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Cockfighting Carbon Trading Australian Horse Trainer in PNG

By Ilya Gridneff

PORT MORESBY, July 16 AAP - A former Australian horse trainer who ran a Philippines cock fighting business is involved in carbon deals central to an inquiry into Papua New Guinea's suspended climate change boss.

Kirk William Roberts denies any wrongdoing in his carbon dealings in PNG and claims former business associates are running a smear campaign against him.

"I am a loveable larrikin," Roberts said from his Port Moresby home.

"I've done nothing wrong, we're doing good things.

"I am the most beneficial foreigner to this country (PNG) right now."

But Roberts' role in a series of carbon deals is now at the crux of PNG's carbon trading woes that includes an investigation in Dr Theo Yasause's role as director of the country's Office of Climate Change (OCC).

Yasause gave Hong Kong based company Forest Top and Roberts, a director of another company called Nupan PNG, an official mandate to trade carbon after Roberts locked in local landowners for potential carbon deals.

But documents show Yasause issued the mandate when he was the PNG prime minister's chief of staff, signing documents as interim director of OCC on May 12, 2008, one month before he was officially appointed director.



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I am the Australian Associated Press man in Port Moresby. I cover PNG and the Solomon Islands. Hopefully this blog can help those interested in these areas.

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The documents show Yasause allowed Roberts to go to the world market offering lucrative carbon credits in PNG.

On the same day Roberts and Yasause also signed a memorandum of understanding with Forest Top director David Leamey to facilitate international carbon credit deals.

Forest Top then gave Australian company Carbon Planet the exclusive rights to broker the credits and provide technical and scientific input to verify the credits.

Forest Top was to be the body that distributed carbon credit sale proceeds to the stakeholders like Nupan, Carbon Planet and landowners.

An Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) document shows Carbon Planet last year gave \$1.2 million for projects in PNG which were associated with Nupan and Forest Top.

Carbon Planet literature predicts the global voluntary carbon market will be worth around \$US9.9 billion-\$US17.1 billion (\$A12.5 billion-\$A21.5 billion) per year by 2012, with the global compliance market worth up to \$US2 trillion (\$A2.5 trillion) by 2020.

Carbon Planet chairman Jim Johnson said they still stood by their PNG deals but declined to comment further.

The deal between Yasause and Roberts' company Nupan became public last month, and as PNG does not have any carbon policy nor legislation for such ventures, the PNG government sidelined Yasause and launched a full investigation into the OCC.

The prime minister's media secretary Betha Somare said any of the deals struck were not valid. The new acting director of the OCC, Wari Iamo, is expected to make a similar statement this month.

"As Nupan (PNG) Trading Corporation is the power-of-attorney for numerous incorporate land groups, it is inappropriate for us to comment on any media speculation at this time," Roberts said.

Nupan and Forest Top are now in dispute and Leamey and Roberts are locked in various legal battles over wide ranging allegations centred in the Philippines, where Roberts is under investigation by the Philippine immigration department.

"I want nothing to do with carbon credits and nothing to do with Kirk William Roberts," Leamey said.

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Roberts, equally as frosty in his opinions of Leamey, was involved in what is considered the Philippines' national sport of cock fighting, running an operation in Olongapo, 130km northwest of the capital Manila.

"Cock fighting in the Philippines is the equivalent to pokies in Australia," he said.

Roberts said jealous cock fighting rivals, former business partners and competitors were running a smear campaign against his efforts to help PNG.

That smear campaign includes details of his time as a thoroughbred trainer in NSW, when his horse Yobro won the 1997 Auckland Cup and came second in the Brisbane Cup the following year.

But in March 2002 NSW Thoroughbred Racing Board stewards charged Roberts for verbally threatening his vet, Dr Darren Gibbins, during a December 2001 telephone call.

Roberts was given a six months disqualification after being found guilty of asking his vet to withhold records from an inquiry.

Previously Roberts had a six-month ban for administering a prohibited substance to a racehorse. An ASIC prosecution report for July to September 2007 shows Roberts also was fined \$2,800 under the Corporations Act for failing to assist liquidators and failure to provide reports to the liquidator.

POSTED BY ILYA GRIDNEFF AT 8:08 AM 

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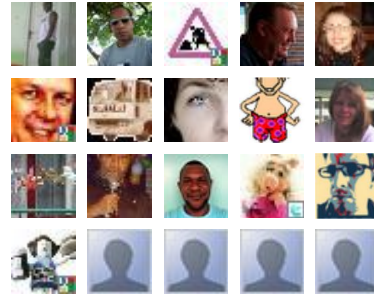
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