

Pull your horns in

Community anger over Rodeo Joe's threat to sue



NATASHA RYAN

lover set to face court for 'perjury'

THE man who helped Natasha Ryan hide from the world for almost five years will appear in court on Valentine's Day on a perjury charge.

Scott Black, 28, is charged with perjuring himself at the Brisbane committal hearing of Leonard John Fraser on April 2, 2002, by allegedly providing a false statement about Ryan's whereabouts.

Black, a milkman, has been arraigned to face the District Court in Rockhampton on February 14. The charge carries a maximum 10-year jail sentence.

Ryan, 20, made world headlines in April, 2003, after being discovered in a cupboard at her boyfriend Black's home in Rockhampton during convicted serial killer Fraser's trial.

She vanished from Rockhampton in 1998, when she was 14, and was presumed murdered. Her parents thought she had been killed by Fraser. Black and Ryan have been charged separately with causing a false police investigation. —AAP



WORRIED: Palmwoods Rodeo Committee members, from left, Jim Gilson, Jenny McKay and Laurie Davison ponder the prospect of being sued by Maroochy mayor Joe Natoli, inset, who injured his back in the event. Photo: Bob Gould

By RAE WILSON

THE organisers of a Daniel Morcombe charity rodeo where Maroochy mayor Joe Natoli broke his back have issued a public plea for him to remove them from a personal injury claim.

The mayor sent shockwaves of worry through the Palmwoods community this week when they learned he might sue for the injury where he was bucked from a rodeo bull in a failed publicity stunt.

Palmwoods Charity Rodeo chairman Jim Gilson, fellow organiser Laurie Davison and councillor Jenny McKay said yesterday they had received countless calls from volunteers involved in the event fearing they could also be sued.

They feared volunteers would now shy away and wondered where community events stood as litigation

became more prevalent.

Mr Gilson said the notice of intention to sue had "ripped the heart out of what Jenny and I have been working towards for years" — a united Palmwoods.

"He might be planning to sue the operator but get us off the notice of intention to sue," he said.

"He's asking Jenny McKay to rely on a handshake that he won't sue but I deal with contracts every day and unless it's signed I don't believe anything.

"I'm sick and tired of being a volunteer in so many community groups and for this to come and bite us in the bum from the last person I'd have expected.

"How does this impact on other community groups who just want to get out their and do their thing?"

Councillor Jenny McKay said she expected to be called as a witness to give evidence should legal action be taken but could not believe she might be among those targeted.

"I'm absolutely devastated for volunteers across Maroochy, Queensland and Australia," she said.

"There was in excess of 100 volunteers involved in the rodeo that night and we've all had calls asking 'are we involved in this, where do I stand?'"

"They fear they're going to lose their homes.

"We just want him to remove the community and the charity organisation from the document."

Mr Natoli said he would

pull out if it came to people losing assets but he had lingering questions and his family's future to think of.

"I could have easily ended up in a wheelchair and who would have been prepared to deal with that then?" he said.

"I'm torn between being a mayor and my responsibility for the future of my family as a provider, so I'm reserving my right to put my family first."

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