

Changeover speech.

Before I bring you my address all the members of the club would just like to honour our past president Bernie who had a tough year and worked tirelessly throughout her presidency. Totally committed to the club its causes, and the members she fitted in a tremendous amount of work and we just want you to know how much we appreciate your efforts.

When I first went to a Rotary meeting it was a visit to Ben Bennett Park (Oct 2017) and as I parked my car the first person I met was Pam Snyman, she introduced me to the other members and I got chatting. Friendly bunch I thought, and when I got home I told my wife Lin that I would be going to more meetings. She seemed happy for me but I guess she knew that Rotary would consume me – she was right, it did.

What can I say about our club, well they really are a great bunch of people, committed, friendly and always quick to impart advice, or remind me that we don't do it that way at Rotary. Certainly it's been a steep learning curve. I have tried to spend the last year tapping into the knowledge of the members and everyone has been very supportive, but I often wondered how I got the job in the first place.

So when I asked a certain esteemed member, why me for President? she said "well you put your hand up" – and that's basically it – I did; and to think I thought I was selected because of my business and project management experience.

Joking aside though, I did have a clear objective when I decided to join Rotary and knew what I wanted to do – put something back into society and get involved in community matters – so how better to do this than take on the President's role.

Our club is in a healthy condition but with an average age of 68 many of our valued and experienced members are not able to commit to projects as they were a few years ago. We are grateful for their commitment over the years and the legacy that they have created, but it's going to present a sizeable challenge to us as we go forward.

Indeed, the whole age thing is a challenge for all Rotary clubs, but as a board, we fully understand the task that lies ahead - making Rotary attractive to newcomers and a vehicle where people can strive to reach their own personal ambitions – but, above all, understand the needs of our loyal club members.

Some form of change is inevitable but it has to be an evolving process conducted by consensus so that the members who turn up week in, week out, can have a major input and be part of the change process.

Like the team that did Bunnings this week in atrocious conditions, that's what our club members do, they keep up the efforts to raise funds regardless. To quote a phrase "our greatest resource is not our funds but our people, the members," - a statement, I for one, will not take for granted during my year.

Personally I think the development of a Satellite Club is a way forward for us to help with recruitment. It will require a lot of input and commitment to get going – but what it would give us is a different version of Rotary that would marry in well with us as the sponsor club. It would not only improve the service to the local community but also add some more volunteers to help with some of our projects.

The flexibility of another version, to cater for a changing volunteering landscape has been a success for a number of clubs and, if this is a route we choose to take then, I am sure we can equally make a success of it.

Let's remind ourselves of a key Rotary slogan – "Service above Self"

We are a service club first – the more times we are seen in the community the more we bring greater awareness to the public. I would like to hear more people talking about Rotary and be inquisitive enough to find out what we are up to.

I would encourage us as a club to be seen at more community events, setting up our gazebo with the Rotary banner and leaflets to give out. This will go some way to gaining more public interest.

So what does Rotary do? is a common question from potential members.

I have to tell this. A quote over heard at a Bunnings BBQ (not ours I add) when asked by a member of the public. "What does Rotary do?" the answer came across "We meet every Thursday at 6.00 p.m in the evening". That's all very well but it's clear we need to inspire people more than this to get them involved – surely they are wanting to know what we are doing in the community.

Involvement in the community, as you know that's what I wanted to do and was one of the key factors behind me joining Rotary but there is also the friendship of like - minded people who support each other.

So I urge members to think about how we can develop the club retaining that friendship, inspiring our members to continue taking an active part in projects, and how we can attract new members that can help spread the workload.

I looked back over some old past president notes as far back as 2009 and a common theme was recruitment and the need to get more members.

It's your club, but in 5 years' time it's likely that, for many of you, your involvement will be less, for a variety of reasons.

I am indeed honoured to lead our club for the next 12 months, Rotary is a fantastic organization and as a club we have a unique opportunity to carry on the good work of past Rotarians and make a real difference in the community and further afield.

In terms of focus for my year we currently support some wonderful organisations and I intend to maintain these relationships and, resources allowing, add a few more worthy causes. In the main, but not limited to these, I would like also to expand our involvement in.

- Programs involving youth, get more young people involved in sport – leadership and character development programs.
- Support for families in need
- Children’s welfare
- Help for the disabled
- Mental health generally.
- I could go on

Members will know of my passion to develop the All Abilities Park in Currimundi to provide more equipment for children with physical and autistic disabilities.

The Council in the last week have reiterated their support for the project but it remains a tall order for us on our own, and we may need to look at sponsorship and the involvement of other clubs to achieve the end result.

Let’s not also forget the Rotary Foundation – our charity

The more financial input Rotary Clubs can commit, the greater the value of grants that can be given to approved projects. Over \$86 million USD to 1,306 grant applications in fiscal year 2018. That is some figure. We need to continue our support for the Foundation and even increase it if at all possible.

The Rotary Presidential message this year is “Rotary Connects the World” and indeed we can by committing ourselves to connecting people, people who need our help, and people with structured humanitarian projects and long term programs all aimed at improving the lives of people less well off than ourselves.

I thank you for your support and belief in me as your President. As I have said, being a Rotarian is a journey, a very rewarding one at that - I have been lucky enough to join a club where the members have created a legacy of commitment and hard work but, above all, a friendly club that gets things done.

In the end it’s all about the wonderful projects that we are involved in – the friendship we develop, and how we try to make a difference in the community and further afield. Also the satisfaction we get from knowing that, as a club, we are contributing to a better life for many people.

Thank you.