

C O N T A C T

Club meeting 01 July 2025 Windy Hill Venue, Cnr Napier & Brewster St, Essendon 3040



On Friday 27th June 2025 it was out with the old and in with the new President of the Rotary Club of Essendon.

On a typical chilly winter night in Melbourne it is hard to force yourself to frock up – or suit up – put on your best heels and brave the night to go out. But upon finding the gorgeous old building on the historic property was so warm and cosy we soon thawed out to enjoy a true family night. Held at Arundel Estate the evening kicked off with good food, good wine and fantastic company.



It is at this time of year that the current president reflects on the year that has passed so quickly. Pres. Tony reminded us of our great achievements and all the people involved were thanked by Tony for the successful year of service to our community. Without our members displaying “Service Above Self” we are nothing. Especially noted as contributors to the club and community were the following Rotarians who were accorded special recognition in the way of the following;

Rotarian of the Year; Michael Cariss.



Self." His leadership, generosity, and active participation continue to inspire fellow Rotarians and contribute significantly to the club's ongoing success and impact in the community." Congratulations Michael.

Michael is a long-term member of the club having joined in 1971! He is always willing to help out in any way with club projects, fundraisers and events. A regular meeting attendee, Michael is behind the setting up and packing away of every club meeting and event – including tonight. Often these jobs go unrecognised but not tonight. Surprised by not only the award but by his gorgeous family arriving to join him in this presentation, Michael was as humble as always in his acceptance of this well-deserved award. Incoming DG Peter Shephard presented Michael with the award. As Pres. Tony stated; “Michael’s enduring dedication to the Rotary Club of Essendon exemplifies the Rotary motto of "Service Above

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Paul Harris Fellow Sapphire x 3 Recognition; Stephen Chandler.

Steve joined Rotary 35 yrs. ago and has been a hard-working member ever since. As chair of the Marketing & Membership committee this year Steve proposed that we hold a rubber duck race on the Maribyrnong River to engage the community in a fun way and put the Rotary Club of Essendon name out there for all to see. The committee was right behind him but with no idea initially of how tight the planning would end up being. Never to be fazed by any obstacle, Steve proved to be a positive – even stubborn some would say – leader and with his small but determined team managed to pull it off to be a most successful event which raised both our profile and funds for our projects. Pres. Tony stated, “Stephen’s multifaceted involvement in the Rotary Club of Essendon illustrates his dedication to service, leadership, and community enrichment. Nothing exemplifies this more than leading, planning, coordinating and sheer persistency to ensure the Inaugural Great Essendon Rotary Duck Race was a success.” Congratulations Steve.



Royce Abbey Award; Regina Davern

The Moonee Valley Art Show was held again this year as one of our major fundraisers and leading the Art Show committee to success was Regina Davern. This event is huge in its planning and execution needing to work with Rotary Keilor East as co-hosts of the event, holding meetings all through the year prior to the big weekend.

Balancing the needs of the artists, the sponsors, suppliers, the venue and the public is a major effort and Regina led her most capable, hardworking and committed team to another memorable event.

It was wonderful that Regina’s family were in attendance to see her accept this award. Congratulations Regina.



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Paul Harris Fellow Ruby x 3 Recognition; Lisa Lowcock

(and



As a part of the Marketing/Membership committee Lisa, a member of 20yrs an avid rubber ducky collector - who knew?!) was swept up in the confidence exuded by chair Steve Chandler with his rubber duck race idea.

It proved to be a wonderful, popular and successful community event but it was not without its challenges.

From running all over Melbourne getting flyers and posters to selling tickets at festivals, finding ducks to actually swim the course, locating 1000's more ducks in Launceston, allocating duck numbers, hundreds of emails (literally) sourcing, decorating and selling ducky hats and mini ducks she was there. Congratulations Lisa. (PS doesn't she have a gorgeous family!)

THE WORLD-FAMOUS PRESIDENT'S SKIT!!!!

Every year the club looks forward to Presidents night and this is largely because of the skit which celebrates the president as their year comes to an end. Always filled with gentle ribbing and humour, this year's production did not disappoint.

Richard Lawrence, Stephen Chandler and Maria Kouppas a.k.a. Riccardo, Stefano and Maria..... highlighted the fine character and family history of our fabulous president. Of course, we all know that Antonio's Italian history was filled with interesting school lunches and plastic covered furniture. And being part of the great institution of local government Antonio was of course reminded of the fun and quirks of his work. Antonio luckily took it all in his stride with good humour. After all, no-one wants to offend an Italian.

Bata bing, bata boom!



The Rotary International theme for the 2025-26 year is UNITE FOR GOOD. Send to the Editor what you think this means for us as individuals and a club. To the right is the official theme logo.



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The beautiful DeFazio family supporting their Papa and Nonno.

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Our club welcomed the incoming District Governor to our Presidents Night. **Peter Shepherd** is a member of Rotary Altona. He has an extensive background in Rotary having been a Rotarian for 20 years, being inducted in Rotary Club of Altona in May 2003. Growing up with a family history of volunteering plus work experiences including governance, financial, project management and sustainable development it is no wonder Peter has taken to this role like “a duck to water” (on the Maribyrnong along with our other duckies preferably...Quack!).

Peter has a long career in retail management including being the Precinct Manager for Queen Victoria Markets. Thanks for attending Peter and you are welcome any time.

Peter is clearly having a great time at our President’s Night seen here with the Ed.

JULY IS MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH MONTH

Our club has had a number of projects which focus on Maternal & Child health. Here are some you can assist.

For many years our club has supported **Caroline Chisholm Society**. They currently have a “Give once, Help twice’ campaign whereby any donation will be matched by a generous sponsor. Go to <https://www.caroline.org.au/> for details.

Days for Girls Essendon make kits to manage menstruation for girls and women in Timor Leste including maternal kits for new mothers. Go to their facebook page for all the contact details and to see how you can help. <https://www.facebook.com/p/Days-for-Girls-Essendon-VIC-Australia-Team-100069493740490/>

The **Ruben Centre in Nairobi**, where our recent scholar Greg Barak works, assists the poorest mothers to care for themselves and their babies before and after the babies are born. Go to <https://www.rubencentre.org/health-department> to find out what you can do to help them.

And of course we have our very own Royal Women’s Hospital who always need volunteers. <https://www.thewomens.org.au/>



What? You want more? Put the following events in your diary so you don’t miss out.

For more information and to book your spot go to our website <https://www.rce.org.au/Events>

Tuesday 15th July Club meeting and dinner at Windy Hill Venue

Sunday 20th July Comedy for a Cause at Essendon Bowls Club 2pm

Tuesday 16th September District Governor Peter Shepherd official visit

Friday 10th October Rotary Moonee Valley Art Show Gala Opening

Saturday 11th, Sunday 12th October Art Show weekend

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What happened at this week's meeting?

President Regina welcomed all to her inaugural meeting as president, a role she is excited about. Ideas were already forthcoming with potential ways we can help out local community and become a more recognisable presence in the community.

Regina explained that she has met with our local Mayor, Cr Ava Adams, to discuss the possibility of erecting a peace pole in Moonee Valley. It will be seen as a way Rotary focuses on peace and hopefully help people who are struggling with the discord occurring in our world. Cr Adams is very positive about the concept and so hopefully in the not so distant future we will be discussing this idea as a project in which we are actively involved. <https://rotarypeacepoles.world/>

Thanks to Richard Lawrence for providing a video from SISU, where our scholar Monica works in Myanmar, and the work they have done to provide kits for those who were affected, and continue to suffer because of the earthquake which hit the region earlier in 2025. They are really making a difference to so many in their community and we should be proud to be supporting their efforts.

Thanks to Veronica O'Sullivan who provided a video about meetings and their role in Rotary. The topic is always interesting and the speaker certainly made thought provoking comments. While many think that our members are our biggest asset it is actually the members time that they can give to Rotary that actually makes a difference to what we can achieve. With time being an increasingly valuable possession to most in our community there is no surprise that most of our members – indeed our active members – are those who are now in the retirement or semi-retirement phase of their life.

So when we hold a meeting we need to think about whether it a productive and effective use of our volunteers time. While surveys indicate that most of the over 50's want entertainment and camaraderie from our meetings, those under 50 want productivity and networking. So what are we doing to encourage younger people to attend? Quoted was Elon Musk who commented, "Unless there's a specific purpose for a meeting, don't have one."

We were also asked whether we are "in love" with our website? It is effective, impressive, easy to use to find information. We can check this by asking a friend or relative to check our website and asking them to find out what our club priorities are, how to get involved, who to contact and what's in it for them. If they cannot do all of those things without help then we need to improve our web site. The website is not for us as members it is for non-Rotarians to find out about us and begin to contribute to our efforts.

What are your thoughts about this?

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Some examples of peace poles around the world.

If we get a peace pole/s how would you want them to represent our club and our mission? Send in your ideas, including sketches, to the Ed. Need some inspiration? Go to <https://rotarypeacepoles.world/>

ROTARY AT A GLANCE

Rotarians: 1,171,195 in 36,632 clubs in 528 Districts in 221 countries/geographic areas.

Rotaractors: 135,426 in 9,454 clubs in 504 districts in 181 countries/geographic areas.

Interactors: 386,170 in 16,784 clubs in 486 districts in 144 countries/geographic areas.

Rotary Community Corps members: 200,615 in 13,984 clubs in 267 districts in 101 countries/geographic areas.

As at February 17, 2025, there are 21,407 Rotary members in 940 clubs in 14 districts in Australia, and 5,896 Rotary members in 238 clubs in five districts in New Zealand and the Pacific. In addition, there are 481 Rotaract members in 45 clubs in Australia and 422 Rotaract members in 22 clubs in New Zealand and the Pacific. Australian and New Zealand districts include Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu, where there are 606 Rotarians in 37 clubs and 357 Rotaractors in 15 clubs.

OBJECT OF ROTARY

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

- 1 The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;
- 2 High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
- 3 The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business and community life;
- 4 The advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

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<https://www.bendigobank.com.au/branch/vic/community-bank-strathmore/>

Thank you to our major sponsor Strathmore Community Bank Bendigo Bank.

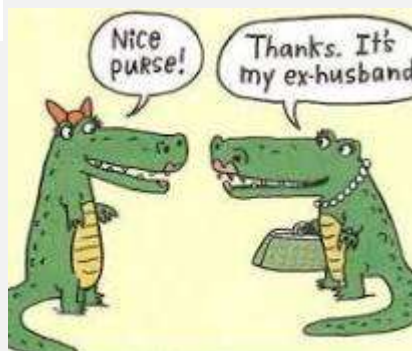


Bendigo Bank



These little rubber duckies and kids shower gloves are currently on sale in Coles Supermarkets.

If you see them please buy one or two or more packets so we can save them to sell at the 2nd Great Rotary Essendon Duck Race to be held in 2026. They are really cheap so (\$1 packet/item) so you can make a big difference with a few dollars.



AGCOM/0A0/4231057

Did you know that if you garden in your back yard naked, your neighbors will build you a privacy fence for absolutely no cost to you.



**UNITE
FOR
GOOD**

Rotary
Club of Essendon



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Get in now to secure your seats for the most fun you'll have on a Sunday arvo this year! Book now! Yes now!
Bring your friends and family and "unite to do good" for those in need.
And if you can help distribute flyers contact Christine.

Rotary Club of Essendon 

Comedy for a Cause

PRESENTS:

Featuring comedians from
Sydney & Melbourne International Comedy Festivals

 <p>CHRIS WAINHOUSE <i>"rapid-fire wit and rapier delivery has audiences begging for mercy."</i> - Brisbane News</p>	 <p>MATT O'NEILL (UK) <i>"Rule-breaking, genre-bending stand-up."</i> - Chortle</p>	 <p>EVAN HOCKING <i>"It's just great to hear such good storytelling."</i> - Herald Sun</p>	 <p>SONIA DI IORIO <i>"Quick witted, tight & oozing with confidence."</i> - Pop Culture-y</p>
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SUNDAY 20 JULY
Venue: Essendon Bowls Club
Doors: 1.15pm / Show: 2pm / 18+ / TICKETS: \$34+ booking fee

BOOK NOW at:
comedyforacause.net/event/RCE25

All the proceeds from this event go to Rotary Club of Essendon Projects.



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Thank you to Tony DeFazio President 2024-25 for leading the club during the past year.

Here is a little from Tony's speech at Presidents Night.

"Well, where has the 12-month Rotary year gone? When I stood here this time last year, I was humbled and honoured to be chosen as the President of this great and proud club especially in its 90th birthday year. I set myself a number of ambitious objectives, cognisant that we are all volunteers with our time being impacted by family priorities, health issues, going on holidays and that we are an ageing club, punching beyond our weight. I am proud that as a club we came together to develop and implement a club strategic plan where we have over 40 initiatives to be considered by the club over a 3 year term. This plan provided the focus and direction by which the club can further develop and grow. We have some challenges as an ageing club and although a few of our members have decided to hang up the boots, and we thank them for the great contribution, we have a few others who have joined and look forward to their contribution with new ideas and renewed drive.

Above all I am proud that I have led the club with creating a focus and direction, ensured good governance and stewardship, kept members informed and involved and providing a sense of belonging, fellowship and empathy and acknowledging the collective and individual efforts of members. How well I have succeeded will be up to all members to judge and comment, but for me I gave it all I could give and I am pleased with having made a positive difference in serving those less fortunate locally and globally.

Reflecting on the past twelve months, what stands out most isn't just the projects, meetings, or fundraisers—it's the people. Our club is made up of generous, clever people who bring energy, ideas, and heart to everything we do.

Together, we've had a year to be proud of:

- We celebrated the **10th Moonee Valley Rotary Art Show and the inaugural Rotary Club of Essendon great Duck Race**, raising vital funds for our local and international causes. It was a testament to teamwork, sponsorship, and maybe a few sleepless nights for some of us!
- We celebrated the **90th Birthday of the club** on 21 May at a gala evening reminiscing and discussing the future of Rotary and our Club.
- And we championed our youth, our environment, and our local and global partnerships—all while never losing our sense of humour or purpose.

None of this could have happened without an incredible team behind me. So, to our Board—thank you for your guidance, patience, and countless hours behind the scenes. To our committee chairs, Veronica O'Sullivan, Stephen Chandler, Regina Davern, Christine Hilbert, Richard Lawrence, Vice President Sam Tartaglia, Immediate Past President Michael Portelli, project leaders, and volunteers—you made things happen, especially office bearers in Steve Roe as secretary and Treasurer Sunil Perera, And to every member,

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whether you were front and centre or quietly supporting in the background—thank you. You’ve all helped carry the spirit of "Service Above Self."

A special thanks to our families and partners—a special thank you to my wife Elena and my children their partners and grandchildren for their support and love and patience during this year of effort and commitment.

I also want to thank those who came before me for setting such a strong foundation, and those who will follow—especially our incoming President, Regina Davern, I know you’ll bring new ideas, energy, and vision, and I’ll be here to support you however I can.

So, as I hand over the baton—or more accurately, the collar—I do so with pride, knowing our club is stronger, more connected, and ready for another great chapter.

Thank you for the trust you’ve placed in me this year. It has been a true privilege to serve as President of the Rotary Club of Essendon.

Let’s raise a glass—to the past year, to friendship, to service—and to the exciting year ahead.”

Congratulations to Regina Davern President Rotary Essendon 2025-26.

From Regina at Presidents Night.

“I am pleased and honoured to accept the role of President of the Essendon Rotary Club for 2025-26.

I understand that this role is not just a title, but an opportunity to lead an incredible group dedicated to fellowship, integrity and service above self.

I aim to uphold our Club’s wonderful 90 year plus legacy, from the impactful Royce Abbey Awards to future collaborations to foster growth and address community challenges.

I would like to thank Tony De Fazio for his valuable leadership this past year and, I am starting to understand the time that he has given to our Club.

I would like to thank all the office bearers for accepting their roles, Sam Tartaglia for his Vice Presidency, Denis Kosnar as President Elect, Steve Roe as Secretary, Sunil Perera as Treasurer and the Committee Directors; Michael Cariss for Club Services (to ensure the effective running of the Club)

Nola Spicer for Community (to identify and focus on local community projects)

Richard Lawrence for International (to guide and grow ERC international projects)

Daniel Gangemi for Marketing and Membership (to raise ERC profile via all media and grow our membership).

The upcoming year promises to be one of renewed purpose and collective effort. I look forward to working alongside each of you and all the members, tapping into the diverse talents and perspectives that make our club exceptional.

Together we will strengthen bonds, inspire change, have some fun and extend our reach into the community and globally.”

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As seen this week on Facebook; comment posted by [Steve Chandler](#) following the Moonee Valley City Council announcement of **Victory Park being declared winner in #playgroundplayoffs**

“I was interested to see that on the MVCC Facebook site, they have been conducting a poll on the best playground in the municipality and the winner was Victory Park. This was a project named The Essendon Community Playground and the Rotary Club of Essendon played a large role in it.

The project grew out of the Lincoln Park Playgroup where a group of mothers discussed the best playground to take kids to and the favourite was the Albert Park Community Playground. Many of the mothers visited the playground and a decision was made to attempt to build one in the municipality.

Bernadette Aylward was chosen as the leader and the process began of getting the community on board and raising funds. The Rotary Club came on board early on and assisted with the raising of funds by assisting in a Steam Train Day. The first item to be worked out was the site, and many meetings were held with the council & community groups and eventually Victory Park was chosen as the site. Once a site was chosen, Leathers & Associates, Playground Architects, from the United States, who produced a complete package to raise funds, engage the community & build the playground were contacted and an Architect flew out to meet with school children who assisted him in designing the playground.

With the playground designed and a material list drawn up the huge task of raising funds and sourcing all the materials for the build began. There were trivia & movie nights, cake stall and information booths at fetes and the Steam Train Day. Gradually the funds started to come in, materials were purchased and volunteers were signed up for the build. The Rotary Club of Essendon took on the task of sourcing all the tools for the build. A container was sourced to store all the tools, many lent, for the duration of the build. Lindsay Arthur from the Rotary Club supplied one of the most critical components, a huge auger to drill the holes for the telegraph pole size posts that would anchor the playground to the ground.

The project began on Tuesday 22nd of November 1994, with timber & other materials being delivered to site along with the tool container. On the Wednesday morning the job of inserting the 60 odd poles into the holes began. At the same time teams were formed up to build the various components that would go together to complete the project.

Many of the people who volunteered were tradesmen or DIY people but many had never used a power tool in their life. It was fulfilling to see people returning a router saying it was the most exciting thing they had done in their life. Equally, there those who attended the playground to work off correctional orders, many spending the whole 5 days on the build despite only needing 8 hours to fill their quota but enjoying the thrill of participating in a community event for the 1st time.



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The build took place slowly but as each component was added, the playground rose from the ground until after lunch on Sunday the 27th November, the playground was opened for the kids to enjoy. The whole process had taken just over 12 months to complete with 1500 people being involved in the build. The small committee that were involved in the project spent many hundreds of hours during the planning stages and were testament to what communities can do when they work together.

The Rotary Club of Essendon played an active role in assisting the committee, raising funds, organising all the tools for the project and donated \$15,000 towards the project with some individual members also sponsoring parts of the project.

[#PlaygroundPlayoffs](#)



HAPPY 10TH BIRTHDAY TO THE STRATHMORE MEN'S SHED!

Sawdust, hammering and concentration abounds in the shed as men of all ages and abilities gather to share a space with others who care, respect and encourage each other. The vibe is so warm. The smiles and comments about how the Shed is often the reason why some of them get up and out of bed in the morning clearly illustrates the importance this simple shed has in the lives of all of these men. During Covid the bonds created in the shed ensured that no man was alone even if he was living by himself. This literally saved lives. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Shed opening and in that 10 years many have experienced the value in being a “Sheddie”.



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A joint project of the Rotary Clubs of Essendon, Nth Essendon and Strathmore the Shed spans three clubs and two districts and gathers us all to “Unite to do Good”. The Shed is managed by a Committee of Management made up of two representatives from each club as well as two Sheddie reps.

Chair of the committee, Rod Gurry, thanked all who have been a part of the 10 years of the Shed. In 2004 past member Simon Cookson bought the idea to our club and incoming President Lisa Lowcock was fully supportive. That led to joining with Barry Coleman from Ess. Nth and Rod Gurry originally from Strathmore, and Moonee Valley City Council where councillor Jan Chantry, the then Mayor, formalised the effort and secured both council funding and donated a site to build the shed. The Rotary Clubs put in \$10,000.00 seed funding to set up the programs and we were off to a great start. From 12 members and opening every second Saturday at the start the shed has now grown to having over 90 members and open four mornings a week. Ours is one of the top Sheds in the country and often referred to as one of the best run.

It has been because of the incredible men who took on positions of responsibility in the shed as leaders that the shed has gone from a simple metal building to a place of safety and purpose for those who attend. **Steve Holman and Rod McLeod (right) have been stand-out leaders.**

Rod Gurry also thanked the dignitaries in attendance – Federal member Jo Briskey, State member Danny Pearson and Councillor Hamish Jones. This shows the esteem in which our shed is held. Members from all three Rotary Clubs and many of the past and present Sheddies were also in attendance.

The active woodworking displays had some of the experienced men cutting, hammering and sanding their works in progress. The display of the excellence of the items they have produced was nothing short of inspirational in the skill and artistry created. And there were of course items for sale, many of which were quickly snapped up by savvy shoppers who recognised the skill and heart put in to each piece. Many of these items would sell for much more in retail outlets. Bargain!

The annual Pride of Workmanship Award – sponsored by each Rotary Club on a rotational basis – was made to two Sheddies who were unable to be split in the votes by their fellow Sheddies. **Graham McNab and Andrew Maynard**, seen above with Rod Gurry and our dignitaries, graciously received the award and displayed the plaque proudly.



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A delicious BBQ followed, tasty fresh sandwiches and yummy sweets ensured that we all celebrated accordingly. [Happy Birthday and many more to the Strathmore Men's Shed.](#) And if you want a work of excellence at a bargain price you can pop down to the shed any day that they are open to purchase your treasure. <https://www.strathmoremensshed.com.au/>

