

## **Rotary International District 9685 Annual Report 2014**

I am pleased to present the first Annual Report of Rotary International District 9685 to this AGM held on Thursday 20 November 2014 at Muirfield Golf Club, North Rocks NSW.

The 2014 Annual Report is published on the District 9685 Website. Whilst this is a departure from providing copies of an Annual Report in print form, the electronic publication is in keeping with current communication, is definitely more economical and I trust Rotarians will find it convenient. Nevertheless Clubs are requested to produce a printed copy of this report presented at the AGM to any Rotarian unable to access the electronic version.

The 2014 Annual Report Documents on District 9685 Website include this report presented to the AGM, the "Executive Summary" distributed at the District Changeover on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014 held at the Castle Hill RSL Club, Financial and other related reports and documents including photographs from the year.

The Document "package" details many of the projects, activities and achievements of the District and Clubs throughout 2013-14. It also includes copies of presentations made at the launch of District 9685, the DGs Official Visit, the District Conference and the 2014 Changeover. These speeches outlined the ideas and concepts upon which the District goals were developed. The report tonight to the AGM will simply highlight some of these achievements and discuss some of the related issues.

In 2013-14 Rotarians throughout the world were challenged by RI President, Ron Burton to "Engage Rotary, Change Lives". The year was characterised by significant changes for Rotarians globally and particularly in District 9685. These include:

- The first year of District 9685,
- The global implementation of the new Grants Model of The Rotary Foundation,
- The adoption of a Regional Membership Plan
- The first National Public Relations Campaign
- Launch of the new RI website and branding
- Our first one-day District Conference and online Conference component
- The Sydney Rotary International Convention
- Chartering of the first Sunday afternoon, family friendly, Coffee Rotary Club

Through this report I wish to acknowledge the work taken from November 2010 to July 2013 by all members of the District 9685 Formation Steering Committee. The Committee was initially under the joint Chairmanship of PDG Marilyn Mercer and PDG George Papallo. Redistricting provided an opportunity to review established projects and practices. District 9685 embraced a positive approach to change and promoted an inclusive culture. It was therefore pleasing to note the number of programs and projects undertaken jointly across clubs and with other districts. Many clubs demonstrated a willingness to work collaboratively and form partnerships with various community organisations.

A major challenge taken up by the Directors of each Avenue of Service was to develop and support the diversity of programs and projects from across the District. To some extent this is an ongoing task that is continually being fine tune. An example is the District ran two RYPEN programs a summer

RYPEN and a winter RYPEN. Whilst this organisation seems adequate for current demand, there is a need to consider running three MUNA programs.

Basically the program and projects District 9685 supported and Clubs adopted across all Avenues of Service were greatly enriched as a result of Redistricting.

The “Meet the Mayor program” was designed to enhance outcomes outlined in the above paragraphs. During July 2013 Club Presidents with the District Governor held meetings with Mayors throughout the District. The outcomes were varied and significant. To give one example Michael Regan, Mayor of Warringah put forward the suggestion that his Council host the entire International Convention delegation of Rotarians from Hawaii to a special function in honour Duke Kahanamoku whose statue on the headland north of Freshwater Beach commemorates the introduction of surfing to Australia in 1914.

Coordinated by AG John Corney, clubs in the Beaches Zone celebrated the 100 year Anniversary of the Duke’s visit with DG Phillip Sammer and District 5000 Rotarians and their partners to a special night at the Nth Curl Curl Surf Club.

This was but one example of the response of District 9685 clubs to the Home Hosting initiative of the 2014 RI Convention Host Organising Committee.

By any measure the Convention was an outstanding success and I wish to acknowledge the dedicated work of the Host Organising Committee (HOC) and the role played by District 9685 Rotarians who served on the HOC and its sub-committees. We are indebted to those Rotarians. It was indeed an honour to be a co-host District of the Convention, as it was to be the District with the highest number of Registrations from across the Rotary World.

The District Conference held on 23 February 2014 included a number of innovations. It recognised the plea of many Rotarians for a more affordable Conference in terms of cost and time. As can be noted from the Audited Conference Financial Statement in the Annual Report Documents, the Conference returned a small surplus. This surplus, low Registration cost and noted quality of the Conference was achieved by the support of our sponsors, Subaru, Ord Minnett and especially Chatswood RSL Club and Clubs NSW. The support the Willoughby City Council and the friendly cooperation of staff at the Concourse also must be recognised. The Conference provided the opportunity for Rotarians to confer through Break-out Sessions and an extended lunch period.

There was considerable use of technology throughout the one day Conference. A highlight was a simultaneous presentation by onstage presenters from the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, an audiologist at the Hearing Hub at Macquarie University and a family in Cairns. The presentation included a live demonstration of the testing and calibration of a cochlear implant in a child living in Cairns by his audiologist working from Macquarie University.

The whole Conference was streamed live throughout the world had a special segment beamed live on the Urban Screen to the public in Chatswood and included online seminars in the weeks following.

It included high quality entertainment throughout the day. The highlight for many Rotarians was a first class re-enactment by the “Willoughby Players” of the first Rotary meeting on 23 February 1905. The script was specially commissioned for the occasion.

The District is indebted to the brilliant and multi-talented Conference Chairman, Noel Cislowski and his team, Tom Sweeny, John Melville and Les Walsh as well as the technical expertise of Bobby Holder. We also acknowledge the friendship and support of the RIPPR, PDG Trish Boyle from New Zealand.

In 2013, The Rotary Foundation implemented globally a new Grants Model previously known as Future Vision. The Rotary Foundation District Chairman, PDG Tony Castley brought together a large District Team of experienced and knowledgeable program coordinators and mentors to assist clubs.

The outcome was spectacular. Firstly the District had an exceptionally high number of applications for both District and Global Grants. Equally important was the level of Foundation Giving which Tony described as “simply amazing”. We raised the largest Annual Fund for Australia and New Zealand with \$409,314, the largest per capita with \$191.27, and all up with Permanent Fund and Grants our total of \$653,000 was the highest ever raised. We also won the Australia Cup.

The August 2014 issue of Tony’s Newsletter is included in the Annual Report Package. Congratulations Tony and also all District 9685 Rotarians who made all this possible.

The of need for all Rotarians to take responsibility for membership growth was highlighted in 2013 when the global membership of RI fell to a ten year low of 1,185,000. As of the first of July 2013, District 9685 had 78 Clubs with a total membership of 2140. Come the end of June 2014 we had just over 2140 members. The number was maintained largely because the first Sunday afternoon club, Vinegar Hill was admitted to Rotary International on 23 June 2014 with a Charter membership of 22. As happens however between the 30 June and 1 July the District membership fell officially to 2092. Two clubs, St Leonards and Terrey Hills handed in their Charter effective 30 June 2014 so the number of clubs in the District is 77.

Whilst there is indication that the declining District membership trend in recent years is slowing there is every hope that 2014-15 will show positive growth. Membership and support for members must be our top priority. New club formats need to be explored in response to our changing world. Vinegar Hill is a family friendly, inclusive, low cost and flexible Rotary Club. The reality is there were many Rotarians inducted across the District. This highlights the need for a real focus on existing members to “close the back gate” and improve member retention.

In October 2013 bushfires devastated large areas of the Blue Mountains and destroyed over 200 homes. This disaster within our District was a defining feature of the year. Reference to it is included in the Community Service Report by Susan Wakefield. Two points need to be made in this report. The fire appeal using the Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) new product Rotary Australia Benevolent Fund (RABS) was a first for the District and proved to be an excellent and extremely easy to use means to manage donations. This Disaster has prompted the development of management guidelines to assist a District when the disaster occurs within the District. These guidelines will be presented to PDGs for consideration at the Zone 7A/8 Institute in December 2014.

Susan's Community Service report also includes details of the DG Partner's Project on Hearing Health. This project is ongoing and includes working closely with organisations such as Australian Hearing throughout Sydney and rural NSW. Funds are still being raised for an Australian Rotary Health Finding Partners PhD Scholarship.

Whilst so many Rotarians from across the District contributed to the success and achievements made in 2013-14, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental leadership role played by each Club President. Without strong Club leadership nothing much would ever be achieved in Rotary. The role of a District team basically is to support and strengthen clubs. Locally this is provided by the Assistant Governors and this report acknowledges the contribution made by John Corney, Mina Howard, Liz North, Bhuvan Unhelkar, Terry Davies, Ray Southeren, Ivan Fedor, Jay Thorogood, Allan Forno, Tony Durbin, Bruce Lakin, Joy Pogson, Joan van den Burg, Caroline O'Shannassy and Paul Rickard.

In addition the Directors and Chairmen of District Leadership Team were the most dedicated, energetic, and supportive and inspiration group of people who laid solid foundations for District 9685 in 2013-14. This report provides the opportunity to express gratitude and acknowledge Lyn Davies, Mentors PDG Pam Pritchard and PDG Bob Aitken AM, Governor Support Mike Hallen and DGE Ian Scott AM, District Secretary DGN Gina Growden, District Treasurer Jim Wells, Training Chairman Lindsay May, RLI Coordinators PDG Barry Philips and PDG David Rands, Communications Director Les Walsh, Conference Director Noel Cisowski, Club Service / Administration Director Brian Plain, Membership Director Mark Anderson, Public Relations Director Brian O'Shannassy, The Rotary Foundation District Chairman PDG Tony Castley, Community Director Susan Wakefield OAM, Vocational Director Peter Kirkwood, International Director Michael MacQuillan, Youth Director Jade Catherall, Projects and Special Events Team Annona Pearse and Ross Pearse, AV / Online Production and RIPPA Coordinator Bobby Holder and District Rotaract Representative Brett Sham.

Finally to conclude this report it is appropriate to highlight some of the Awards achieved by Rotarians and Clubs in District 9685 in 2013-14. The full list of District Awards is included in the Annual Report Documents on the District Website. Two initiatives in 2013-14 were the opportunity for a Club to honour an individual Rotarian with a DG Meritorious Service Award and for the District to recognise Rotarians who had made a significant contribution to Rotary beyond the Club with the District 9685 "Service to Rotary" Award.

The exceptional achievement for District 9685 in 2013-14 was the award of three most prestigious Rotary International Awards. Districts are invited to nominate suitable candidates for each of these awards. These nominations are then rigorously reviewed by an independent international selection committee. Whilst a number may meet the selection criteria, in any given year the number of awards made is extremely limited.

In 2013-14 Districts 9685 Rotarians received three such awards.

- RI Significant Achievement Award was awarded to the Rotary Club of Lower Blue Mountains.
- RI Spouse/Partner Award was awarded to Jane Clifford (Rotary Club of Lindfield)
- RI Service Above Self Award was awarded to Malcolm Deall (Rotary Club of Gosford North)