

## Chapter 2

### Our District Conferences

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# Our District Conferences

It says a lot about the Rotary Club of North Balwyn and its members that, in less than thirty years, it has provided the District with three District Governors, namely Gregory Ross in 1991-1992, John Reddish in 1996-1997, and Jim Studebaker in 2008-2009. Three District Governors has meant three district conferences to be organized!

Below is a précis of each of those Conferences:

## “The Vintage Conference” 1992 for DG Greg Ross and Carole

Following Gregory Ross’s election as our District Governor for 1991-1992, it became North Balwyn’s responsibility to arrange his District Conference, which Greg decided to hold at the Adelaide Convention Centre in South Australia.

David Cheney was asked to chair the Conference Committee that was formed and it first met in February 1991, some 13 months before the conference. The committee headquarters were located in Ron Phillip’s office/basement, alongside Ron’s port barrel. Two committees were formed with the following membership.

### Executive Committee

Gregory Ross  
David Cheney (Chairman)  
Ron Phillips  
Ralph Lee  
Tom Wing Young  
Tony McLean  
John Thwaites (Secretary)

### General Committee

Treasurer	Max Hunter
Accommodation	Gregor Matthews
Publicity	Stan Hibbert
Catering	Geoff Steinicke
Programme	Paul Fitz
Logistics	John Rennie
Sports	Russell Fynmore
Ladies	Anthea Mollison

Three visits by air to Adelaide by Greg Ross, Greg Matthews, Ron Phillips and David Cheney allowed them to check out hotels and possible conference venues. In mid-winter, 1991, David Cheney drove a bus taking his committee members and their partners, to Adelaide for the weekend. All then were able to become familiar with the layout of the facilities, meet the function organisers, and check out the accommodation.



*DG Gregor Ross and Carol*

Anthea Mollison and Judy Reddish led the team of those who designed a suitable outfit for our members. What resulted was a remarkable mix and match of ties, hat bands and blouses - absolutely striking, although John Robson received a number of "solicitations" whilst walking down Hindley Street! A total of 91 members and partners assembled at the Hindley Park Royal Hotel, our conference accommodation headquarters. It was a great sight to see, all dressed in their outfits and keen to put on the best conference our district had ever seen – and modelled below by couples Phillips, Ross and Cheney



*President Ron Phillips & June, DG Gregory Ross & Carol, Jan and Conference Chairman David Cheney & Jan*

Some of the highlights included:

- The musical opening ceremony with the Police Band and Bendigo Childrens' Choir.
- Keynote speakers such as Barry Jones, Dr John Tickell, Geoff and Campbell McComas.
- The Friday breakfast for all delegates and partners at the Exhibition Centre, rather than separate functions for Presidents, P H Fellows, etc.
- The Saturday night Dinner Dance at the Convention Centre, with floor show by Dennis Walter.
- The entire Club photo taken on the stage at the end of the Conference, which took Ron Carnell many attempts to take successfully.
- The standing ovation from delegates as our club members arrived in the gardens on the Torrens River at the Saturday box luncheon.
- The sight of some 90 Club members and partners at the 6.00am Friday briefing in the hotel ballroom before the breakfast; some of them had had very little sleep that night.



*Greg Ross and Dennis Walter*

- Murray Carr's birthday gift of a blow-up doll courtesy of Heather Matthews and Anthea Mollison was presented to Murray at the Friday night after party.
- The reaction members received when greeting and welcoming delegates in the foyers of several city hotels; this had never been done before.
- The Friday lunch, where delegates were allocated table numbers drawn at random rather than having club members all sit together; another "first".
- The way in which the Conference Committee worked together to achieve an almost faultless production.

The Conference was an outstanding success, with over 85% of our Club members making their way to Adelaide to assist and join in the fun.



*The club in full "outfits" – Adelaide 1992*

***A Special Memory from Tom Wing Young***

That wonderful feeling when at the Adelaide Conference we hosted, with David Cheney as organising Chairman, for our DG Greg Ross. As we left the main hall as a group to serve the "boxed lunch" on the river bank, the spontaneous applause that came from all our Rotarian guests from the other D9800 clubs gave a special feeling of pride in North Balwyn!

## **Melbourne 1997 “Melbourne on Yarra” for DG John Reddish and Judy**

It was DG John Reddish and his committee who put forward the World Congress Centre, Melbourne, as the venue for the 1997 District Conference.

<b>Executive Committee</b>	<b>General Committee</b>	
John Reddish	Ladies Committee	Judy Reddish
Stan Hibbert (Chairman)	Regn / Accommodation	Peter Cleary
Clive Hughes	Publicity /Promotion	John Mollison
John Thwaites (Secretary)	Catering	Geoff Steinicke
	Prog / Sponsorship	Ian Taylor
MC's – Gregory Ross, Jim	Transport/Manpower	Bruce McIver
Studebaker & Keith Glover	Sports	John Moyle
	Entertain/Stage Mgmt	Gregory Ross

To advertise our “Melbourne on Yarra” Conference for 1997, Greg Ross wrote lyrics to “Up There, Cazaly” with which we regaled the assembled Rotarians.

Conference on Yarra, the venue's A1;  
The program's a beauty full of content and fun.  
It starts Friday evening and to build atmosphere;  
We've arranged that for openers three tenors you'll hear.

Conference on Yarra, we'll see you all there.  
We promise you'll love it, so let down your hair.  
Conference on Yarra, make a note of it now;  
We'll welcome you warmly, with North Balwyn's know how.

The conference was promoted as being within every Rotarians budget. Travel costs were minimal and home hosting could cut costs even further for people coming from the northern clubs of District 9800. However, it was a shock to find that with two months to go, probable attendees numbered only about 400. Club members were then rostered to every club to “sell” the Conference resulting finally in an attendance of almost 1000.

A simple explanation for the likely lack of attendees initially could be that: Rotarians' wives wanted to travel to another destination that could be described as a “weekend away”!

Some of the weekend highlights were:

- VIP's were taken on a trip up the Yarra by scenic cruisers. Smokers relegated to the rear deck had to duck quickly to avoid being decapitated by a low bridge!
- Opening night with PDG Greg Ross as MC featured: the “Cosgriff Irish Dancers” dancing a segment from Riverdance.
- Conference Chairman PP Stan Hibbert, RI President's Special Representative PDG Mike Bandey from South Africa, our President Clive Hughes and partners with DG John and Judy made up the official party.



*Part of the “Team” enjoy some relaxation  
while waiting for duties*

The Fellowship Ball - “A Night to Remember” - featured Normie Rowe and the Cox-Brady band. Decorations focused on the theme of the Yarra River, Princes Bridge and St Kilda Road. George Swanson made an illuminated two metre long bridge over which Rotarians and partners walked to enter the Ballroom.



*DG John Reddish checks the decorations  
and George Swanson’s bridge*

Rotarians Keith Glover and Jim Studebaker were comperes for the plenary sessions and stage management was under the expert services of Paul Steefkerk to keep things running smoothly.

Speakers included:

- Ian Kiernan AO, "Clean up Australia"
- Moira Kelly, Social Worker in Bosnia
- Joyce Brown OAM, World Championship Netball Coach
- Brad Cooper, CEO of FAI Home Security Group
- Paul Sheahan, Test Cricketer and Head Master Melbourne Grammar



*The Club team for the 1997 "Melbourne on Yarra" Conference*

Possibly the most emotional aspect of the conference agenda was reached during the session that recognised the work of ROMAC. One of the most publicised aspects of ROMAC's work was the separation of the Siamese twins from Papua New Guinea. The arrival on stage of the twins with their parents was a moment that few will ever forget.



*An inspiring and emotional ROMAC "special"*

We were very proud that this was one of the really great Rotary Conferences for fellowship and for organisation, and we were all delighted with the level of participation from our Club members with the phenomenal support of their partners.

Bill Oakley composed the North Balwyn theme song sung for the first time at the roll call:

“Who are we? Who are we? We’re North Balwyn Rotary.  
Service, fellowship and play, it’s a great Rotary day  
All the other clubs attest, District 9800’s best.  
So Rotarians give us a cheer – North Balwyn Rotary’s here”

## **Launceston 2009 “Building a Better Future” for DG Jim Studebaker and Carol.**

DG Jim Studebaker was nominated and selected in April 2006 to be our DG in 2008-2009.

Greg Matthews was asked to chair the Conference Committee in May 2006. Greg, together with Heather, took on the job of finding a new and suitable location – they visited Asbury, Mildura, Broken Hill, Adelaide, Mt Gambier, and finally Launceston.

After some deliberations, a visit to Launceston with DGN Jim and Carol was arranged, and it did not take long to realize that Launceston would be an ideal place to hold our 2009 Conference, the third that we have had the pleasure of organizing in our 30 year History.

Launceston, not being set up to handle conventions for 800 plus, did not represent the “easy option” and a great deal of improvisation and imagination was required. Three venues were needed for the various activities – the beautiful Princess Theatre for the plenary sessions; the City Park and adjoining Albert Hall for the lunches and welcome “happy hour”; and the historic Clarendon Homestead for the Gale Dinner.

The General Committee first met in March 2007 and all meetings were held at Greythorn RSL Club Rooms.

### **Executive was:-**

District Governor Jim Studebaker, Chairman P.P. Greg Matthews  
Deputy Chairman P.P. John Major, Treasurer Lindsay Pegg,  
Secretary/ Administrator P.P. David Cheney.

### **General Committee:-**

Catering/Youth Exchange	P.P. Bill Oakley
Manpower & Logistics	P.P. Peter Elliott
Outfits & Decorations	Anthea Mollison P.H.F.
Program	P.P. Paul Fitz
Publicity	P.P. John Mollison
Fundraising & Sponsorship	Terry Gretton
Gala Dinner	P.P. Garth Symington
Master of Ceremonies	P.E. Tony Wells



Many visits to Launceston by the committee members (eleven in one case) were necessary as it was planned to use multiple venues. These visits ensured that all members were working from the same page.



*The Registration Desk, awaiting the crowd*

Anthea Mollison and her team designed and partially made the outfits that were to be worn by our members and their partners. These were absolutely outstanding when 122 members were observed walking in the streets of Launceston in the Red hats & Blue jackets, with the men wearing red ties whilst the ladies wore scarves of red, white and blue, all set against black pants and white shirts.



*"Welcome" to the House of Friendship*

Our accommodation was at the Grand Chancellor which also housed the Registration desk and nerve centre.

Some of the highlights of the Conference included:-

- The opening by the Governor of Tasmania.
- Soloist Elizabeth Barrow accompanied by our own Paulina Gorka (Youth Exchange from Poland) and Rotarian Michael Lapina receiving a standing ovation from the capacity audience.
- Keynote Speakers:-  
Robyn Moore, Walter Mikac, Julian Burnside, Bernard Salt, Damain Bugg, Kathy Walker, Kim Pitt, Julian Burnside, Bruce Esplin, P.R.I.P. Wilf Wilkinson.
- The Wacky Band that entertained during the Conference and also led the members to morning/afternoon teas and to the City Park for lunch. Just fantastic!



*The Wacky Band*

- After the opening plenary session on Thursday, a “happy hour and half” was held in the City Park. Delegates were entertained by many different acts, from human statues to a man on stilts. This was a great night, commencing at 6.30pm and finishing up after 9.00pm.
- Our club dinner was another great night organized by P.P. John Magor and held at “The Happy Chef” at Longford (a cousin of Geoff & Judy Steinicke). The evening commenced with drinks in the gardens and then moved indoors for a wonderful night of fellowship. P.R.I.P Wilf and Joan Wilkinson also attended and remarked what a great spirit our club has.



*Happy-hour in City Park*

- All our members coming together to have breakfast at 7.00am in the York Town Square, where the owner of the restaurant opened an hour early each day to cater especially for our members. Meeting there each morning gave a real buzz to the start of the day.
- The outstanding highlight of the Conference was the Saturday night Gala Dinner - a black tie dinner dance at historic Clarendon House where delegates were entertained by "The Three Waiters" and a very good local band (and the GSE Team from Sweden!). The 50mm of rain that fell that night did not dampen the spirits of any who attended, and some danced till stumps.



*The Sweden GSE teams take over the stage*



Another feature of the Conference was the bonding that occurred between many members who previously had not spent a lot of time together. This ensured that the whole event was made a lot more enjoyable for the newer members and wives especially.



*The Crowd of 800 at the Gala Dinner react to the “Three Waiters”*



*Launceston has never seen anything like this before*

The Conference was an outstanding success, with approximately 65% of our Club members making their way to Launceston.