

**Rotary Club of North Melbourne
Annual Report 2025–2026**

***UNITE
FOR
GOOD***



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President's Message

Unite for Good

As we reflect on the 2025–2026 Rotary year, I am proud of what we have achieved together as a club.

Guided by Rotary International's theme, "**Unite for Good**," we have demonstrated the power of service, fellowship, and collaboration. While we remain a relatively small club, our impact continues to extend well beyond North Melbourne, reaching communities across Australia and internationally.

This year we strengthened partnerships, supported vulnerable communities, invested in young people, recognised local volunteers, and contributed to life-changing international projects. None of this would have been possible without the dedication of our members, volunteers, partners, sponsors and Friends of Rotary.

Thank you for your commitment to Rotary's vision of creating lasting change.

Our Year at a Glance

Community Service

- Continued support for the Simonds College Breakfast Program
- Assisted North Melbourne Primary School community events
- Supported Joseph's Corner and Orygen Assist
- Sponsored the Olive Branch Dialogues initiative

International Service

- Continued support for a family through the Cambodian Rural Student Trust
- Contributed to life-changing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) projects across Cambodia through collaboration with Rotary Passport Club and international Rotary partners.
- Supported the Jerusalem Women Driving Health Together project

Youth Development

- Strengthened partnership with University of Melbourne Rotaract Club
- Commenced planning for the John Hanley Student Volunteer Award

Fundraising & Events

- Successful Queensberry Cup BBQ
- Successful Moomba Festival BBQ
- Record-breaking Mother's Day Classic BBQ

Membership & Fellowship

- Welcomed new member Deborah Bucolini
- Strengthened relationships with neighbouring Rotary clubs
- Expanded community engagement through online participation

Our Community

One of our most rewarding ongoing commitments continues to be the **Simonds College Breakfast Program**.

This initiative ensures students have access to a nutritious breakfast before commencing their school day. Through this partnership, we continue to support student wellbeing while strengthening our connection with the local community.

We also commenced the **John Hanley Student Volunteer Awards**, recognising students who demonstrate exceptional commitment to service and leadership.

We continue to maintain a strong relationship with **Haileybury College City Campus** through our annual participation in their ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day commemorative services. These events provide an opportunity to honour those who have served our nation while strengthening connections with students, staff, and the broader community.

Our members also supported and contributed towards:

- North Melbourne Primary School Father's Day BBQ
- Joseph's Corner community initiatives
- Orygen Assist volunteer activities supporting young people experiencing mental health challenges

These projects demonstrate Rotary's commitment to creating positive local impact through practical service.

Celebrating Community Champions

One of the highlights of the year was the presentation of the **Phonse Tobin Awards**, recognising individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the North and West Melbourne community.

The awards celebrated the spirit of volunteerism and community service that lies at the heart of Rotary.

The 2025 recipients were:

- Madeleine Scully – Melbourne Bowls Club
- Janet Graham – North & West Melbourne News
- Karl Hession – North & West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre

We were honoured to welcome:

- The Tobin Family, the generous sponsors of the program
- Nik Reece, Lord Mayor of Melbourne
- Peter Shephard, District Governor
- Graham Hope, District Governor Elect

Their attendance reinforced the significance of these awards within our community.

International Service and Global Impact

Cambodia Family Support Program

Our partnership with the **Cambodian Rural Student Trust (CRST)** continued throughout the year.

Through regular financial support, we assisted Mrs. Thunh and her family in Banteay Srei District, helping provide food security, educational opportunities, and ongoing support.

This program remains one of the most personal and meaningful international projects supported by our Club with an opportunity to extend to another family in the next Rotary year.

Clean Water, Better Health, Brighter Futures

Access to safe water and sanitation remains one of Rotary's key priorities globally.

This year we partnered with Rotary Passport Club and several Rotary clubs to support significant **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** initiatives in Cambodia.

Key achievements included:

- Completion of the Kampong Kdei High School WASH Project
- Participation in a Rotary Foundation Global Grant to,
 - Support for bio sand water filtration systems
 - Construction of sanitation facilities
 - Delivery of hygiene education programs

Collectively, these projects are expected to benefit approximately **6,000 students** across Cambodia.

Fundraising Success

Fundraising activities not only generate vital resources for community projects but also raise Rotary's profile throughout Melbourne.

Queensberry Cup BBQ

Another successful event with strong community support and excellent fundraising outcomes.

Moomba Festival BBQ

One of our flagship activities, supported by members and volunteers from the University of Melbourne Rotaract Club.

Mother's Day Classic BBQ

A record-breaking event that delivered our highest attendance and strongest fundraising result to date.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of members, volunteers, and supporters.

Building Peace and Understanding

Rotary's commitment to peacebuilding was reflected through several important initiatives during the year.

The Club proudly sponsored the **Olive Branch Dialogues**, bringing together Jewish and Muslim community members in a spirit of mutual understanding and respectful conversation.

We also continued our support of the **Jerusalem Women Driving Health Together** project and joined Rotary partners supporting a Global Grant application through Rozana Australia.

These initiatives highlight Rotary's unique ability to foster peace through service, healthcare, and community connection.

Fellowship, Learning and Club Life

Fellowship remains at the heart of Rotary.

Throughout the year, members enjoyed regular club meetings, social gatherings, and opportunities to connect with Rotarians from across District 9800 and beyond.

Highlights included:

- Hosting members from neighbouring Rotary clubs and joining the meetings of neighbouring Rotary clubs
- Participation in the Paul Harris Breakfast
- Presentations to Rotary Passport Club and Rotary Satellite Club for Ending Forced Organ Harvesting
- Trialling an online meeting to improve accessibility and engagement

These activities strengthened relationships while helping members stay connected and informed.

Inspiring Speakers

Our club was privileged to host an outstanding range of speakers covering humanitarian service, health, peacebuilding, community development, and international affairs.

Highlights included presentations from:

- Manorani Guy – AusWise
- Jane Edrington – Interplast Australia & New Zealand
- Sue Albert – Melbourne City Mission
- Dr Elaine Pratley – Rotary Peace Fellow
- Chris Hrnevich – Association of Ukrainians in Victoria
- Nicole Lewis – Founder, The Soup Angels
- Leon Colla – Joseph's Corner

- Tedd Dziadkiewicz – Celebrating 32 years of Rotary service
- Des Tobin – Author of *It's in the Genes*
- Aimee Stefanski – Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation
- Mikaela Stafrace – Project Rozana
- Deborah Bucolini – Coimpecto B
- Karl Hession – The Hotham History Project
- Sophie Shen and Amy Yan – Awareness of Illegal Organ Harvesting
- Christine Edwards – Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia)
- Kunthea Pon – President-Elect, Rotaract Club of Siem Reap (Online Meeting)

These presentations informed, challenged, and inspired members throughout the year.

Special thanks to Neville Page for coordinating our guest speaker program.

Environment & Sustainability

The Rotary Club of North Melbourne continued its support of environmental sustainability initiatives through participation in the Rotary Environmental Garden Planning Committee. During the year, plans progressed for the establishment of a pollinator-friendly Rotary Environmental Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, moving from concept development to project planning.

The project brings together multiple Rotary clubs and community partners with a focus on sustainability, environmental education, biodiversity, and Aboriginal engagement.

We look forward to supporting the project's development and exploring opportunities for member participation in this significant environmental initiative over the coming years.

Membership and the Future

Like many community organisations, Rotary continues to face membership challenges.

Despite this, our club remains active, vibrant, and impactful.

During the year we:

- Welcomed Deborah Bucolini as a new member
- Developed several prospective membership opportunities
- Continued to build relationships with younger generations through Rotaract

Growing our membership and developing future leaders will remain a priority for the years ahead.

Looking Forward

As we enter the next Rotary year, our focus will be on:

- Growing membership and engagement
- Expanding support for local community programs
- Continue and expand our Cambodia Family Support Program
- Delivering major fundraising events
- Expanding youth leadership opportunities
- Strengthening partnerships across District 9800
- Increasing our impact through sustainable service projects
- Explored the Friends of Rotary model

Together, we will continue to create positive and lasting change.

Thank You

The success of our Club is built upon the generosity, friendship, and dedication of our members and supporters.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time, shared their expertise, participated in events, supported our projects, and embodied Rotary's motto of **Service Above Self**.

Together, we continue to prove that while we may be a small club, we are capable of making a remarkable difference in our community and beyond.

Thanu Kothalawala

President 2025–2026

Rotary Club of North Melbourne