

# Community Lofts, a future for the Sport?

I have been conducting a Community Loft ever since the Mallee Classic started way back in 1998. Basically a One Loft Event is a Community Loft with fanciers from many different areas sending their birds to compete from the same loft. Now the way the community loft started to come together was when the Classic was finished the owners were asking if there was another opportunity for their birds to compete in Dr Colin Walker's Open 700 mile event. I arranged for them to have their own section as well as competing in the overall result. This in turn saw the owners of the birds in the Mallee Classic loft able to compete in Open racing against all competitors. This is no different to someone sending birds to a mates loft to fly I hear you say, BUT all the birds in the Mallee Classic loft actually competed under the individual fanciers name not just the Loft Name! This also enables credit to be given to the actual breeder or owner of the bird and not to the so called Loft. I have seen many times people saying that this guy or that guy has great pigeons, but to only find out later that he isn't the breeder, people had simply bred birds for him to race, but of course the fancier was taking all the credit and even selling his own birds on the back of someone else's achievement. This is simply fraud, I have even seen people buying stock and then selling youngsters that have not even raced, only selling birds on the performance of pedigrees, pedigrees are great BUT unless birds are continually tested then people waste good money on bad pigeons. Many reputable fanciers try to better their bloodstock birds and test them in racing before trying to sell the birds. If you are buying birds from someone like this you are throwing your hard earned money away, unless they can provide results from birds they have sold.

I have had many people ask me about the concept and there have been other articles written, especially by my friend Duncan MacGregor, but still many people miss the message and the benefits of a community loft. We have travelled to many clubs and federations in Australia and discussed our concepts, which at the time the people who attended thought were great ideas, only to have committees over turn or stop their motions for the concepts to be trialled or integrated into racing. These people stopping progress are fearful of the competition and their power base, because maybe the new people attracted by the Community Loft idea would have a better understanding of managing a club or federation or even how to market and promote the sport better than the people on the committees.

So now let me break things down further.

If you have 10 members in your club and you pay a nominal fee of \$10 membership each year. All the other fees come direct from your own pockets for racing fees etc. now just on memberships alone they bring in a small \$100. This may help with electricity and other running expenses, maybe.

Now if you allowed each member to become a **Pigeon Trainer**, just like a **Horse or Greyhound Trainer**, then a different perspective can be seen. Now if each member was able to have just 5 people flying from his loft, then this means that the fancier who owns the loft becomes the **Pigeon Trainer** and the others are merely members and owners of individual pigeons, BUT you now have 5 extra members to your club. Therefore 10 lofts now have 50 members of the local club! Now 50 members multiplied by \$10 equals \$500 dollars going into the club account and assisting with the expenses. Now things don't stop here.

The **Pigeon Trainer** can opt to charge a nominal fee to train and house the birds for racing just as a **Horse or Greyhound Trainer** does, this in turn cuts down the expense to the owner of the loft, thus making his racing cheaper for the year as well. Everyone is saying the sport is getting too costly and people are leaving because of this but we are not looking at ways to reduce costs or to encourage new people to the sport.

Now the **Pigeon Trainer** can decide his own costs per bird etc for his own loft, this is up to him, but it also allows for him to have additional contacts, birds, ideas and companionship on the day of races waiting for the birds. Maybe even the fact that some of the new members may assist him and give him some time out, maybe he could use with the family even. The money raised by people competing out of his loft reduces his costs and assists with the overall up keep of the race birds etc.

Don't get too excited yet, this doesn't mean if your club or fed charges \$100 per member you do the same for the new people, commonsense must prevail, do not get too greedy! I can see people grabbing calculators going  $10 \text{ lofts} \times 5 \text{ members} \times \$100 \text{ per member} = \$5,000$ . Some of these guys may only have up to 20 birds to race each, so it is not feasible to charge someone exuberant fees for 20 birds when someone else is registering or breeding up to 500 birds. So you have to find a middle of the road approach.

Now when the birds are entered for racing they are entered under the owners name flying to a particular loft. We have STB clocks able to take 15 rubbers and even more so we have electronic timing which times all birds returning to the loft, so for the little extra work identifying the owners the benefits out weigh the negatives. We have more people racing and enjoying the sport with added benefits of attracting people who are not able to house or keep pigeons whether it be council regulations or for health reasons, they can still have involvement with the sport.

Now who could this apply to?

- Pensioners
- Students
- Disabled People
- Business People

These people either lack, money, property, access facilities or even time to be able to be involved in our sport, but by looking outside the square we maybe able to find answers to taking our sport into the future which will see growth and even making the sport more professional.

I will add more to this subject as I get questions and have some more time to ponder! So stay tuned for more updates.

Once again I am placing this out in front of everyone to get people thinking of new possibilities in our sport.

Yours in the Sport,

Barry Trewin

