

## MEMBER OF THE MONTH – APRIL

Queensland PIAA member Blake De Bruin is 24 years old and he's already running three pet businesses that have made their pawmark in the pet industry. It's bizarre how he manages to fit it all in one day!



Coming from a family who has owned and operated boarding kennels for more than 30 years, Blake is now owner and director of Queensland's first accredited boarding kennel under the current accreditation scheme, Samford Pet Resort, which he took over management from his parents five years ago.

In 2009 he founded Pet Tech Pro which was in 2010 renamed Coda Associates, a software development, IT and graphic design company that specialises in the pet industry. Coda Associates are the developers of Pet Tech Pro Pet Resort management system. He is also a franchisee of Sell A Business, acting as a real estate agent for businesses across the pet industries.

Blake has an older sister named Kylie, an airline pilot whose husband Colin Mackay is Director of North Shore Pet Resort (in Redcliffe), which the De Bruins bought a few years ago.

"I started flying at 15, but it didn't capture me the same way it captured Kylie," says Blake. "I was always intending to go into pet resorts."

### **Growing up in pet industry**

Blake's interest for working at a pet resort stems from growing up in the pet industry amid litters of puppies. "I remember as a child, waking up every Christmas to clean out the kennels first before opening presents," he says.

His parents, Karen (former director of PIAA Boarding) and Garth, bred and showed dogs until about 30 years ago when they got into the boarding business in order to meet increasing demand from people who showed dogs and didn't want to leave them at home.

Despite Blake's desire to work in boarding, his parents did not want him to get straight into Samford Pet Resort without having life experience. "They wanted me to work somewhere else before stepping into the family business," he says.

So he chose the next best thing to boarding pets – 'boarding' humans. He worked for a real estate agency for a number of years before joining the Samford Pet Resorts team.

**Q: Tell us about the pets in your life.**

I have a two-year-old Birman cat which we adopted, named Theodore. He sits next to me, on top of me, on my keyboard. Then there's Koda, my 3-year-old purebred German Rottweiler. I named the company (Coda Associates) after him. Theodore and Coda get along well; they sleep together. Koda is 65kgs and he's a sook. He follows me around, goes everywhere with me. I always loved Rottweilers; they have a lot of personality. They are a dog that is protective and the absolute sook that you want them to be. When I sit up late hours to work, he's always there.

**Q: What do you do for fun?**

I enjoy spending time at home with Koda and Theodore or getting out on the boat with my partner Caitlin. She is a psychologist. I got my Dive Master and Master scuba diver qualification when I was 17 but had to give up the sport I loved because I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. I now volunteer as a surf life guard at the local beach. It's an excuse that I have to leave everything I do at work to spend a day at the beach. If I'm going to volunteer, I might as well do it somewhere with a good view!

**Q: If you could meet anyone in the world dead or alive who would it be and what would say to them?**

I read Richard Branson's books. At the moment, he would be my idol. I would love to have the opportunity and chat about his business ventures. His business ethics and business mind are on the same path as mine. I would like to clash heads, get some ideas and hear some of his stories. The more I read (his books), the more I understood what he was talking about and believe his way of doing business. I admire that.

**Q: Who has influenced you in your life?**

My parents and grandparents whom I was brought up with and learned from. We didn't grow up with an awful lot. If we wanted something as a kid, we would work for it before we got it. I grew up appreciating and respecting what we had and what we owned. If you take care of it and look after it, it will look after you. I picked that up from both my parents. They also taught me good work ethics and supported me throughout my years of developing and finding my feet. I don't know where I would have been now. I think it's responsible for them to make me go out and work elsewhere – I learned a lot from working in real estate. I was the youngest working there, dealing with tenants; it's a big responsibility. It made me the business person I am today.

*PIAA Member of the Month articles are researched by Caroline Zambrano. Caroline is a PIAA member and award-winning pet journalist. She creates specialist pet content and editing for magazines, newspapers, media releases, websites, e-newsletters and brochures. Visit [www.petjournalist.com.au](http://www.petjournalist.com.au)*