

Our flight landed in torrential rain and wind, at 8.00 am. However, my enthusiasm was never dampened and I had my first pair of new shoes purchased by 9.10 am. Accompanied by my mother (official shopping bag carrier and Wellington Street navigator), I continued to contribute to Wellington's economy for several hours. In fact, my Samsung health app had recorded us as having done 9000 steps by lunchtime! (Second pair of new shoes purchased by 2.00 pm)

Then came the speech rehearsals, alterations, and the nerves! (x1000) The Rotary event was held at the very opulent Wellington Club, a beautiful venue situated on The Terrace. President John McKinnon welcomed us and Immediate past President Denise Church chaired the evening and panel discussion. Kriddles from the RC of Waitakere, a self-confessed 'sister from the hood' and self-educated in the school of 'hard knocks' in the far North, gave a powerful talk on the struggles her communities of West and South Auckland face. Ramola represented RC Awapuni and Rotaract Club. She spoke very passionately about how her association with Rotaract, and how Rotary had assisted her back in India to confidently grow as a person and subsequently become President of her Club. My talk centred around my experience as an RYE student and how I became re-introduced to Rotary and climbing the ladder from helping in the hotdog caravan as a ring-in, through to Presidency.

The diversity in our three clubs was very apparent, but we all agreed about the benefits Rotary had provided us and the need for Rotary to change to become relevant going forward, while still maintaining respect for the traditions of the past.



9940 District Governor Gillian Jones presented a formal thanks to us all and John McKinnon, along with the fascinating Colleen Singleton then hosted a most enjoyable dinner where we were able to relax and enjoy one another's company.

The following day Te Papa was first on the list of things to do. The Gallipoli exhibition was a must for me, and left us in quite a sombre mood..... so what else could one do, but more shopping! The third pair of new shoes purchased? A quick trip up the Wellington Cable car to tick off the tourist list, and a drive past the Basin Reserve (unfortunately there was no cricket) before it was time to head home.



It was a lovely couple of days and definitely pushed me out of my comfort zone as far as public speaking goes..... but I'm very glad I took the opportunity to meet so many other Rotarians and visit our great capital city again. Thank you for the experience RC Wellington!

Jess