

President Report Chris Hanson 2015

It hardly seems a year since I took on the mantle of President and those 12 months have certainly flown. But there are very many thanks that are due. It has been a rewarding experience full of experiences that I could not have imagined. As President you find out a lot about Rotary, about the club and its workings and its members. You hear a lot of things, you get complaints (or well meaning suggestions), you get unsolicited advice, you hear about personal problems, you get scuttlebutt but mostly you get really good support and friendship. So I thank you all, members, partners and friends for being such great Rotarians.

But thank you firstly to my wife, Dubravka, who has been amazing and unwavering in her support and encouragement. I told her there were certain occasions I would like her to attend but she attended many more. And being a clueless male I needed her attention to detail shall we say when preparing for things like Board meetings.

But also thank you to the Board who were really diligent in both attendance and work rate. Especially our two newest directors Katrina Flinn and Sheridan Brown. Katrina arranged for the meetings to be held at the NAB offices in Toorak Road which was a great help. So a special thanks for that. Sheridan took on the task of learning to use email and did a fantastic job too! Maybe Wendy had something to do with that...

Some unsung heroes were always beavering away in the background - so special thanks to Charles Morrison on the front desk, David Owen our bulletin editor, Jill Weeks who arranged our speaker program so brilliantly, Philip Slobom who despite his deteriorating health was always around to collect the cash, Geoff Wright who helped me prepare each week's running sheet, Ian Macfarlane the Second Bite champion, David Bradshaw our social secretary and plenty of others.

Our activities this year were very broad – Second Bite, Relay for Life, Christmas Party for the Socially Disadvantaged in Boroondara, Donations in Kind, Beds for Box Hill, Mock Interviews at Auburn High School, the Open Meeting at Kooyong, Garden DesignFest, Car Parking, Hams Deliveries, BBQs at Masters and Bunnings, Rotarians at Work and some very enjoyable “fraternal” events (I think the word fellowship is not politically correct anymore) i.e. for movies and dinner. One of our best efforts was when about half of our members trekked out to the DIK Footscray warehouse to load the container bound for Baguia with desks, chairs, clothes, books, and much more. Another major effort was participating in the biennial Garden DesignFest as part of the team with RC Kew. That amazing project is also a major fund raiser for us. We bought Anzac poppies from Anne Scott, a number of us went to the District Conference in Hobart and the International Women's Day breakfast. There were numerous youth events under Katrina's watchful eye, including the ongoing exchange with Campbelltown High School in Tasmania. Sheridan Brown has made a great start with his greenhouse project for Servants House which is due for completion later in the year. We had a number of valuable “vocational” visits to Athelstan and the Shrine thanks to Ken McNamara. We have also made financial contributions to Friends of Baguia, the Seeds of Peace program and through the Survey Street Trust we have donated funds to the new emergency ward at Epworth Hospital. Our

last event for the year was a very enjoyable club visit to our little brother club – RC Glenferrie. So it was a pretty busy year of service and enjoyment for all of us. Jill Weeks even gave me a gig on Rotary Radio. And the ghost of Winston Churchill was oftentimes heard trying to inspire the troops.

But we have lost some old and dear friends: Vic Burns resigned due to his increasing incapacity, Ian Hamilton has had to leave for personal reasons, Norman Hall left us and now Robert Ball is heading for a quieter life outside Rotary. These are hard people to replace but all gave outstanding service over many years: but with new members like Stephen Bowtell coming into the club we remain optimistic.

Last year I signalled my goals to (a) have an Open Meeting, (b) develop an international project, (c) develop a domestic service project and (d) develop a new fund raising project.

These are areas which are all critical to our future. In particular I am particularly proud of the development of a co-operative international relationship with Friends of Baguia. We now have a Memorandum of Understanding and it's my hope that as the years progress we can do much to help that very poor area in Timor Leste improve its standard of living whether by regular funding or eventually visits and hands on work by members, and loading containers full of goods as mentioned above. I think we can say the Friends of Baguia satisfies the international objective.

Similarly with the Open Meeting which was in itself a great success with nearly 150 in attendance although it has not led to the anticipated flow of new members. I still feel it was worth all the effort to introduce many local business people to Rotary and our club. Perhaps it's still worth another crack to capitalize on the effort put in by Ngaire, Jill and many others.

The third major effort this year has been to find a signature community service project which the whole club can get behind. It's great that we can now go forward with the Rotary Opportunity Centre which was a concept developed by Noel Halford and its exciting to have Ian Warren accept the position as project manager. We will be working closely with the Salvation Army's Norman Gale and Denbigh Richards. Watch this space.

Fundraising is somewhat of an Achilles heel for us. We do not have that grand cash flow generator like the Farmers Market, or the Camberwell Art Show, or the Camberwell Market and some of our trusty sources have begun to dry up. We do need to find a fund raiser that taps the public's purse and not our members. So all ideas are welcome.

On my scoreboard I reckon we scored 3 out of 4 which is not bad but obviously there is still plenty to do to bring them all to fruition.

One real disappointment was that we failed to gain access to the "Innovative and Flexible Club" program of RI. We wanted this to allow us to develop new forms of membership such as would allow an organization like Swinburne to become a member in its own right but that still remains as an objective for the near future. Perhaps DGE Julie can help us out on that score.

All in all it has been a reasonable set of outcomes.

And now for some awards.

Earlier in the year I presented PHF sapphires to Jill Weeks and Ngaire Cannon. Tonight we have a couple more.

BILL TROEDEL, will you please come forward. Bill, you are an amazing guy, notwithstanding your footy team's hokey theme song. You have been a great Rotarian for very many years and I have seen it firsthand this year. Your initiative in cajoling members to donate thousands of dollars to the Vanuatu cyclone disaster was brilliant and you have always been available at every club event to lend a hand not to mention your efforts on the printing side. With Prue at your side you have justly earned a Paul Harris Fellow extra Sapphire. Well done, Bill.

Ralph, would you please escort Ngaire up here? Now Ngaire go and sit down. RALPH TRELOAR has been a shadowy figure at many Rotary functions and events over the years we have known him and since he got entangled with Ngaire. But we have come to love Ralph - he has always been there to carry, deliver, set up, install, move, and otherwise grease the wheels of what we have been doing. Whether car parking, barbecuing, loading, unloading, whatever, Ralph has been there always ready to help. He also likes a good red which endears him to us all the more. Ralph I have extreme pleasure in presenting you with a Paul Harris Fellow Award.

Finally, it's my enormous pleasure to make our special Club award of Rotarian of the Year to a man for whom nothing in Rotary is too much effort. A man who came to us as a breath of fresh air. He has dug us out of a few potholes and we owe him – big time. He has been President of the club, leader of our DIK work and will now be Secretary. GORDON CHEYNE, come forward and accept the perpetual shield as our Rotarian of the Year.

Thanks everyone it has been my honour to serve as your President. Can I just leave you with one message:

Enjoy Rotary

Chris Hanson

President 2014-2015