

NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE CONSULTANTS LTD.

(INC. VIC.)

P.O. BOX 389

CAULFIELD EAST, 3145

January 25, 1988.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

Ten years ago I helped start the Motorcycle Riders' Association. I have been proud to work for it until a little over two years ago when the MRA began to decline. Financial membership fell, services and events disappeared and the MRA's good name went to an all time low. The campaign to stop unjust 3rd party increases failed. The Elizabeth Street shop, which was turning over more than \$100,000 in 1985, had to close through lack of funds. The legal service ended as did the recovery service and we lost the 10% discount on bike insurance that MRA Promotions Pty.Ltd. had established for the members.

I left the MRA Victorian Committee at the end of '85 hoping the vacancy would encourage new people to serve and take the Association to the next phase of development. The MRA must go professional to avoid becoming just another touring club with a political opinion. It has to increase membership to grow so it must offer services and products. This means people are going to have to take MRA responsibilities seriously, look at it as a career and run it as a business.

During 1986 the State Committee spent up to \$1000 of members funds employing a firm of lawyers to see how they could stop MRA Promotions from using the MRA name. They obviously did not succeed. The money was wasted.

Early in 1987 the Gippsland Register President, Warren Coward, moved a motion at a State Committee meeting to have me expelled from the MRA. The motion was seconded by Dave Hornsby from Morwell, now the State President. The motion failed but a motion of confidentiality was passed, the item was removed from the minutes and MRA members were banned from talking about what went on in the meeting. I was not told it was coming nor given any opportunity to defend myself nor was I allowed to know what I was charged with. To this date I still do not know on what grounds Coward/Hornsby & Co. wanted to throw me out in disgrace. In terms of honour and honesty I believe this to be the lowest episode in the ten year history of the MRA.

Most of this type of attack on members and Registers seems to come from a handful of people in the La Trobe Valley. I stress that I do not believe that it is the Gippsland Register as a whole, just a handful of negative, unimaginative little people.

The Geelong Register put an enormous amount of effort into the mid 1987 Registers Conference and Motorcycle Safety Seminar. Top industry, Government and Police representatives spoke and answered questions on our future in motorcycling. The venue was excellent and it should have developed into an annual event with training workshops for MRA members and direct contact with the authorities. Everyone agreed that it had great potential and the date of March '88 was set for the next one. Then out came the Gippsland newsletter which virtually accused the Geelong Register of wasting members funds for their own glory. Needless to say the organisers who thought they had done something worthwhile for the MRA were hurt and discouraged.

Also around the middle of 1987 the Victorian Treasurer realised that the city shop had become a financial liability. Income had been allowed to fall so far that the MRA could not even meet running costs on what had been an expanding business. Tony Scicluna sought help to try to salvage what was left of the Association from me. In spite of the moves to expell me and take legal action to put me out of business I agreed to help. Steve Bond and I put a team together to move the shop to a store. The financial records disappeared from the counter between Friday night and Sunday morning in similar fashion to the reasons that should have been in minutes for my expulsion. If Bondy and I had not given up our time the loss to the members in terms of furniture and equipment left at the shop would have been far greater.

Bondy and I also tried to help with the 3rd party fight. We got it to a stage where we had a meeting organised with the Treasury, the Industry, ourselves and we invited the MRA thinking we were achieving for motorcycling. When Hornsby got the invitation he rang the Treasury official to cancell our meeting saying that no one but his committee could speak on behalf of Victorian motorcyclists. By the time the meeting was reset

3.

This charge is trumped up. Dont ask why. I have never been able to understand the way they think. Because marshals failed to turn up we had a manpower problem on the day. I had to load the MRA gear at 5 AM by myself. I set up the MRA stand, the stage position, and the various other tasks for the event between 7 and 9 AM. By mid morning there were parking problems and since Marg Guthrie was the only State Committee person available I asked her to assign some people to help me out for half an hour.

Several witnesses from the 4B's and Ulysses club saw I had a problem. Guthrie asked Warren Coward, president of the Gippsland Register who was standing there doing nothing, to get some of his members to help. I assume that among them were Alec Hood and Tim Smith. Coward agreed and the group moved off in the general direction but no help ever came. Later Coward claimed to have been worried about a child that he had lost. If that was so at that time then he was clearly very calm about it. Perhaps the child in his care got away from him a little later. If so then he owes the Secretary an apology. I certainly do not.

From what I hear on the Grapevine, Gippsland is going to try to have the Toy Run venue changed. This would be a disaster and the height of stupidity but I suspect there are those who live in the La Trobe Valley who do not want to see the event continue its success.

It seems to me that there is a small "push" in the La Trobe Valley that will continue to attack the MRA's real achievers until those people quit and the administration of the State Branch centres on Morwell. Think about it in just over 2 years they have taken over the roles of State President, Public Officer and newsletter editor. They had the State Membership Secretary for a while too.

I came back to the administration of the Association in the last half of 1987 because Tony Scicluna asked me for help. I did not seek an executive position or any form of voting power. I just wanted to achieve for the Association. I have, but I am disgusted at the way I and my team have been treated.

Its about time that this organisation began to mature and behave in an open and businesslike manner. If it does not then it has about the same future as a small town touring club. The members should wake up to the fact that for years these childish and very non specific attacks on the MRA's achievers have come from the same small group.



Damien Codognotto.  
Founding Member.  
Honourary Life Member.  
Victorian Branch Patron.  
Director MRA Motorcycle Insurance.

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Tel: Business (03) 211 5127

**DAMIEN CODOGNOTTO**

Director

Koala Motorcycle Tours  
P.O. Box 389,  
Caulfield East, 3145

MRA Motorcycle Insurance  
P.O. Box 389  
Caulfield East, 3145

4 February 1988.

Mr. Bill Bardsley.  
A.P.O. Central Zone.  
GPO Box 1820 Q,  
Melbourne. 3001.

Dear Sir,

at 11.45 AM on Monday, February 1, I was given a letter terminating my employment under the CEP grant at the MRA office at 208 High St., Northcote. The letter was handed to me by Margaret Guthrie.

This dismissal is unjust. In 38 years I have never been sacked from a job. I have been employed for most of my working life. I wish to appeal against the decision to sack me. I believe the MRA should withdraw the letter.

I have been employed as office supervisor since August 1987. I have worked well with the staff and with Margaret Guthrie. The staff at the MRA office have worked very hard and achieved a lot under extremely difficult conditions. Erin Horner was allowed to work from home because conditions at the office made it impossible for her to work there. I have put in many more hours than required, as have the other staff, because we believe in the community service value of the MRA.

There has been considerable friction between the CEP Steering Committee and the staff which I have tried to keep under control through direct consultation with Margaret Guthrie.

I am a Founder of the MRA, an Honourary Life Member and Patron of the Victorian Branch. I have represented the MRA on the Police Road Safety Advisory Committee and I have organised functions and promotions, including a TV ad at no cost, for the MRA. I write a column for Australian Motorcycle News which reports and comments on MRA activities Australia wide not just in Victoria. This column recently changed its name. My activities were known to the CEP Steering Committee when Mr. Scicluna approached me to take the position. The MRA asked me to do a job and I kept nothing from the Steering Committee. I deny doing anything that justifies my dismissal.

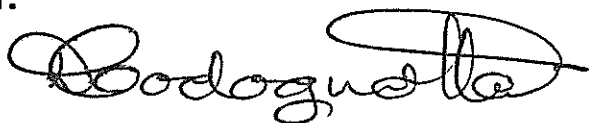
The CEP Steering Committee has failed to specify what I am alleged to have done wrong or when or where.

Reason 1.) On the morning of Monday, January 18, Mr. Scicluna rang me at the MRA and told me that if I did not alter my AMCN column to what he wanted he would sack me from the CEP position. I said that my work as a journalist had nothing to do with my CEP job and he could not use my employment to influence my reporting. He again threatened to sack me. Julian Butler was in the room and later spoke to Mr. Scicluna. He too was threatened with the sack. Although Mr. Scicluna rarely visited the office it was not the first time he had threatened staff in this way. I had complained about the way Mr. Scicluna and Mr. Hornsby had treated staff. The incident on the 18th. deeply upset me. Since Sue Thompson left at Christmas, Erin Horner worked from home supervised by Ms. Guthrie and Julian Butler was a driver spending a lot of time on the road there was not a lot left to supervise. Also conditions in the office were harsh with no cooling in heatwave conditions and dangerous floors. Because of the friction with Mr. Scicluna it was agreed with Ms. Guthrie that I spend less time actually in the office.

Reason 2.) I did not neglect my duties as office supervisor. I did not, at any time refuse to carry out or fail to carry out Ms. Guthrie's instructions. The CEP Steering Committee has failed to give any detail as to what I am supposed to have done or when or where.

Reason 3.) The politics and administration of the MRA have nothing to do with my role as office supervisor. Even so I deny the alleged interference. In spite of being asked by Mr. Scicluna on 2 occasions to run against Mr. Hornsby I have consistently refused to hold any voting position in the MRA executive since 1985. I do not attend meetings and have no voting power therefore I could not change a committee administrative or political decision. I believe that reason 3 has more to do with my relationship to Mr. Hornsby and Mr. Scicluna than with my role as office supervisor. It is a question of freedom of expression.

Sincerely,



Damien Codognatto. Ph. 211 5127

February

1988

8

MONDAY

Week 7 039-327

10 am: All staff to meet with State Sec.

1988

February

9

TUESDAY

Week 7 040-326

APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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APPOINTMENTS

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MARCH

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February

Week 6 037-329

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Week 6: 038-328

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February

1988

4

THURSDAY  
Week 6 035-331

Mary not available today 11

ERIN NOT AVAILABLE AFTERNOON! SIGNED JKR

Shelley: Erin team → 12 MD

Julien 12 MD → 2 pm

Mary 2 pm → 4 pm

Julien 4 pm → 6 pm

\* Erin on s/c in p.m

\* Julien req. to be in office all day unless Sec. auth. absence.

APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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1988

February

FRIDAY

Week 6 036-330

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APPOINTMENTS

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MARCH

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# February

[illegible]

Figure 1

10 am - All staff to meet with State Sec re week's

work plans

Office staffing - All staff a.m.  
p.m.

P.M. — Erin & I went out home

Italian in office

Meeting office to 3:30 pm

out at approx 4:30pm

not back til 6:

Fin in 10 am

Tedious in 10:15 am

Daniels in 11 am - dismissed with 1 day pay in lieu of notice.

## APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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SATURDAY  
Week 5 030-336

MR A Sale + Districts  
"Confusion '88 Rally"

## APPOINTMENTS

53

JANUARY

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January

SUNDAY  
Week 5 031-335

## APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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January

1988

28

THURSDAY  
Week 5 028-338

St. Sec. arranged office open/staff coverage

Erin in.  
Julian in? - gone before 10:10 am, left note in log book  
alleging doing bike shop round; no contact with shop  
after leaving in a.m.  
Damien not in MRA office

APPOINTMENTS

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JANUARY

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1988

January

FRIDAY

Week 5 029-337

29

Shop closed  
(St. Sec. injured ill)

Erin in (working at home, as per Sec's instructions)  
Julian in? - unable to contact per phone at 9:55 am.  
10:15, 10:20 am - note in log book alleges ~~not~~ doing  
bike maintenance (contact phone no given). and states will  
be back early afternoon.

APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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January

1988

26

TUESDAY  
Week 5 026-340

Public Holiday - shop closed

1988

January

WEDNESDAY  
Week 5 027-339

27

St. Sec arranged office open / staff coverage

10 am - All staff to meet with St. Sec re week's work plans.

Enn in.

Julian in.

Damian not in MRA office - arrived approx 3pm, left approx 4pm

7.30pm STATE COMMITTEE

APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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JANUARY

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January,

1988

24

SUNDAY  
Week 4 024-342

MMA Asst. conference

1988

January

MONDAY  
Week 5 025-341

25

Public Holiday - shop closed

JANUARY

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APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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APPOINTMENTS

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January

1988

22

FRIDAY  
Week 4 022-344

St. Sec. arranged office open/staff coverage

Erin in.

Damien not in MRA office  
Julian working with Damien ? ? (see entry in log book)

APPOINTMENTS

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JANUARY

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1988

January

SATURDAY  
Week 4 023-343

23

MRA Aust. conference

APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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January

1988

20

WEDNESDAY

Week 4 020-346

St. Sec. arranged office open / staff coverage

1988

January

21

THURSDAY

Week 4 021-345

St. Sec. arranged office open / staff coverage

2 p.m. All staff + CEP steering Comm.  
to meet with CEP + DCL staff.

Erin in.

Julian in by 1 p.m. as instructed

Damien in office (after Operation Countdown meeting)  
approx 4 p.m. - met with State Sec for next Aust. conf.  
in hotel next door

APPOINTMENTS

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JANUARY

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APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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January

1988

18

MONDAY

Week 4 018-348

Mary in today - will see Tony in p.m.

Damien in  
Erin "  
Julian absent till 12 MD - explained last week's absence  
+ this morning's absence due to vehicle failure whilst  
on holidays + alleges Damien knew of his whereabouts

APPOINTMENTS

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JANUARY

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1988

January

TUESDAY

Week 4 019-347

19

Shop Closed

Damien not in - alleges doing Office Supervisor's job at home  
Erin working at home - not advised to attend office  
Julian working with Damien

APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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January

1988

1988

January

16

SATURDAY  
Week 3 016-350

17

SUNDAY  
Week 3 017-349

JANUARY

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APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

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APPOINTMENTS

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January

1988

1988

January

12

Staff pay day

TUESDAY  
Week 3 012-354

WEDNESDAY  
Week 3 013-353

13

Danica in  
Evin "  
Indian absent

Danica in  
Evin "  
Indian absent

APPOINTMENTS

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1988

January

MONDAY

Week 3 011-355

11

MRA Office opens

-Marg in today (only day all week)

Damien in

Eria in

Julian absent - no contact with office, inc. Damien

APPOINTMENTS

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FEBRUARY

Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa Su Mo  
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17 March 1988.

Brian Wilkins  
MRA Australia  
President.  
1/46 Booth Street,  
Annandale, NSW. 2034.

Dear Brian,

Further to my letter to you of February 24 I would like to add some information.

Firstly the Victorian Branch attempt to sack me and or influence the AMCN column failed. Before the matter reached the Industrial Commission Tribunal they withdrew the letter of dismissal clearing me and dropping the unsustainable allegations so that should be the end of the matter. Rightly so since all I am Guilty of is working hard for the members and telling the truth.

I stand on my record both as an honest and honourable person and as an achiever. Example: I was an organiser of the Geelong Registers' Conference and Seminar. It was a success that should have become an annual event but the Victorian Committee could not seem to generate the enthusiasm in the skilled people needed to run the show this year. My ten Toy Runs speak for themselves.

Which brings me to your two latest columns. I point out that the picture used in the MRA Column in the Feb. issue of Bike was the 1983 Driver Awareness Ride in Melbourne. I took the shot. I was an organiser. Seven to eight thousand motorcycles went out the Tulla Freeway and back to the Motorcycle Expo which my company put on and paid \$35,000 for. The MRA had no outlay and made a good profit from stock sales and memberships and got enormous publicity. In those days we had over 5000 financial members and turned over in excess of \$100,000 per year. We operated efficiently to the best of our abilities, we learned and we improved.

I reckon you should be outraged that many of the structures that gave people a reason to join the Association and gave the members a pride in it, have been destroyed. In March Bike you talk about attendances at Toy Runs and the reasons they consistently pull good crowds. You are wrong the reason they pull good crowds is that they are a festive season event, on at the same time each year so people can plan for them and they are better publicised than any other event. It is a fact that over the 10 decade they have consistently pulled more column centimetres and more prime time TV than anything else. That is the result of professional style promotion. Every year I send media releases to all TV newsrooms and current affairs depts and all dailies on the east coast. That combined with local publicity makes Toy Runs happen.

2.

I think you would have to agree that with ten years experience and many large scale events under my belt I may just have some advice that is worth taking.

If you want to be remembered as the MRA president that achieved a worthwhile change I suggest you lobby for a truly national motorcycle month that begins with the Driver Awareness Rides in November (all on the same weekend as with the Toy Runs) and ends with the Toy Runs.

This packs most of the action in to one month. There are obvious advantages with publicity. The Toy Runs can be promoted at the DAR and the Swann Series etc. There are advantages from the organisers' point of view too. Anyone who has had to arrange events over a short time span will tell you there is little extra work in doing two at once. It just means longer check lists.

When we came up with the idea of a national month we made a bad mistake in picking October. It doesn't matter so much up north but for Tasy and Vic. it is a disaster weatherwise. Victoria, sensibly in my view, made the change last year. I was not on committee and had no vote so I did not influence their decision. I did not even attend meetings. Common sense prevailed. Now Tasy and Vic. combined would have more than a third of the total financial membership of the MRA. Since no solid reason has surfaced not to change the National Motorcycle Month I feel you should seriously consider the change for the good of a major proportion of the membership.

NSW has said they could not change this year, 1988, because the time is too short OK what about 1989? SA claimed that the car GP got in the way. My response to that is there is more publicity about in November for the GP and a lot more people in town so use the situation to advantage.

You can't move the Toy Runs for two good reasons. 1. Christmas is fairly static on the calendar. 2. It works. So the sensible thing to do is to make it possible for the states with the bad weather to work with everyone else for the maximum benefit nationally.

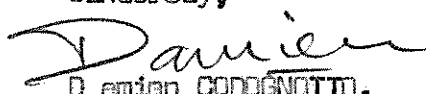
If you change the NMM to Nov. '89 then you can begin now to arrange a 1989 NMM logo & slogan for all to use. You can save heaps by making one badge and t-shirt for the whole country. I think MRA Australia should set the standard and make the stock and keep the profit on those items. That would mean less outlay for the less financial Branches and the profit on items sold in the first year of national control could go to pay off fees in arrears. Done properly MRA Australia would wind up with all members financial and a healthy bank account by 1990. With some planning now it can be done but it would take a strong initiative for the good of the majority who would support it if it was properly explained. The minority who whinge about anything and everything would not be hurt. The move to November is positive and makes sense. Central control and stock sales for a national event likewise.

You must be aware that the MRA's membership across the country is either static or in decline. I believe that what you should do is take a much higher profile so that people can see that MRA Australia actually does exist. Get a national P.O. Box in Canberra. The ACT Branch can clear it when they clear theirs and your new research officer can forward them to the national secretary. An organisation really must have a permanent address to be credible. In Hal Gaston's day it was P.O. Box 34 Higgins now MRA Australia needs an address.

Finally, I have said this before and I doubt you will even give it serious thought if you have read this far. You really should pull the MRA out of the AMC on mass. I was a founder of the AMC. At least I was there representing my State at the start and I helped organise the 10,000 bike run to Canberra which got it on its feet. But there are good reasons why it has failed and why you as National President have a responsibility to consider all points of view with regard to AMC membership.

As in the Feb. 24 letter I invite you come down here and discuss it face to face. Give me some warning though so I can tee up a video and so on.

Sincerely,

  
Damien CODOGNOTTO.