



Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) Tall Timbers Centre

Address: 125 Old Pitt Town Road Box Hill NSW 2765 Phone: 02 9679 1246 Fax: 02 9679 0638

e-mail: talltimbers@rdansw.org.au website: www.talltimbers.rdansw.org.au

Dear RDA(NSW) Members

In response to the Board's email and questions raised by Kirsty Hardman and the boards response titled "under-utilisation of RDA(NSW) assets" Tall Timbers Committee responds as following;

1. The board has used a rationale of *"it costs RDA(NSW) and its Centres in the vicinity of \$2million per year in total to operate"*. This statement is not a rationale argument, given that it is comparing RDA(NSW) assets (being those stated in audited financial report) against estimated expenditure to operate of all Member Centres expenditure (which is not shown in the financial report). The comparison is "apples and bananas" which makes no financial sense as to the liquidity of the organisation as a whole. The board is ignoring the combined total assets of the organisation as a whole, from their belief of the RDA(NSW) current structure (being one of ownership) and each Member Centres ability to cover its own debts as going concerns.
2. The board further states *" wise commercial practice for an organisation such as RDA(NSW) and its Centres should have at least 18 months ' reserve funds..."* again this is not substantiated and has no financial bases.

Further, Tall Timbers Centre wishes to clarify the situation with regard to the use of "the property" located at Box Hill. This property dispute has been in play for many years and this information is provided by those that have lived it from the Tall Timbers perspective.

RDA in NSW commenced on Pearl Batchelor's home, land known as Tall Timbers Riding School, West Pennant Hills in 1972 on the 23/10/1972 the name, constitution and bank account was formalised and the Committee commence known as the Tall Timbers Group. In 1977 the original 5 acres of land was purchased at Lot 7 Conrad Rd, Kellyville a loan was secured by Jo MacWilliam & Pearl Batchelor as Guarantors. Ponies, saddlery gear donated by Pearl to Tall Timbers Group. In 1978 grant to build indoor arena \$30K was secured. Subsequent land holdings were purchased, with **mortgage paid through fundraising, agistment and riding lessons delivered at the Centre**. An additional land holding was a lease. It is belief by Board Members that these actions were provided by RDANSW rather than Centre members however Centre members and volunteers were most certainly involved in the day to day work of all activities. **RDA(NSW) didn't exist until 1981**. RDA(NSW) was set up to provide a link to other Centres and States. At this point in time two committees were formed, "Group named Tall Timbers" and "RDA(NSW) State board". All assets were transferred to Tall Timbers Group, except \$500 to commence RDA(NSW). Title Deeds for property went to the Tall Timbers Group.

At the time that the developers came knocking in Kellyville, the additional leased land would be lost and residential development and main road frontage right next to the arena would impact the safety and security of the Centre long term.

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Joint Patrons: Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of NSW and Mr Dennis Wilson
ABN 22 977 966 930 • CFN 12295 Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 **All donations \$2 or more are tax deductible**
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In 1999 a property was purchased at Box Hill with the proceeds from the sale of land in Kellyville the amount of this purchase was \$1 495 000 as carried in the financial reports of RDA(NSW). The decision making of that has been discussed at length, disputed and actions taken which resulted in 2005 the Tall Timbers Committee being given an ultimatum by the RDA(NSW) Board and they resigned as a whole. At this point the RDA(NSW) Board appointed administrators, Gerard Murphy and Greg Pike (dec) to manage the Centre.

As part of this management by the Board:

- The Board attended the property, changed locks and accessed paperwork
- Tall Timbers Centre was advised that the use of the house on the property was no longer permitted which was used for admin and Volunteer breakout areas and storage of records had also hosted RDA(NSW) AGMs and Workshops
- Tall Timbers Centre was required to pay RDA(NSW) a sum of \$483k as a result of the sale of the Kellyville property.
- Under direction of the Appointed administrators the facilities that are currently onsite were designed and built, using the funds in Centre accounts (deemed to be Centre funds following the settlement listed above) and grants such as the Community Building Partnership grants
- The RDA(NSW) Board has since leased the house at the property at Box Hill for \$25 - \$30k per annum revenue to the state.

At this time the dispute over the land holdings and what was and wasn't Tall Timbers or RDA(NSW) was considered dealt with and resolved. From Tall Timbers Centre perspective, we have proactively worked hard to repair a relationship with the Board and other Centres as it was common for Tall Timbers Volunteers not to be involved in RDA(NSW) activities and be ashamed to wear their shirts or be proud of being part of Tall Timbers due to the conflict and jealousy directed to Tall Timbers that is commonplace in the organisation.

We are proud that the name Tall Timbers is fondly remembered as Pearl's place and will always link back to the grass roots of the organisation.

There is no denying that the facilities at the Centre are fantastic and grateful that we were able to have input into the development of the site but **the comment that this has been paid by RDA(NSW) is disrespectful of our Volunteers and Centre Members who worked hard to fundraise, apply for grants, maintain and add improvements where we can.**

Our objections to the Vodafone tower were many and varied based on the health of our workers and participants and the need to understand the benefit for all Centres balanced to the perception of our local community that we rely on for support and fundraising which is increasingly difficult as it is for all Centres. The request for how the additional \$25k pa would assist all Centres is still not able to be provided by the RDA(NSW) Board. If it was to be split annually amongst Centres then that would be approx. \$500 per Centre per year but that was not the intended action of the Board.

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On the subject of leases that other Centres pay, there are many arrangements that are utilised by Centres however for clarity the arrangement in place for Tall Timbers is a \$10 per annum licence fee in place until 2024.

Tall Timbers does not receive money from RDA(NSW) for any improvements, maintenance or staff costs to maintain the property.

Tall Timbers Centre currently fundraises to pay for the following property costs which totals **\$30k** per annum:

- Insurance buildings
- Telephone
- Water
- Property maintenance
- Property Improvements – example new boundary fencing

In addition to this we also have the costs that all centres have with feed, vet, horses and Staff to manage the property and resources.

Depending on arrangements Centres leases may be higher but also have a walk in and walk out arrangement so it is important to ensure that we compare these arrangements on an actual basis of ongoing costs to centres rather than making the statement that Tall Timbers is being treated favourably with a \$10 lease arrangement.

The Centre has worked hard over the last 15 years to improve the relationship between the Centre and the RDA(NSW) by supporting at all opportunities, 2 Board members, 2 Regional Reps, Coaching and Assessing Volunteers, provision of time and expertise to other Centres when requested and offered at all opportunities.

Recently we requested approval for expenditure from RDA(NSW) for 3 members to undertake some targeted Social Media and Marketing consultation work with a leading NFP program with a view as proposed to the Board that this knowledge be shared through workshops with all RDA(NSW) Centres. This proposal took weeks to be approved and has now begun.

At the end of the day the organisation is there to provide services to those that need it most. The boards statements and actions of late leave Tall Timbers Centre vulnerable and disheartened of the spirit of the organisation.

RDA(NSW) Tall Timbers Centre Committee

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