



## *The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)*

*(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)*

### *Avian Importation into Australia (brief discussion)*

*(The Avicultural Society of NSW Meeting - December 2012)*

**Graeme Phipps:** The background behind this is that Paul Gilchrist sent a letter to the last meeting of the ABA and our view was to positively reply to them to say yes, in principal we are interested in being involved and we seek a meeting with you at the earliest opportunity to progress this matter. Paul Gilchrist's point about needing to have a more coordinated approach is because they are already spending up to \$440 million decommissioning Spotswood and Torrens Island Quarantine Stations, they are going to have nothing in Sydney, and they are going to have just one mega facility somewhere in Melbourne.

I went to the meeting but I was just there to listen, see who was there, and what goes on. I am not the representative of the Society on the ABA, it is Keith Gallagher.

My own personal opinion, which is not the Society's opinion, is that I am in support of legal avian importation into Australia. Personally I don't see the point in it in that if someone dumped me as a curator onto anywhere I wanted to be on the whole planet, may it be Australia, because Australia has the best birds in the whole world in terms of diversity, etc. But the reality is that there are exotic birds in Australia and there is a demand, and while there is that demand, it needs to be met and it needs to be met legally. It will add to the genetic pool of a lot of the exotic birds that are already here and if you think about it in terms of exotic birds such as the Green Peafowl for example, which is critically endangered in the wild now, we have got some good genes here that could help with the ultimate survival of the birds in their country of origin in the wild.

We need to find out the opinion of the Society. I can have an opinion but I am not entitled to put that forward as being the view of the Society.

**Ian Ward:** It has got to be realistic and not like the last time when there was a selected group of birds coming in and a selected group who got them.

**Graeme Phipps:** Yes that's right. It has got to be realistic and it has got to be better than last time, because last time it didn't work.

**Ian Ward:** It worked for a few, those people who got them.

**Graeme Phipps:** Yes that is right.

So personally again, I favour CMPs (Captive Management Plans). In other words that you actually make up a Captive Management Plan so that you know whether you need the genes or not. It could be that the birds you have are doing alright and you don't even need any, but if you do, you have got a case straight away.

I know what I think, the question is, what do you think?

Joe Habib: Some of you might know that for the last two or three years I have been working with a couple of people trying to instigate importations of exotic parrots, Psittacines, back into Australia again. I can honestly say that at this present moment we are no closer to it than we were three years ago. I have been spending a lot of time and a lot of money in trying to get this happening with meetings in Canberra, Melbourne and Queensland. I have a lady that is currently working for me, who lives in Western Australia, that is currently involved with importing exotic poultry. Her next shipment is coming in, in March. She has a quarantine facility with a syndicate in the UK and her birds will be coming through the Torrens Island Quarantine Station in South Australia.

The current status with the importation quarantine facilities in Australia is that at the end of 2015 their leases run out for most of these facilities. Some of them are privately owned lands which the Government just leases. It is planned that the Spotswood Quarantine Station will be decommissioned and the residential area around there will be knocked down. With the new plan the only birds that will be allowed in will be poultry and racing pigeons.

There is a new facility that is being built in Melbourne which is going to be on 144 hectares about 10 minutes this side of Melbourne Airport just off the Hume Highway. Many of you may know that as you are driving into Melbourne there is a Shell Service Station on your right-hand side which is pretty much on the corner of the road where it is on the outskirts of north of Melbourne at Mickleham. I forget the name of the street. They will be spending \$440 million on this facility which will include dogs, cats, horses, poultry, pigeons, plants, and animals like llamas, alpacas, etc. But there is nothing in their current plans at all that allows for Psittacines. They are looking at this facility being fully operational in 2018. Stage one will be for poultry in 2016-17 and the final stage will be in 2018. They are even allowing for bees, although there have been no bee imports for five years because of some of the diseases that they have had with those. They are spending 10s of millions on a facility that they don't even know that they are going to use and nowhere in their plans is there anything allowed for Psittacines. Not even pheasants, even though they are closely related to the poultry - they are not allowed.

There were a few people from AQIS at this last meeting that I went to on the 1st November in Melbourne, who were there to talk about this facility, but nowhere did they say, not even in their future planning, that they have allowed for anything other than new areas for chickens, the dogs and the cats and the horses. So they have got growth area for them but no initial plans for anything else.

Graeme Phipps: In the light of what Paul Gilchrist is saying, i.e., that you have got to get on the agenda. We can't allow that. The idea is for the ABA at least, and others to push it.

Joe Habib: Yes. That is the support from the poultry industry. I am part of a syndicate which started out initially with just me. Now I have a gentleman from Queensland that is part owner of a zoo and there are two other guys that are involved that are keen to import. We have the full support of the poultry people because they don't want to see any illegal smuggling going on due to the risks of bringing in any diseases which could affect the commercial poultry industry and cost them billions of dollars. Even with all that support - nothing - but the illegal smuggling continues.

Graeme Phipps: So we need to get some forward on this. Following on from the ABA meeting that was mentioned earlier, who agrees that we respond to Paul Gilchrist saying that in principle we agree with you; and then organise a meeting to establish what needs to be for the next step forward?

- Members: It was agreed unanimously by members who were present at the meeting.
- Graeme Phipps: Does everyone agree that it is The Avicultural Society of NSW's petition that we support legal importation?
- Members: It was agreed unanimously by members who were present at the meeting.
- Graeme Phipps: Does anyone want to put forward an opinion on this or do you think we should just put it up as a sort of forum to find out what people think?
- Joe Habib: The problem is that a lot of people are going to get scared that the cost of this is going to be phenomenal. A pigeon shipment, without buying your birds, with 45 days quarantine in the UK and 25 days in the Australia, will cost you \$160,000.
- That is to rent the room that is 3 x 3 metres in Melbourne for 45 days and then if your birds are found to be diseased they are either put down or extra quarantine time required depending on what it is.
- Graeme Phipps: One of the head keepers of birds at Melbourne Zoo was trying to get the support of other zoos for avian importation but they were not at all interested. Not even for flamingos, or crown cranes, or birds like that, that would significantly buff up our open plain zoos significantly.
- Joe Habib: One of the members in our syndicate, Steve Robinson, he is part owner of the Darling Downs Zoo near Warwick and he is currently involved in talks with Melbourne Zoo and Seaworld to see if with quarantine and leasing, if leasing their facilities would ever be a possibility. I don't think Seaworld are interested. He has a pretty good working relationship with Melbourne Zoo. He has bought baboons from Melbourne Zoo and has had exotic animals through quarantine through Melbourne. Another option is building a facility on his property which is going to be a massive cost.

*The discussion was concluded at this point.*

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