the decision of the Board.

The issue was again discussed in the April 2020 Board meeting. By that time Treidlia Biovet had refunded a further \$10,000. Whilst a lively discussion occurred, again no vote was taken as the Treasurer reported that there were still insufficient funds in the account to refund all individual donors, should that be the Board's decision. It was agreed that the matter be relisted for the October meeting, by which time there being the possibility of a further refund payment by Treidlia Biovet. The ANRPB does intend to seek Australia wide feedback from donors prior to making a final decision, this being one outcome of the April meeting.

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The article stated, *“The ANRPB has evolved into an unelected group of private pigeon fanciers who have supposedly taken it upon themselves to represent pigeon fanciers of Australia.”*

The Australian National Racing Pigeon Board (ANRPB) is an Incorporated body with the NSW Office of Fair Trading viz the Associations Incorporation Act 2009.

Current Membership of the ANRPB is comprised of:

- **Greg Kakoschke, Chair**, former South Australian Delegate nominated by the SAHPA Committee of Management. Current Chair of Metropolitan Invitation Racing Pigeon Club. Former Vice-Chair of the South Australian Homing Pigeon Association, former Secretary SAHPA Long Distance Committee, former Release Officer for SAHPA, former Secretary Hampstead IHPC, former Chair Para Hills IRPC and Onkaparinga (Adelaide Hills) RPC. Extensive experience on non-pigeon related Boards and Committees. Justice of the Peace in and for the State of South Australia.
- **Neil Machar, Vice-Chair and Treasurer, Victorian Delegate** nominated by VHA and endorsed by VPU, GMPF, and WPF. Current Secretary of the Oakleigh/Waverley Club and Secretary Notting Hill Centre VHA. Former President of VHA, Secretary of the VHA, Ass Sec of VHA, 50 year VHA member, Life Member, Hall of Fame member. Club secretary of various clubs over a 40 year period; Oakleigh, Metropolitan, Pathfinder, Waverley-Box Hill, and Oakleigh-Waverley.
- **Stephen Shears, New South Wales Delegate**. Current Vice-Chair and Executive Committee member of the Central Cumberland Racing Pigeon Federation and nominated by the CCRPF. Current Secretary of the Hills District Racing Pigeon Club.
- **Phil Squire, South Australian Delegate**. Current member of the SAHPA Committee of Management and nominated by SAHPA. Current Chair and Treasurer of the Central Districts Racing Pigeon Club and the Northern Group. Former SAHPA Junior Coordinator. Served 3 terms on the SAHPA Release Panel. Extensive experience on non-pigeon related committees.
- **Kevin Wilson, Western Australian Delegate**. Board member and Vice-Chair of the Pigeon Racing Federation of WA and nominated by the PRFWA. Original member of the ANRPB.

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- **Jeff Profke, A/Secretary and Queensland Delegate.** Current Management Committee member of the Queensland Racing Pigeon Federation and Secretary-Treasurer of Phoenix Invitation Pigeon Club.
- **Sheree Evans, Tasmanian Delegate.** Current Secretary and Race Secretary for the Tasmanian Racing Pigeon Federation.

Jim Craig, former Secretary and Treasurer recently tendered his resignation following some “difficult” communications with the author of the article.

With all Board members being nominated or endorsed by the major federation or association of their state how anyone could suggest that membership of the ANRPB is not truly representative of Australian pigeon fanciers’ beggars belief!

The ANRPB was originally established in response to the Australian Federal Government’s decision to update animal welfare codes and convert them into the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. These now form an annexure to the ANRPB National Code of Practice for the keeping of racing pigeons. Thus, the ANRPB was established and remains as a “Pigeon Welfare” centric body.

Despite the opinion of the author of the article the ANRPB Disease Management Fund is not “defunct” and loan funds refunded by Treidlia Biovet are being deposited in that account. The account also contains moneys raised by other means.

Contract with Treidlia Biovet

The Finance Agreement between Treidlia Biovet and the ANRPB contains a “Confidentiality” clause, as do most commercial agreements. That clause stipulates that *“The parties must keep the terms of this agreement confidential, save for any necessary disclosure to their respective legal and financial advisers.”*

The article states that Treidlia are required to repay “2% of profits” but has agreed to repay the full loan “within 2 years”.

Both statements are false and mis-leading.

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The Rota Vaccine Contract with Latrobe University

The truth is that the ANRPB was never in a realistic position to own or control the rights to the Rotavirus vaccine that was developed by Dr Travis Beddoe.

As the ANRPB did not possess the technical knowledge it relied heavily upon the advice of Dr Colin Walker.

The original contract for the development of the vaccine against pigeon rotavirus between Latrobe University and the [Racing Pigeon Federation, Australia](#) (note: as Dr Colin Walker was the sole contact person with AgriBio Vic and Latrobe University perhaps it's best for him to explain how he came up with this name) was for \$174,900. At that time, the ANRPB Disease Management Fund had nearly \$55,000 in donations, a shortfall of some \$120,000.

Dr Colin Walker advised the Board that; *"I am applying for an Australian Research Council linkage grant. In this scheme the government matches every \$1 from industry with \$2",* and that he was confident that it would be successful.

The ANRPB accepted Dr Walker's advice and circulated a Press Release informing Australian Pigeon Fanciers of same, requesting donations to raise the necessary one third of the funds. A target of \$60,000 was set.

Unfortunately, what Dr Colin Walker failed to comprehend and advise the ANRPB accordingly, was that the development work for the Rota vaccine was a "proof of concept" and therefore not eligible for the 2:1 government subsidy.

At the same time Dr Colin Walker was also wanting the ANRPB to commit to research at a cost of \$75,000 over 3 years, again subject to the availability of the 2:1 government subsidy. Without subsidy the cost tripled.

Although Dr Walker never advised the ANRPB of his mistake, re the ineligibility for a government 2:1 subsidy, some months later to his credit he did then offer to loan the ANRPB \$90,000.

Charles Hider, acting in his friend's best interest, wanted this \$90,000 and one of Dr Walker's companies, written into a revised contract between Latrobe University and The Australian National Racing Pigeon Board.

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Whilst the ANRPB agreed to this condition it was rejected by Latrobe University.

The ANRPB understands and accepts that Dr Colin Walker was disappointed and unhappy with the Latrobe decision. However, Dr Walker appeared to blame the ANRPB for Latrobe's decision and made it clear that he did not want any further contact with or from the ANRPB, despite an offer by Greg Kakoschke to fly to Melbourne to meet with him to try and resolve his issues.

At that time, the ANRPB had a shortfall of some \$112,000 in the Disease Management Fund to meet the terms of the contract with Latrobe University. Had the ANRPB been able to raise the required \$112,000 through Australian pigeon fanciers (highly unlikely) it would then have had to fund a vaccine manufacturer to develop the vaccine from test tube development to commercial manufacture, or find and develop a contract with a vaccine manufacturer willing to undertake the work on commission. All costly and time-consuming processes with no guarantee of success, at a time when the Australian pigeon fancy was in urgent need of a rotavirus vaccine.

With the risk of having the rotavirus vaccine work written off by Latrobe, a decision was made in the best interests of Australian pigeon fanciers, to approach Dr Mark White of Treidlia Biovet. Dr Colin Walker had previously invited Dr Mark White to participate in earlier professional discussions with Dr Travis Beddoe around the development and manufacture of the rotavirus vaccine. Dr Mark White explained some of the challenges of commercializing highly complex vaccines that had been developed in a test tube environment. Concerns were also expressed about the small size of the test sample and implications for gaining approval from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

Dr Mark White somewhat reluctantly agreed to contact Latrobe University about taking on the Rotavirus vaccine contract, subject to a \$60,000 interest free loan from the ANRPB. Dr Mark White was clear that without this inducement it was unlikely that the contract would be financially viable, given the relatively limited market in Australia, and the costly and complex process to manufacture a rotavirus vaccine and gain APVMA approval for the vaccine.

Although there were significant challenges to the manufacture of a commercial rotavirus vaccine, through the Treidlia Biovet / ANRPB agreement Australian pigeon fanciers have gained access to the Rotavirus vaccine at a cost of less than half of what they pay, for example, for the live pigeon pox vaccine.

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The ANRPB acknowledges that Dr Colin Walker endeavored to convert the ANRPB into a commercial entity. However, the ANRPB's Constitution is registered with the NSW Office of Fair Trading viz the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 which stipulates that those "associations must only be engaging in small scale, non-profit and non-commercial activities".

The ANRPB did seek independent legal opinion regarding the commercial enterprise promoted by Dr Colin Walker. That advice was that the ANRPB would be acting outside of the registered Constitution to do so.

On the issue of there being no competitor for Treidlia Biovet, "obviously it would be very awkward to pay to license some technology without there being exclusivity in the contract." Treidlia Biovet have spent tens of thousands of dollars on "research and development of the rota vaccine since the under-developed state of the early stage research done at Latrobe." (Dr Mark White/Treidlia Biovet)

With regard to statements made in the article about other companies being available to manufacture the rota vaccine the ANRPB has been advised by a reliable industry source that neither Scolexia nor Bioproperties manufacture Recombinant class vaccines such as the Rotavax.

Whilst the ANRPB was mis-informed by Dr Colin Walker on a number of occasions during the rotavirus contract process, it does respect his veterinarian knowledge and expertise, and his right to have an opinion on other matters. However, that does not give him a license to put into print information that he has been reliably advised is incorrect.

Furthermore, highly respected VHA Secretary Gerry Sheean has advised the ANRPB that "*Colin has been requested by the VHA to ask the question, what is happening with funds from Treidlia and when are we likely to have funds reimbursed.*" "*This is all he was requested to do. All other comments are outside of his instructions.*"

When it comes to the Administration of our sport perhaps there are others better qualified, and with greater experience in social administration; like Neil Machar the Victorian Delegate and Vice-Chair of the ANRPB.

Finally, the ANRPB stands proudly by its decision to sponsor and commission a bronze plaque commemorating the role of racing pigeons in the theatre of war, at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Grateful thanks to our Canberra friends for their invaluable assistance.

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The ANRPB would also like to publicly acknowledge the excellent ANZAC Day initiative and work of Rod Simmons and the Pigeon Radio team that not only commemorated our ANZAC spirit but also gained widespread coverage and positive exposure for our sport, especially amongst younger Australians where the ANZAC spirit has become embedded in their psyche.

Our sport has experienced trying times, with the impact of PMV, Rotavirus, Bushfires and most recently Coronavirus. Through these tough times no good will come from divisiveness, rather we need to work collaboratively and co-operatively for our sport to survive and hopefully thrive into the future.

Yours in Our Sport, for and on behalf of the Australian National Racing Pigeon Board.

Greg Kakoschke
Chair: ANRPB Inc

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