

# Exchange Report

2024

October 4- December 12



## Rotary Vocational Exchange Program

### PREPARED BY

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### PRESENTED TO

Balwyn  
Rotary



Rotary  
Albert Park



Rotary  
Keilor East





# INTRODUCTION

The Rotary Vocational Exchange Program 2024 was an incredible journey of exploration, collaboration, and learning. Spanning ten weeks across four Australian states—Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, and New South Wales—this program allowed me to delve deeply into **Youth Empowerment, Education, and Peacebuilding themes**. The experience gave me valuable insights into innovative practices, cultural exchanges, and opportunities to adapt these learnings for impactful initiatives in Nepal. The program was supported by Rotary Club of Balwyn, Rotary Club of Keilor East and Rotary Club of ALbert Park

## Exchange Objectives



Peace Building



Economic  
Empowerment



Youth  
Empowerment

# MY EXCHANGE JOURNEY



Before the Rotary Vocational Exchange Program, I was at a crossroads, seeking clarity about my purpose. My Rotaract presidency had ended on a high note, with remarkable projects earning recognition nationally and internationally. Professionally, I was engaged with the World Bank, contributing to Nepal's first-ever IDA 21 Replenishment Meeting. Life seemed perfect—prestige, professional success, and family pride.

Yet, a conversation with Suzanne, my manager during the IDA meeting, shifted my perspective. Her words, "Ajay, don't settle for comfort or let anyone consume your energy or anything," made me realize I was at risk of losing my essence—the part of me that finds fulfillment in stories and smiles. Determined to regain clarity, I attended a 10-day Vipassana retreat, which helped me reflect and approach the exchange program with renewed focus.

Collaborating with Sally Armstrong, Jenny Foster, and David Gorman, we designed the program to explore three key areas: peacebuilding, economic empowerment, and youth engagement. These themes resonate deeply with me—peacebuilding reflects my spiritual inclination and love for meditation, economic empowerment stems from my experiences with poverty and professional insights, and youth engagement aligns with my passion for energizing Nepal's young generation. Despite challenges in securing resources and host organizations, persistence led to a successful program design.

# MY EXCHANGE JOURNEY

Over 10 weeks in Australia, I visited four states and engaged with inspiring individuals. This experience reaffirmed my belief that true transformation begins when people question societal assumptions and adopt a mindset of growth and collaboration. I see entrepreneurial education as a powerful means to achieve this vision, aligning perfectly with my life's purpose.

As I return to Nepal, I am excited to explore this approach and contribute to meaningful change. I am grateful to everyone who supported and guided me through this transformative journey.

10 Weeks

4 States

3 Host organization

Supported By:





# ROTARACT JOURNEY

- **RY 2020/21: International Service Director**
  - Coordinated with over 50 Rotary International Districts (RIDs).
  - Fostered collaborations across 25 countries.
  - Engaged 700 international Rotaractors in impactful initiatives.
- **RY 2021/22: Club Service Director**
  - Focused on innovative projects and team-building activities.
  - Received the "Most Innovative Member" award for creative contributions.
- **RY 2022/23: Vice President**
  - Effectively coordinated International Service and Club Service roles.
  - Became a Rotary International Positive Peace Activator, contributing to global peacebuilding.
  - Represented the club at Mr. Rotasia Bangladesh and the Rotary International Convention in Australia.
- **RY 2023/24: President**
  - Led the club with a focus on growth and impactful initiatives.
  - Spoke at prestigious platforms like UNESCO and the World Bank, advocating for youth empowerment.
  - Participated in the Rotary International Positive Peace Activator Summit, promoting peace and collaboration globally.
- **RY 2024/25: Immediate Past President**



# EXCHANGE ENGAGEMENTS

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### **Young Change Agents (YCA)**

Young Change Agents, an Australian social enterprise promoting entrepreneurial education, hosted me during this exchange. Over 3 weeks, I engaged with their initiatives that focus on fostering innovation and critical thinking among youth.

- **E3 Unconference (University of Tasmania):**

- Attended a three-day event with 76 delegates from across the globe, exploring entrepreneurial education's potential to create classroom change agents.
- Participated in design thinking workshops and developed a deeper understanding of how experiential learning can cultivate a growth mindset, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.
- Connected with passionate educators and youth leaders, exchanging ideas to contextualize entrepreneurial education for Nepalese students.



After my time in Tasmania, I joined the team of Young Change Agents in Brisbane for an enriching experience. During the initial days, I had the privilege of being guided by Margaret, the CEO of Young Change Agents, who offered invaluable one-on-one mentorship. She shared insights into their programs and provided personalized guidance that helped deepen my understanding of entrepreneurial education.

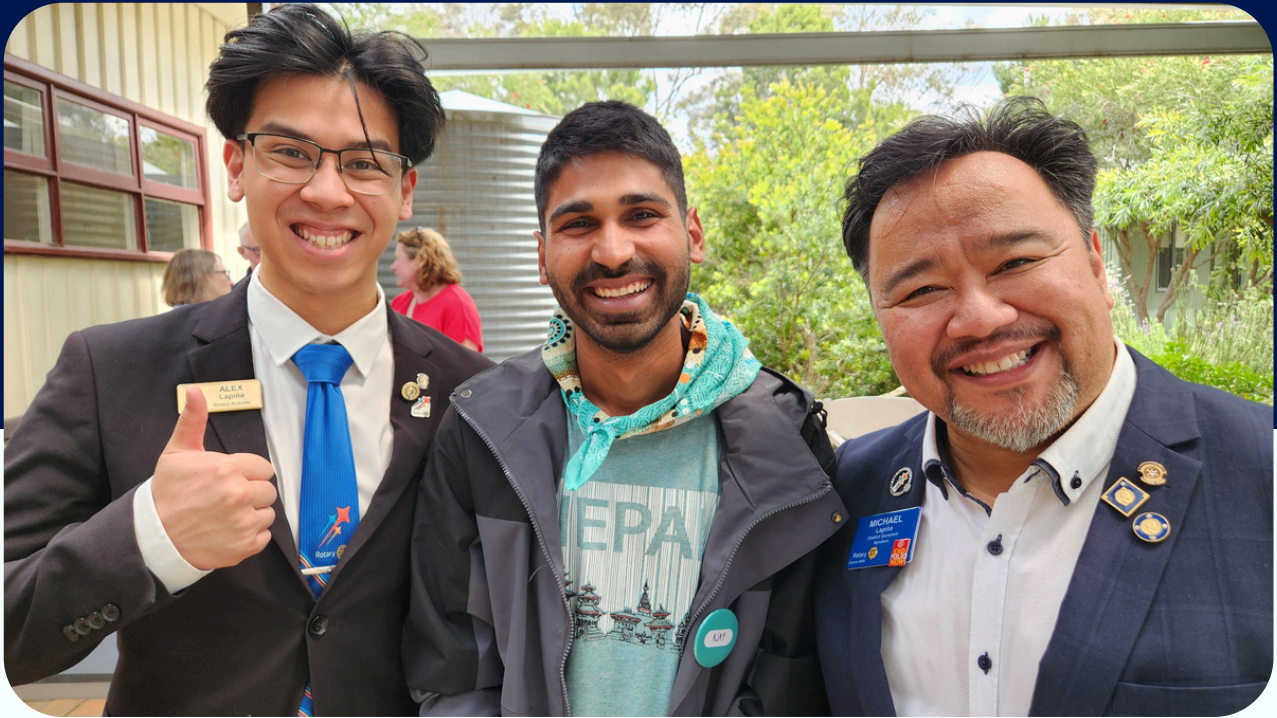
Later, I collaborated with Cat, the COO of Young Change Agents, where we delved into their course curriculum and explored the potential for future collaborations. Together, we discussed ways to adapt their entrepreneurial learning hub for Nepal, focusing on expanding the movement of entrepreneurial education to empower young minds. This engagement strengthened my belief in the transformative power of experiential learning and opened doors for meaningful partnerships to bring this vision to life in Nepal.



illuminate Education Australia exists to have every young Australian invited to meaningfully address the biggest problems that matter to them now. To do so, they empower them to be confident, creative, and capable. Their programs and workshops do more than just teach business and entrepreneurial skills, they provide an opportunity for young people to develop a core set of skills and capacities they can use immediately in the program through to the rest of their lives. Spent 2 weeks with Illuminate to get hands-on experience in using design thinking as a tool to explore entrepreneurial education.

- **Workshops in Gosford:**

- Co-facilitated sessions with Adam Mostogl, empowering 200 students from 10 public schools to design solutions for aging populations using ideation, prototyping, and financial planning.
- Supported St. Edwards Boys School students during a five-day design challenge, observing their journey from initial confusion to confident presentations.



# RYPEN

Rotary's has made significant programs to support youth leadership development, and RYPEN is one of their notable programs. RYPEN is a weekend camp for young people aged 15 to 17 (Years 9-11), focused on helping them develop their potential through a mix of lectures and adventure-based learning. I was fortunate to attend RYPEN organized by District 9800 from October 25-27, where I had the chance to connect with young Australians.

I was impressed by their intelligence and dedication, which made the future of Australia look promising. On the other hand, I also learned about some challenges they face. For me, this experience was an opportunity to immerse myself in the vibrant energy of young minds. I served as a support member for a group, led short mindfulness activities, and observed some fantastic facilitation techniques by experts who incorporated storytelling, activities, and active participation. It was a truly rewarding experience.



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Space Melbourne (formerly Illoura Peace Retreats) was established in 2016. With backgrounds working in the peace, development, security and community sectors on difficult topics and in difficult situations, Space Melbourne is no stranger to the darker sides of difficult work. With a history of managing the impact of difficult work on individuals, teams and organisations Space Melbourne is very alive to the common experiences of burnout, depression, grief, and other challenges.

### **Space Melbourne and Charles Allen**

- Spent three transformative days with Charles Allen, co-founder of Space Melbourne and a Rotary Peace Fellow.
- Discussed experiential peacebuilding, explored tools like Haiku and Mirror exercises, and reflected on Positive Peace's pillars.
- Witnessed inclusive leadership in practice during a Rotary Club of Sydney meeting focused on the Reconciliation Action Plan.

# ROTARY PROJECTS

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## ROTARY SHARE PROJECT

- Learned about the global impact of this initiative, which redistributes surplus medical, educational, and essential items to underserved communities worldwide.
- Gained insights into volunteer coordination and project management that can be applied to similar initiatives in Nepal.



## DONATIONS IN KIND

- Visited DIK's warehouse, which has delivered AUD 76 million worth of supplies globally since 1978.
- Observed efficient logistics and volunteer-driven efforts, reinforcing the value of resource redistribution in addressing local and global needs.



# ROTARY PROJECTS

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## CAMBERWELL MARKET

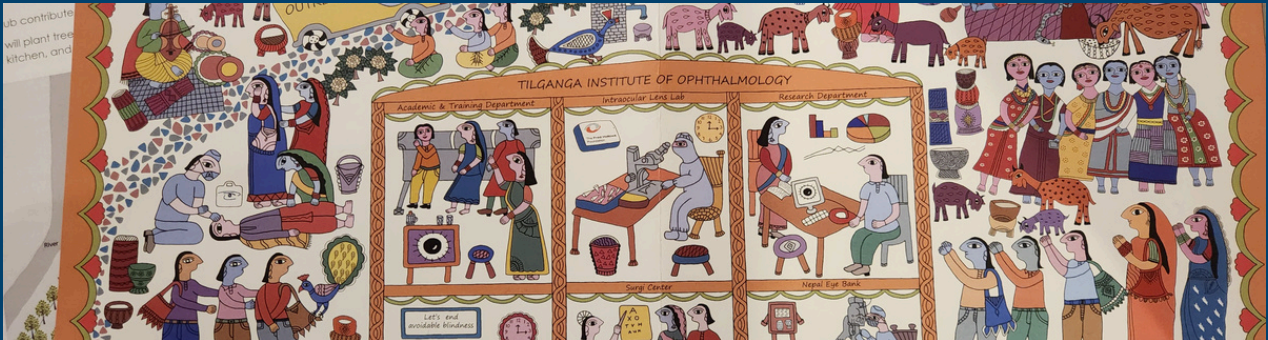
- Volunteered at this iconic Rotary Club of Balwyn project, which has raised over AUD 20 million for community development.
- Witnessed its vibrant atmosphere, fostering connections and raising funds for impactful causes.



## MOONEE VALLEY ART SHOW

Attending the opening day of the Moonee Valley Art Show highlighted the effectiveness of auctions for fundraising. The engaging auctioneer and vibrant energy of the crowd demonstrated how this method can successfully raise significant funds while creating an interactive and lively atmosphere.

# ROTARY PROJECTS



## ROTARACT FUNDRAISING

On October 19th, I attended the Peninsula Rotaract Halloween Trivia Night, a fundraiser for a Nepal project. The vibrant energy made the two-hour drive worthwhile. A remarkable coincidence occurred when I met the coordinator, who shared a Mithila art connection, revealing she was the artist I saw in Nepal years ago!



## RIMERN

I had the privilege of volunteering at RIMERN, a Rotary project assisting those in crisis with essential items. David Gorman, organized a wonderful tour. It's heartening to see their efforts, which have provided over 16,000 items to individuals facing significant challenges.



# ROTARY PROJECTS

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## ROTARY CHARITY BOOKS

My friend David gave me a quick tour of the Rotary Charity Books project and explained the concept behind it. This initiative has been one of Rotary's popular programs, aimed at promoting reading while supporting charitable causes. As someone with a keen interest in reading, I found the concept fascinating and am excited to explore the possibility of designing something similar in Nepal.



## RC KEILOR EAST BUNNINGS BBQ

I participated in the Rotary Club of Keilor East's Bunnings BBQ fundraiser, a well-loved Melbourne tradition. With support from Bendigo Bank, which also sponsors scholarships and community projects, this initiative reflects a strong commitment to uplifting local communities through collaborative efforts.

# ROTARY CLUB MEETINGS

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ROTARY CLUB  
OF SEYMOUR



ROTARY CLUB OF  
BALWYN



ROTARY CLUB  
OF ALBERT PARK



# ROTARY CLUB MEETINGS

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ROTARY CLUB  
OF SYDNEY



ROTARY CLUB OF  
MELBOURNE



ROTARY CLUB  
OF KEILOR EAST



# ROTARY CLUB MEETINGS

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## ROTARY CLUB OF SOUTHERN MITCHELL



## ROTARY CLUB OF SUMNER PARK



## ROTARY CLUB OF JINDALEE



# ROTARY CLUB MEETINGS

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ROTARACT  
CLUB OF  
PADDINGTON



ROTARY CLUB



# SPECIAL MEETINGS

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## HEATHER SADIECHILD HARRIS

Meeting Heather Sadiechild Harris, who worked as a midwife in Nepal's southern Terai in 2009, was insightful. Her stories highlighted past development challenges, prompting me to reflect on the region's progress. While physical changes are evident, persistent social issues reveal a deeper continuity in Nepal's developmental journey.



## ELAINE PRATLEY

Spending time with Elaine Pratley, co-founder of Peace Inc. and creator of Peace Kitchen, was truly inspiring. A pioneer in connecting peacebuilding and food, she shared her journey and future vision. I shared my Foodractor initiative with her, and she treated me to Malaysian cuisine and a Melbourne University tour.



## JOHN SIPEK

Meeting Mr. John Sipek, Past Mayor of Moonee Valley, was truly enriching. His story of overcoming challenges to lead his community was inspiring. Our discussion spanned politics, spirituality, and the possibility of working together on impactful development projects.

# SPECIAL MEETINGS

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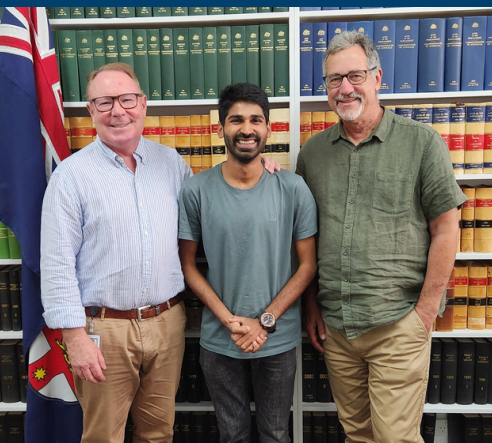
## SHAYNE

I had the pleasure of meeting Shayne, a retired public school teacher and recipient of the Australia Educator of the Year award. She shared valuable insights into the Australian education system, offering a unique perspective from her extensive experience.



## SAHAN

Having collaborated with Sahan, a fellow International Service Director from Sri Lanka, on several projects during the COVID-19 period, meeting him in person for the first time was a special moment. Our shared bond as brothers made this encounter even more meaningful.



## HUGH MCDERMOTT MP

It was insightful to talk with Hugh McDermott MP, State Member for Prospect, about his work serving a diverse community. He shared how being approachable and staying connected with people has been key to his success in community engagement and his ongoing local involvement.

# SPECIAL MEETINGS

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## GUY MURPHY

I had the pleasure of meeting Guy, a young Rotarian, former Rotary Youth Exchange participant, and entrepreneur. He shared his journey with Rotary and how it has influenced his life. Additionally, he helped me find a host in Gold Coast, further demonstrating his generous and supportive nature.



## VINU

Meeting Vinu, a Rotaractor from Sri Lanka and past International Service Director of the Rotaract Club of Alumni of University of Moratuwa, was a memorable moment in Sydney. We had a wonderful time recalling our shared Rotaract journey.



## BEN PECOTICH

Ben Pecotich, a renowned expert in design thinking and entrepreneurial education, is a visionary leader in his field. During my stay in Sydney, I had the privilege of meeting him in person and sharing my journey and experiences in Nepal. Our conversation was both insightful and inspiring, as he generously offered to connect me with potential collaborators in Nepal.

# MY HOST FAMILY

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SALLY  
ARMSTRONG  
MELBOURNE



JENNY FOSTER  
MELBOURNE



CHARLIE AND  
SUZZANE  
MELBOURNE



# MY HOST FAMILY

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WINSTONE,  
MARILYN, WYINE  
AND CHRISTINE

TASMANIA



SAPANA KHATRI

TASMANIA



GIL

BRISBANE



# MY HOST FAMILY

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DAVID AND  
DONNA

SYDNEY



DAVID AND  
LAUREL

GOLDCOAST



## OUTCOMES AND FUTURE PLANS

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### IMMEDIATE IMPACT

- Secured AUD 2,500 seed funding from Young Change Agents to implement entrepreneurial education in Nepal.
- Technical and educational resources from the Young Change Agents to experiment entrepreneurial education in Nepal





# ONGOING INITIATIVE

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## PROJECT POSSIBILITY

Project Possibility is a two-month initiative to nurture entrepreneurial thinking in students. Through three phases—developing a mindset, learning Design Thinking and Social Enterprise, and pitching solutions—students learn to tackle challenges innovatively. Personalized mentorship refines their ideas, while pitching to stakeholders fosters confidence and ownership. The program empowers students to create meaningful change, balancing innovation with community impact.



# THANK YOU



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