

Welcome and Family of Rotary Address

Ladies and gentlemen what a stirring fanfare and parade of flags!

Welcome to our Rotary Come Alive in 9685 District Conference.

I wish to acknowledge the Guringai people on whose ancestral land we meet today. I pay respect to their elders past and present and extend the hand of friendship to Aboriginal people present today.

Please stand for the National Anthem performed by Caroline Reid and her singers.

Rotarians and Friends, whether you have travelled from the Mountains or the Sea or anywhere in between or indeed from Across the Sea, welcome to our first District 9685 Conference and the celebration of Rotary's 109<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

It is my great pleasure to welcome from the Rotary Club of Invercargill North, District 9980, New Zealand, the Rotary International President's Personal Representative, PDG Trish Boyle, Simon and their daughter Louise.

In each Rotary District there is a group of Rotarians who have been afforded the privilege to serve as District Governor. We are pleased to extend a warm welcome to our Past Governors and spouses especially Elaine Turnidge wife of the late PDG Graham Turnidge. Twelve months ago we established a tradition in District 9685 that we both welcome and SHOW our appreciation of Past District

Governors by using deaf sign language. Past District Governors, I now invite those who are comfortable to do so to stand along with your wives and husbands, turn to face the audience so Conference delegates can give you a District 9685 welcome.

I especially wish to recognise all members of the Host Organising Committee of the 2014 RI Convention, Regional Rotary Public Image Coordinator Phillip Archer, Assistant Rotary Coordinator, PDG Keith Roffey and Margaret and all District 9685 Rotarians, as listed in the District Directory, who have a role beyond the District. Thank you.

I also recognise our Assistant Governors and District Team. Thank you Team for the work you do in support of Rotarians and Clubs in our District.

To all Rotaractors, RYEP students,

To those who are attending their first District Conference

And non Rotarian guests we extend a special welcome and trust you will continue to join us in future years.

Does anyone who shares a Birthday with Rotary?

Welcome Everyone! We hope you both enjoy the day and are inspired by what Rotary does throughout the world.

A little later we will be joined by Governor Garry Browne (District 9675), PDG Bob Aitken, DGE Ian and DGN Gina, AG Bhuvan Unhelkar, and President Tess Hall (Penrith). That group is currently climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge. They are making a promotional video which will be released world-wide in support of Rotary's attempt to break a world record during the RI Sydney Convention. The record is for the number of Bridge climbers from the same event.

In this address I will give a short review of some of the District highlights since its formation in July 2013.

I will then briefly outline an approach by which we can have a conversation about a different way of thinking about some aspects of Rotary, including the Family of Rotary. I encourage Rotarians to engage in this discussion over the next several months

But first a little about today's Conference!

Chairman Noel and the Conference Committee with the support of the combined Rotary Clubs of Chatswood, Chatswood Sunrise, Chatswood International, Roseville Chase and Lane Cove have I believe put together a most innovative Conference package. I commend the booklets in your satchels and thank Kathryn Dodd for her role in their production.

We wanted to make the Conference affordable, to build in flexibility and give Rotarians a voice, thus the breakout sessions before lunch. If you can it would be advantageous for clubs to have at least one Rotarian at each of Breakout activities?

Please visit all our stall holders in the Rotary Showcase during the breaks including our commercial sponsors, Subaru and Ord Minette. We have had amazing support from Willoughby City Council, Chatswood RSL and Telstra. Kamahl is kindly donating proceeds from the sale of his CD to "End Polio Now" The 3x CD Pack is available in the foyer. As you have already seen, many local community groups and individuals have also donated their time and talent to the Conference. We thank them all.

Key note speakers today will receive a gift as a memento of their time with us. This will be presented off-stage so I am mentioning it now so you know there has not been an oversight. The gift most appropriately is a copy of Fire in the Belly signed by the author our own Don Stein. It is a great read and is Don's story.

If you would like your own copy see Don's stand in the Showcase. Don asks for a donation to either the Salvation Army or "End Polio Now" rather than payment for the book.

You may have noticed the cameramen in the auditorium. The Conference proceedings today are being recorded by Bobby Holder and Rod Holman. Thank you both for the donation of your services.

And now the really exciting part! Our Conference today is being streamed live across the nation and beyond.

[\[Link details on screen\]](#)

If you know someone who would be interested, just quietly text them the link details. Please leave your phone on silent.

So let's make some cheerio calls! To our great friends PP Kari and Marji-Leena from Kincumber now living in Finland.

RYLA TL Director Eddie Pinto in Dili

A very early "good morning" to Governors Hank and Erwin in Western Australia, Gov. Barbara in South Australia, Gov. Bruce in Tasmania, Dili and all my fellow First Class Governors throughout Australia and New Zealand and their Districts.

On behalf of the Zone 8 Governors, I extend a very special cheerio to Governor Trevor Taylor and Robyn. You are an inspiration!

We are delighted that all of you can join us. [\[CLOSE Link details on screen\]](#)

The establishment of District 9685 was as a result of Redistricting. I thank the District 9685 Formation Steering Committee for their thorough attention to detail.

As co-host district for the RI Sydney Convention, 2013-14 was always going to be an amazing year for us. Our goal was to ensure that every Rotarian had the opportunity to attend the international convention. This thinking very much influenced the design of this Conference.

Currently there are more paid delegates to the International Convention from D9685 than are attending this Conference. Further we have more paid registrations than any other District in the world.

And the good news is until 31March you can still get a discounted registration.

A priority was to develop an inclusive District 9685 and Club culture. This is a work in progress. Lyn and I regularly witness innovative and relevant projects and well run and inspiring meetings where Rotarians are enthusiastic and keen to engage.

Of particular note is the increase in the number of clubs combining for all sorts of purposes including creating bigger, better, bolder projects.

2013-14 saw the introduction of new TRF Grants model. Thanks to Tony Castley and his team we have had a record number of applications for District Grants which means more clubs than ever before are involved in the work of TRF. We also have high impact global grants in varying stages of development and implementation.

Year to date District 9685 has the highest total level of giving of all Districts in Australia.

But not yet on a per capita basis.

Other aspects of the year so far include

- Official Club visits were conducted on a Zone basis. Increased cooperation between clubs seems to have been one outcome.
- The Meet the Mayor program was well received.
- We will complete seven Rotary Leadership Institute courses in 2013-14.
- We continue to be the leading District in supporting Australian Rotary Health. Please check out Lyn's ARH PhD Hearing Health Scholarship proposal.

Rotarians of District 9685 you are exceedingly generous and deserve a collective pat on the back as you Engage Rotary, Change Lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen, October 2013 was a defining moment for our District when we were faced with the Disaster of the Blue Mountains Fires with the destruction of over 200 homes. I am in awe of the response by the District 9685 clubs and Rotarians across Australia. There will be a report on the fires later in this conference. So many Rotarians have been involved but I am sure everyone would want me to say, "President Laurie Waterson, the Rotary Club of Springwood and Rotarians from across the Blue Mountains, you make us all very proud. Thank you."

So a great deal has been achieved. But there is more to do. [slide on screen from 2013 Conference with Lyn holding the Ball]

Remember the ball? We haven't forgotten. This initiative and the 2500 Trees proved to be a little more difficult to implement than anticipated but we are working on both.

I know some clubs are experiencing difficulty with 1000 Photographs? Remember District Photographer Bill Forsyth can help. All you have to do is ask him. [CLOSE slide on screen from 2013 Conference with Lyn holding the Ball]

The major task ahead though is highlighted by the following figures.

On 1 July 2013 we started with 2140 members. Today the official RI number is 2136.

We are going backwards. I don't believe that is a reason to panic. But we must take sensible action. Central Blue has had an increase of 7 members so far this year. It can be done.

We have an excellent Regional Membership Plan which is to increase by three percent per year for three years. If we gained one member net per club per year we would meet that target.

Imagine what would happen if 50% of those were women

But to do that we need to rethink some aspects of Rotary. We need to focus on the core values of Rotary to guide change as we make decisions thinking to the future.

That involves a clear focus on the importance of what we do in the world. The late John Carrick said, “Of one fact there is no doubt. We will never run out of customers.”

To borrow a concept from Garry’s conference, there needs to be a shift in our thinking about membership.

The first shift is to focus on members rather than membership.

We do that by taking time to listening to each other, understand and accommodate member’s needs, ensuring all members have meaningful roles, leaving our egos at the door and respecting each other as Rotarians.

If we do that alone we will have gone a long way to locking the back gate. At the moment too many clubs leave it wide open. 800 Rotarians from District 9685 clubs have walked through the back gate in the past decade.

The second shift is to interpret our goal as “to grow Rotary” rather than just invite new members. If we do this, all sorts of capacity building possibilities open.

The first step is to invest in existing members so we have more knowledgeable, involved, engaged, motivated members who will be the ones to lead us into the future. (Ron Burton)

President Ron Burton’s theme is really a goal, “Engage Rotary Change Lives”. So the second step **is** to think more broadly about the Family of Rotary. Our Family is significantly greater than the current 1.2 Million Rotarians so why not engage them to assist with what we do in the world?

Like all families however there is a need to keep in touch, know how each other is getting on, to visit each other and to have family



reunions. Clubs could well think about having a group of Rotarians who undertake to maintain this contact, not in an intrusive, high power selling pitch but rather a sharing manner.

But what about younger Rotarians aged in their 20's and 30's? To really grow Rotary into the future we need to have this age group as part of the family. Well we already do have a number of Rotarians in this age group. A number are already in leadership positions in their clubs. It should come as no surprise that their clubs tend to have a focus on members which results in accommodating and adapting to meet their needs.

We are planning a district symposium for the Younger Rotarian.

Let's listen to a younger member of the Rotary family.

David Postic is a member of the Rotaract Club of Norman Oklahoma, USA. He says "If you make a habit to continuously evolve as a club, you will continue to engage young people and flourish."

And when clubs flourish, Rotary flourishes.

He also asks why he has never heard someone say, "Did you know that through Rotary you can change the world."

We want to attract busy, successful motivated people who care.

David Postic claims there are millions of young people like him who do care and want to change the world through Rotary.

Is your club ready to engage with David's friends?

During the Sydney convention and also when we achieve the eradication of polio, the eyes of Sydney and indeed the world will be upon Rotary.

Is your club ready to take advantage of that?

I invite you to join me in engaging with younger Rotarians, men and women and together get ready.