

# Networker

Rotary Opens Opportunities.

## Around the traps with the DG

This morning I received an email from RC Bendigo's Graeme Clarke who suggested a great idea about growing our membership, which will be taken up by our District Membership Director, Peter Frueh. Graeme's email inspired me to think further about new year challenges for Rotary clubs and how these are often centred on membership growth. Whilst current times might seem difficult under COVID-19 restrictions to grow membership, these times also present an opportunity to help alleviate the sense of isolation many feel in lockdown.

With this in mind, I would like to encourage all Rotarians to consider their network of friends, family, work colleagues, suppliers etc., who may in fact greatly benefit from connecting with others through Rotary. We offer a wonderful vehicle through which to communicate, connect and feel valued. This is truly a special gift we as Rotarians can offer to those within our circles.

As we start this new (Rotary) year, why not make a resolution to check on those around you who may find a sense of belonging, as well as satisfaction, from being part of an organisation that offers such diverse opportunities to service the community. As importantly, Rotary will connect them to others with whom they can share a conversation that could very well lift them out of lockdown isolation and open a wonderful world of opportunity.

Perhaps a new year resolution could include seeking out people to join your club so that they may help in giving service to others; or extending the hand of Rotary fellowship to all those you know. One of the many benefits being a Rotarian brings is in the friendships we form and the resulting fellowship we enjoy. Wouldn't you like to share this with those you know? Finally, I'd like to thank all our members and clubs for making the Governor Train feel very welcome at your changeovers. It's inspiring for IPDG Grant, DGE Dale, DGN Amanda and me to be at these changeovers and hear about your great activities and the way you're handling the COVID-19 challenge.



Discussing the G'Day homeless initiative with Cr Beverley Pinder, City of Melbourne & Major Brendan Nottle, Salvation Army

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"It is just as easy to acquire the habit of speaking kindly as it is to acquire the habit of speaking unkindly" 1935  
*RI Convention, Mexico City, Mexico*

## Mirror Mirror

### EndTrachoma by 2020, A five-year Rotary districts of Australia project

The world around us, our environment, provides a reflection of our state of being. It mirrors who we are or what we have become. One reflection that Australia is yet to deal with is the state of Aboriginal health and wellbeing, especially in remote communities. In 2016, Australia was the world's last developed country not to have eliminated Trachoma, a blinding infectious and totally preventable eye disease affecting some of our Aboriginal communities. When a group of Rotarians got on board, they didn't send medications out into communities, they sent mirrors.

Their efforts were fruitful, and the average Trachoma rates dropped from approximately 1 in 5 children in 2008, to around 1 in 20. However, this rate plateaued since 2012, and once antibiotic treatments ceased, there were recurrences. (Continued pg 2)



NT Health Promotion Officer Julie Wright distributing Rotary-donated hygiene kits to community members

## Mirror Mirror (cont'd)



was being held outside of Geneva for the first time. Lien attended the Sydney conference on behalf of the Rotary team and met with major Australian Trachoma stakeholders. She analysed the World Health Organisation global strategy for dealing with Trachoma to see whether their SAFE acronym; surgery, antibiotics, facial cleanliness and environmental improvement was actually being executed effectively in our indigenous communities.

What they determined was that huge investments had been made into the treatment strategies in regard to surgery and antibiotic use (the S & A of SAFE). Improved processes were enabling the detection of trichiasis (in-turned eyelashes, which causes pain, corneal scarring and resultant blindness) requiring corrective surgery. Programs had been coordinated in at-risk and known Trachoma-endemic regions across Australia, to routinely screen and administer community-wide antibiotic treatments. IEH too had developed and continually evolved a suite of health promotion resources to encourage facial cleanliness.

At the time, the experts thought that just focusing on SAF would be adequate, and environmental improvements received little attention. However, there's a strong relationship between health and environment. Inadequate community-appropriate hygiene and sanitation infrastructure plays a significant role in the prevention and alleviation of suffering from Trachoma and other infectious diseases. So, the backdrop of intense poverty meant there was still much work to be done to get this infectious, potentially blinding disease under control.

Projects were developed through partnerships with the Australian Trachoma Alliance, as well as indigenous communities, government and NGOs.

"Over the following years, we observed, listened and found ways that Rotary could support communities living under this threat. One observation was that mirrors weren't a priority; many homes didn't have one. Children were being told to wash their faces to prevent

Optometrist and public health expert, Lien Trinh, was engaged by Rotary to investigate whether there was scope for involvement.

Coincidentally, in 2016, the WHO Global Elimination of Trachoma by 2020 meeting

Trachoma but they couldn't actually see what needed washing. Our Mirrors in All Homes project was born and it has been in strong demand," said Lien.

Over 7,000 mirrors have been installed in communities across South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory through Rotary's partnerships with environmental health partners.

Rotary clubs across Australia continue to provide access to hygiene and sanitation opportunities through donations.

"Each iteration of our project aims to be better than the one before. Hygiene infrastructure appropriate for remote communities has been carefully considered and delivered through value adding to existing community services with portable water tanks, a community laundry and extra washing areas. Strong local partnerships ensure the longevity of such provisions," said Lien.

Sally Dell from RC Warragul in D9820 is part of a team of district Trachoma champions from across Australia. She formed great relationships with communities and service providers on her visit to Alice Springs in March 2019 for Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) Community Health Day, and the Rotary Community Laundry launch.

A year later, Sally and husband Peter returned to Central Australia with a trailer load of hygiene kits, medical equipment, funeral clothes, hand-knitted blankets and towels to gift to partners working with remote communities. Her timing was impeccable; local organisations were astonished to be receiving hygiene kits to distribute right before the COVID-19 lockdown.

"The importance of this project, is not merely ending Australia's national shame of Trachoma. We have also forged stronger relationships with our fellow Australians, understood their circumstances, and offered friendship and support," said Lien.

For more information or to make a donation, visit our website [www.endtrachoma2020.org.au](http://www.endtrachoma2020.org.au).

### Rotary tip

Consider dedicating a Zoom meeting to a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of your club.

See what action can be proposed by members to further improve the club's performance.

## Celebrating new and long term members

### Leon Scott—Flying high in Rotary



#### Black Hawk days

Being surrounded by 40 heavily-armed guards with Blackhawk helicopters hovering overhead in Timor Leste is quite unsettling when you're building a new school. I was inspired to get involved in the rebuild project after seeing guest speaker José Ramos Horta at a Rotary conference in Canberra.

A committee of 17 of us planned to help rebuild Timor Leste after the first coup in 1996. Because I was the only member with hands-on trade experience, I found myself leading the team to Dili. It was a terrible scene; 90% of buildings were burnt out and some 300 houses had no roofs.

This was the first of 50 project teams that I arranged. An important part of that was to make local labourers job-ready through providing skills training and general education. I've been fortunate to have the opportunity to build hospitals, schools, houses, an orphanage, a water treatment plant and tourism landmarks in Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and Australia.

#### Never waste a moment

Years ago, I attended fortnightly Citizens' Military Forces camps, however, my business commitments were so demanding that I couldn't afford the days away. Missing the fellowship, I joined Rotary because it offered a new network of caring people. I guess I've proved myself to be as persuasive as a sledge hammer and I've successfully recruited other clubs to support my projects.

Our local projects include the construction of the Rosalind Sound Shell outdoor entertainment centre in Bendigo, a waste paper transport depot, SES headquarters, and the bluestone toilet block at Lake Neangar. The toilet block happened while I was Mayor of the local government council. The Lady Mayoress and I were given the solemn task of opening it.

#### What about Rotary in 2020?

It's especially important that we don't lose the Rotary traditions or the fun side of things. I think it's a mistake that many clubs have dropped customs like the sergeant's sessions and the national anthem. There's also a risk of us over-emphasising training; Rotary is a service organisation not a corporation, and I don't think that today's presidents are any better than those of the past when training was much less time consuming and costly.

After 44 years in Rotary I haven't slowed down too much. I still support DIK and the Rotary office in Timor Leste, and I'm actively involved in improvement projects at Camp Getaway in Axedale, thankfully, no Black Hawks in sight, just big mosquitoes.

### Karyn Vines—Performing to a community beat

#### Benevolence starts at home

The importance of community support was instilled in me from childhood because I grew up in a very giving family. My grandfather who was very active in the church was quiet and humble. He'd do things like provide home grown vegetables to the community. It wasn't until his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party where everybody thanked him for what he had done that I realised just how generous he was.

My mother was a musician and gave time to community projects such as running choirs for dementia patients. About 15 years ago when I moved into a newly developed estate, my family and I started an organisation to bring the local neighbourhood together with events such as Clean Up Australia day and Carols By Candlelight. We'd run sausage sizzles and choose a different charity to donate to each month.

#### Rotary

I'd always wanted to join a volunteer organisation like Rotary but got caught up in the corporate world. For 25 years, my career's been in property management and development for hospital developments across Australia. My GP spoke to me about Rotary, which piqued my interest so I went to a Hoppers Crossing club meeting. I loved it because it's an international organisation that does amazing things. My induction was July 1, 2020.

Taking on the club role of Director of Fundraising for 20/21 will be challenging because we can't currently run events in person, and people may not be able to give as much, however it's also a great opportunity for us to help the local community through activities such as funding meals. This means we can go to bed at night knowing that we have done something worthwhile.

#### Music moves us

My birthplace was Brisbane. Initially, it was a bit of a shock when Mum, my sister and I moved from the Gold Coast to Melbourne because it was so cold. I was 15 and my 11-year-old sister had been accepted into the Victorian College of the Arts because she was an excellent flute player. I'm not as musical as the rest of my family – I play some piano but I'm more into singing; although mainly in the shower these days. I soon came to love Melbourne, particularly the arts, multiculturalism, and food.

#### The food of life

I'm a proud mother to a son and daughter and have two beautiful grandchildren aged four and six. They live close by. Cooking is one of my favourite pastimes and marrying an Italian was so right for me because of the food culture, family get-togethers, and the entertaining and socializing.





## Club Service tool kit

### How to make friends and influence people

#### Overcoming the cross-cultural challenges of overseas projects

Many of you might relate to visiting an impoverished area in a lesser developed country where children are denied basic education and health services. Of course, there's no welfare system, clean water or toilets, and girls have to stay home from school when menstruating because there are no sanitary products. You might be emotionally moved and determined to do something about it. Many Rotary projects began that way and achieved a lot. However, quite a number have led to disaster.

In one case, members of a Rotary club decided that an overseas village would benefit from a pump to provide more consistent water flow. No-one understood local behaviour and practices. The pump disappeared one week after installation. Another well-meaning Rotarian visiting a developing country thought it would be a good idea to provide toilets in a school. They were built but never used because western toilets were completely foreign and made the students feel uncomfortable, hence they continued to use the river.

There are many more examples like this and the huge lesson is that having a good heart is not enough. The best ideas won't work unless the local community is consulted and committed to achieving them through a competently managed change process. Nevertheless, it's really important that Rotarians become involved in overseas projects so following are ways to negotiate cross-cultural endeavours.

#### Diplomacy

First and foremost, consult the diplomatic policy filter. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs publishes a list of eligible countries and if the country is not on that list, the proposed project will not receive government or Rotary support.

#### How not to incite an international incident

As a matter of policy, Rotary steers away from projects that involve politics or religion and strives to remain impartial and neutral. Avoid involvement in activities that might be seen by host governments as interfering in their affairs.

#### Culture

Understanding cultural differences is critical. Making decisions about what to do from our comfortable armchairs is unlikely to produce sustainable solutions. Unless we understand what the people both need and want, with the best will in the world, we run the risk of doing the wrong thing.

Equally, significant change is likely to encounter resistance. The 'not invented here' mindset quite often forms a formidable barrier. The skill is to gain the trust of the local communities to work with you and gradually take ownership.

Begin with something that the potential beneficiaries are familiar with. This will enable you to achieve runs on the board, develop relationships and demonstrate commitment. This is so important because communities in developing countries often have a history of broken promises and stalled projects. Those poor experiences may generate a high level of skepticism.

There are going to be many challenges, including human rights and unorthodox practices, which raise issues for us who come from an egalitarian society. Decide what you are prepared to accept, and determine how you might ensure that funds and assistance get to the intended beneficiaries. For instance, how do you ensure that the medical contents of a DIK container doesn't disappear onto the black market?

Usually, you'll need trustworthy partners on the ground and community consultation to enable the lifestyle improvements you are working towards to be effective. Know the differences between your beliefs and values and those of the people you're trying to assist, and how that impacts their behaviour, so you can communicate and work together effectively. Rotary insists on a community assessment before it will consider a global grant application. That's because this lesson has been learned the hard way, and the process will increase the probability of success.

Finding areas of common ground can help achieve greater understanding. For example, how do people in their society relate to each other, what are their attitudes to space and time, what is their mode of activity, what do they believe about good and evil, and how do they relate to nature? This knowledge underpins the development of sound relationships with people who are different from you.

In a country where there's no welfare, jobs are scarce or pay minimal, where people need to scrape together what they can to survive, those circumstances can result in activities which you might disapprove of. However, we need to ask ourselves, whether this activity is morally wrong, a matter of survival, or greed. In many cultures enough is never enough, and power creates opportunities for corruption.



Rotarians are wonderfully caring people and don't shirk from a challenge. By all means take action on the situation you want to change, but make it thoughtful well-planned action and, wherever possible, form a partnership with the intended beneficiaries.

**Rowan McClean**

## Clubbing with Rotary

### International fellowship clubs

#### HIT THE OPEN ROAD

Motor-homing, or RV-ing, has become a popular way to holiday and explore the country. According to members of the RVFR, (Recreational Vehicle Fellowship of Rotarians (Aust) Inc), it's not merely a meander across borders, sojourning to drop a line in limpid pools or rivers, there's plenty of adventure to be had with like-minded explorers.

In one jaunt, 15 members from RVFR's eastern zone (NSW) conducted a muster (social gathering-they even have their own language) in Coonamble over the Queen's Birthday weekend. Their aim was to assist the Rotary Club of Coonamble with their two food vans at the monster rodeo. Just 12 Coonamble Rotarians up against a crowd of 6000 meant the RVFR's were a welcome relief mission.

If you own a recreational vehicle, you too could roar along highways and fields with this chapter of the International Recreational Vehicle Fellowship of Rotarians. The Australian chapter membership spans the east coast of Australia. Each year they connect to enjoy musters at different locations and visit local industries, tourist attractions and have group social events. The RVFR Southern Zone, covers Victoria and South Australia, so D9800 Rotarians can connect at interesting locations. If you'd like to try it out, you're welcome to come along as a guest of a current member and experience what the fellowship has to offer.

Over the next 12 months they plan to visit Albury – Wodonga, Bairnsdale, Wentworth and Broken Hill. For more information contact [rvfrsouthern@gmail.com](mailto:rvfrsouthern@gmail.com) or go to the national website <http://www.rvfr-aus.org.au>



## Getting to know the clubs

### Rotary Club of Melbourne

The history of the Rotary Club of Melbourne is a chronicle of sustained dedication to Rotary's motto, Service Above Self. Over its near 100 years, projects have been underlined by relevance and commitment to both the international and community fronts. This is evidenced by their End Hepatitis Now project (2019). The project works in conjunction with Hepatitis Victoria and aims to increase awareness of hepatitis. They're also renowned for Second Bite, where members collect surplus food from Queen Victoria and Prahran Markets and redistribute it to community food programs for the disadvantaged.

Chartered on April 21, 1921 as the first Rotary Club in Australia, its membership contains a notable list of leading professional men such as Sir John Monash - engineer and prominent general in WW1, Sir John Latham, Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, and grain broker and humanitarian, Sir Angus Mitchell who was inducted into the club in 1927.

In 1948-49, Mitchell became the first Australian to be elected as President of Rotary International and in 1958 was the first member of the club to be honoured as a Paul Harris Fellow. The annual Angus Mitchell Oration, initiated in 1971, is a highlight of the club's year

featuring high profile inspirational speakers who present topics on memorable events or current issues.

Once chartered and imbued with Rotary's many magnificent messages, the Rotary Club of Melbourne set about extending the organisation and in 1924 it chartered the Rotary Clubs of Adelaide, Hobart and Launceston. Over the next 75 years a further 24 clubs, would be embraced into Rotary's family under their sponsorship.

Among the many international projects they support is Donations In Kind (DIK) where members assist in the collection, sorting and dispatch of goods to disadvantaged communities and the 'Give Every Child A Future' project, which is a D9800's R100 Centenary project.

In happier times, President Marion Macleod and the membership look forward to welcoming visitors to their weekly meeting at the Sofitel on Collins; Tuesdays 12.30.



Portrait, Sir Angus by  
Sir William Dargie