

Report from Ken Hall, Rotary Board member, to the NYSF Board for Friday 28th July 2023.

I want to report initially on the success in trying times for the NYSF program held in January 2023.

Most Rotary clubs have now contacted their students and have received very positive reports back from the students. Students have been high in their praise for their involvement with the National Youth Science Forum program and what they have been able to achieve. Despite the hybrid delivery, this is in line with comments over the many years that Rotary has participated with NYSF as it approaches 40 years providing valuable STEM activities to students as they start their final year of Secondary schooling.

This is really an excellent result from the students in what continues to be trying times for Rotary Clubs and NYSF with the continuing impact of the COVID epidemic following bushfires and the effects of Government legislation.

It is felt widely by Rotarians that the return to a residential program for Year 12 students is a very positive move and this seems to be borne out by the number of students expressing interest this year in the program. Over this time many Rotary Clubs have found it difficult to fundraise for events such as NYSF and with continuing demands on their funds from other community events, it is hoped that they will spend up to \$3000 to send a student to NYSF as an important priority. It becomes increasingly difficult to sell the importance of NYSF as a program to individual Clubs and convince the clubs to continue to support the program for the benefit of STEM students in their local community. Over the past five years that financial support has amounted to an estimated \$800,000 per annum across Australia. Over the past 39 years the financial support for NYSF by Rotary has been continuous since inception.

There are also questions at Rotary level about new restrictions imposed on the way Rotary districts are expected to manage interviews and orientation. This is of course due to increasing privacy restrictions imposed by the Federal Government which have not supported organisations such as Rotary and NYSF working collaboratively. This has meant that many District chairs are now questioning whether the interview process will work successfully ensuring students attend interviews, experience the interview process as preparation for their future and gain further knowledge of ways in which they may be assisted with Rotary sponsorship.

During the leadup to the 2023 program, regular Zoom meetings were held between CEO Dr Melanie Bagg and the Rotary District Chairs and these were seen to be effective in updating Rotary on the progress and any changes to the NYSF program. This year the district chairs were able to participate in a face-to-face conference for the first time since before COVID that ensured that the Chairs were able to discuss issues that have arisen at a management level and ways in which alternatives could be implemented.

The major issue centred around the new privacy policy adopted by the NYSF Board. NYSF indicated that information provided to Rotary could not be kept confidential. This has created continued angst and I believe, a division between NYSF and Rotary in Australia. This leads many of us to consider the health of the relationship and its continuation. Is NYSF mature enough now to go alone with the program without Rotary involvement? Should Rotary at a District level withdraw any activities previously used to assist NYSF (interviews and Orientations)? Should NYSF manage its relationship with individual Rotary clubs (as all clubs and Districts are autonomous), to decide how students are funded to attend the January program?

This has also been suggested by NYSF management, who believe that they are time encumbered by the dual relationship which does not occur with other STEM programs. I believed until recently, that NYSF still needs the services of Rotary, but I am reconsidering my views now.

In closing these remarks, I am tending my resignation from the Board of NYSF as the Rotary representative. My responsibilities as a Board member are now conflicting with my first love which is Rotary and Doing Good in the World, and the current situation leaves me no other alternative.

It will be up to the present District Governors of Rotary Zone 8 in Australia, to make the decision as to whether my position on the Board of NYSF will be filled by another Rotarian of standing.

I am still wholly committed to what NYSF does for students in the development of their interest and abilities in STEM and wish you every success in the future.

Ken

PS The following Rotary document gives clear guidelines as to the role of District Chairs. The current NYSF requirements are now conflicting with Rotary expectations.

NYSF District Chairs Responsibility

To Rotary

District Chairs are appointed by the District Governor who is the representative of Rotary International. District Chairs are therefore responsible to report to the District Governor in each district

- District Chairs liaise with Rotary and Rotaract clubs to
 - Promote the program and find applicants for the programs.
 - Liaise with schools to promote the program and seek suitable applicants.
 - Encourage clubs to sponsor students to attend the program.
- Assist prospective students to complete and submit an application form to NYSF.
- Assist students to liaise with local clubs to seek sponsorship from Rotary.
- Assist clubs to complete the application process and prepare students for interview.
- Prepare and organise interviews for all students to assess their suitability for the program.
- Conduct the interviews.
- Conduct Orientation for all students and parents prior to the program.
- Report to clubs during and after the NYSF program. To do this, district chairs need to access students to receive a report from them concerning their experience and make this available to the Clubs.

To NYSF

- Promote the program to all Rotary, Rotaract Clubs, and schools in their district.
- Report successful students to NYSF after interviews.
- Liaise with NYSF during the application process.
- Provide some student supervision during the program as requested by NYSF for face to face or hub activities.

Issues to address

Rotary Sponsorship

- Rotary provides an enormous amount of sponsorship for students to attend the program.
- As a result, we are responsible to account for the public monies used.
 - Ensure that students who have been sponsored meet their obligations through attendance and participation during the program.
 - Ensure that students do not 'use the system' and attract funds from multiple Rotary clubs and financially benefit. Rotary needs to be informed of NYSF funding (Access scholarships) made to students.

Insurance

- Rotary has a comprehensive Insurance to cover Rotarians and volunteers in all programs. Rotary policy covers all Rotarians and volunteers for every activity including NYSF interviews and orientation and attendance at sessions when required.
- Rotary clubs or district need to notify our insurer of any activities such as interviews and orientation prior to the events to have these events approved.

Child Protection

- Rotary has its own Child Protection policy and indemnity and insurance. Rotarians and volunteers access this policy if and as required in the first instance. Rotary policy covers all Rotarians and volunteers for every activity including NYSF interviews and orientation and attendance at sessions when required.

District Chairs should report on:

Number of Clubs which support NYSF.

Number of students in the district who apply and attend NYSF.

Student information:

- Male / female / other.
- Public / private schools /home-schooling.
- Indigenous, Torres Strait island and social disadvantage recognition.
- Rotary sponsored and full fee paying.

Rotary Club information

- Number of students they sponsor.
- \$\$ given to students as scholarships.
- Do they have contact with student during the application process?
- Do they have contact with the student after the program?
- Some comments from students regarding their experience both before, during and after.