

Dear members, firstly I want to welcome everyone here tonight, thank you for turning up. I want to thank any outgoing councilors and welcome the new. I was extremely fortunate when I took over the position of President to find that half of the committee were like-minded people who were, committed, ethical and responsibly dog breeders. This to me what the backbone and underlying mandate of our association, the promotion of purebred dogs. I was also fortunate to be able to govern a committee with considerable experience not only in purebred dogs but also the running of canine affairs on a national platform.

It has been a trying and eventful year for the association. I found myself as President in an awkward position due to the financial situation of this organisation. My first action was to take grants out of being recorded as income as this ambiguously elevates the actual income of our association as advised by a chartered accountant. I will explain more on this when we get to the treasurer's report later. I inherited this issue from the preceding council. I had conversations in September last year with particular council members after a council meeting regarding the urgency of tightening our budget. At this point I suggested we would wait until this years financials and incoming membership for 2024 were known before any steps were needed to be taken but I did state that one solution would be to reduce admin hours in the Dogs NT office.

Unfortunately, all controlling canine bodies have been in a position where they have had to significantly slash office staff to cover the shortfall in declining membership Australia wide. We are no exception. This coupled with the fact that much of the work is now electronic we could not as a council justify keeping admin hours at the level they were historically when membership was much higher, people were actively breeding a lot more and paperwork was considerable.

I searched for ways to balance the budget to ensure the long-term viability of our association. It was discussed at length at several council meetings. Council did not want to increase fees and thereby turn away more members, which would still not have generated enough to cover the shortfall. We are at a considerable loss, and this is not acceptable. Council also did not want to increase fees of struggling clubs. I discussed our position with a financial institution who advised that our current expenditure of almost 50% of association income on office administration alone was an unsustainable business practice.

Council made the unanimous decision to remove the five non-contact hours from admin. We debated offering members one day of trading per week and keeping non-contact time however we did not want to disadvantage our members who deserve to attend our office. We therefore decide to keep the two face to face days and remove the non-contact hours. This decision worked as there has been no approach to council to say it has impacted the operation of the office. Council has also advised our admin officer that councilors were available as volunteers to assist with any additional workload should the need arise. Our admin officer has never taken up this offer and therefore council has been lead to believe that our decision has not impacted the office. This decision will save our organisation over \$7,000 per year which is still short of our loss but is helping.

Come October the person holding the ground portfolio removed herself. I would like to thank my wife Carol for helping me mow and poison over the Christmas period. I would also like to thank Steve Russell for stepping up to maintain the lawns as a volunteer. It is people like Steve who give me hope that there is a bright side.

In October Dogs NT was represented at the National Administrators Conference at which the issue of gundog clubs obtaining insurance was raised as a concern. Council has tried multiple avenues to ensure clubs coverage however the Palmerston Gundog Club remains uncovered. At this point I

would like to thank Sarah Gordan for her untiring efforts to gain insurance coverage by liaising with our provider.

Whilst I am thanking Sarah for this effort as a volunteer, I also thank her for taking on the grants portfolio last year and securing a grant to replace lighting, another grant to update the toilet block and several other minor grants to improve facilities and the grounds for our members.

Finally, I would like to include, as published by other controlling bodies, a breakdown of councilor attendance at our scheduled monthly meetings since February 2023. Commencing from the top; Your President missed one meeting, Vice-president Carol missed one Meeting, Secretary Rebecca missed two meeting, Treasurer Clare missed two meetings. To your councilors, Sarah missed one meeting, Marlene missed two meetings, Emma missed three meetings, Nikki missed four meetings, Caroline missed six meetings, Deborah missed eight meetings and was unanimously removed from council as per our regulations.

Historically we have had a low return of ballots to the returning officer. This is a sign of member disengagement. We need to look at ways to reengage our members, to give them a reason to be invested in the organisation and its viability. There are several larger organizations, such as the Education Union who conduct their ballot process via a digital service such as Survey Monkey. This is financially beneficial as it is cheaper and will help to improve the return rate of votes. We should be seeking feedback as to why lost members have not renewed.

In closing I wish the incoming council all the best and I trust that your commitment shown at our recent elections rings true through your future actions in supporting our association moving forward.

James Stephen Beckett

President, Dogs NT