From the desk of District Governor Andy

Fellow Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors and friends.

The ability of humans to adapt has never been challenged as much in our lifetime as it has in the past 4 months. Each one of us, our families, our friends, our neighbours, our clubs, our employers, our governments, our places of worship, our supermarkets, our hospitals, our travel, and everything around us has changed to face a new future. This change was so sudden; did anyone of us see this coming?

In January, this year when I joined 544 other District Governors-Elect from around the world for our Governor Training in San Diego, California USA, none of us knew, we will be leading our Clubs and Districts into a new future. Our District was advantageously placed to use modern internet technology to connect during lockdown, because we have had Rotary E-Clubs in the district meeting online since 2013. Since you elected me three years ago as District Governor Nominee, our Governor Team had been meeting over the past years on Zoom. So, moving our traditional Rotary and Rotaract club meetings to online zoom or skype platforms was not a challenge for many clubs. Let me congratulate Immediate Past Governor Harry Bolton, PDG Terry Brown and every member in our district who led this transformation to be connected online during the past 4 months for being a trailblazer. 49 of our clubs met online during lockdown. Yes, together we in District 9640 did it!

My District Trainer PDG Michael and I grabbed the opportunity of the pandemic lockdown in April and May to engage with the then Presidents-Elect on zoom to discuss their challenges, aspirations and fears going forward into the unknown future. These regular interactive zoom chats led by my Assistant Governors-Elect helped us to get to know each other better and bond as a team. As a result, I am delighted to see the new camaraderie and open communications developing in each cluster. Already some clubs have teamed up to embark on joint projects to create a bigger impact in their local communities. Well done D9640, we are expanding our reach!!

So where do we go from here? As a Marketing professional, to me every challenge is an opportunity to renew our focus and grow our companies or clubs. This year in place of the annual district assembly with a large gathering of people, we are having small cluster-based training days for all Rotarians starting in August. My District Trainer PDG Michael Irving together with the 10 Assistant Governors (AG’s) will organise these cluster training days after discussion with each club President. Rotaractors and Interactors too are invited to join. The AG’s will play a key leadership role this year in mentoring your club to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Please share your great ideas with your AG. Our District Leadership Meetings too will be held in 4 different clusters starting from Jimboomba in Queensland. These are ground breaking actions! We have not done this before. Let’s give it a go.
My one crazy big goal this year is to grow our District to have 1400 Rotarians and 100 Rotaractors which were our membership numbers 10 years ago. We can achieve this goal, first by retaining our existing members. Do you know that 200 Rotarians left our clubs in the district last Rotary year? 145 of them had been in Rotary for less than 2 years!! We must stop this membership leak now. Second, we plan to start new format Rotary, Rotaract and Interact Clubs that are more affordable, flexible, action focussed and not meeting centric. I believe the COVID-19 pandemic has given us all, a once in a lifetime opportunity to “change for real” some traditions and processes our clubs have been doing for years with not much outcome. Looking ahead at this new Rotary year, one big question for us will be “how can we make membership in Rotary, Rotaract and Interact memorable to every member in our club so they will stay?”

Please share with me, your ground breaking ideas or an action your club had done to retain your members. Email me at; andyrajapakse@gmail.com. Together let’s get ready to face the new future with confidence and enthusiasm as we celebrate 100 years of Rotary in Australia!
Dear fellow Rotarians:

Ask any Rotarian what led them to Rotary, and you’ll usually get different answers. Why? Not only does Rotary mean different things to members in different parts of the world, it also has a unique meaning for each Rotarian.

However, we are all brought together in three important ways. We believe in Rotary values and all share the same Four Way Test. We believe in friendships and love spending time together. And we take great satisfaction in helping others – we are committed to Service.

Regards, Holger Knaack, President, Rotary International 2020-21

Holger Knaack, a member of the Rotary Club of Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln, Germany He’s the organization’s first German president, and came to that position in untraditional fashion. Read a profile of Knaack in The Rotarian and visit the office of the president pages.

**ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT HOLGER KNAACK 2020-2021**

**PRESIDENTIAL THEME: ROTARY OPENS OPPORTUNITIES**

Knaack urges members to embrace change so Rotary can expand and thrive. Rather than setting a specific target for increasing the number of members, Knaack is asking clubs and districts to think about how to grow in a sustainable and organic way. He wants clubs to focus on keeping current members engaged and adding new members who are the right fit for their club.

“We need to stop thinking of new members as people we can mark down as statistics and then forget about,” Knaack said. “Every new member changes us a little bit. That person brings a new perspective, new experiences. We need to embrace this constant renewal. We will grow stronger as we learn from new members.”

Download 2020-21 theme logo and materials  2020-21 Theme: President-elect Holger Knaack (PDF)
International Conference in Honolulu: hardly anyone was there...

Saturday 20th June, the Rotary International Convention opened in Honolulu. Except that hardly anyone was there... You see, just like our District Conference, dozens of AFL and Rugby matches and ordinary club meetings, also this event could not be held physically. Modern technology allows the live streaming of the conference and this was the first ever where anyone could attend – free of charge! However, not everyone has the time (or inclination) to spend the better part of a week sitting at their computer, particularly if one of the most attractive components of any conference is missing: the coffee breaks, the lunches and dinners which allow you to network with fellow Rotarians from all over.

Enter ‘Post Conference Streaming’. The whole lot is up on Youtube. You can watch the whole lot, or just selective segments. Even better: not meaning to be derogatory, but you can fast forward or skip what I (in streamed business seminars) used to call ‘Corporate Gumph’… Even better: if a speaker speaks (in your view) too slowly, you can run the video at 1.5 speed or even double speed. How good is that!

Click here to access the opening session on Saturday 20th June.

Franz Huber | Rotary Club of Surfers Sunrise

* DG Andy was a breakout speaker at “Grow Rotary Through New Club Types” session moderated by Jesse Harmon.