

THE POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**2018 Conference 9800
Warrnambool, Victoria
16 March to 18 March**



CONFERENCE REPORT

Rotary
District 9800



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Rotary District 9800 2018 Conference Report

Introduction

The Rotary Club of Balwyn were honoured to host the 2018 District 9800 Conference in Warrnambool on March 16-18th 2018, on behalf of District Governor, Peter Frueh and Anne Frueh.

More than seven hundred Rotarians, partners and guests attended the conference which commenced on the Friday at Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village. Approximately 20 percent were first time Rotary conference attendees. Guests gathered on a pleasantly warm evening to register attendance, enjoy entertainment and refreshments, and literally start the conference with a bang, firing the cannon which overlooks the bay.

We were delighted to host PDG Brian Hall and Lynn Hall from D6840 ,(Louisiana, USA) as the World President's representative, and in discovering the Aussie vernacular, they enjoyed being referred to as a 'ripper' RIPR .

The Theme and Speakers

The theme 'The Power to make a Difference' gave good scope to presenters and speakers who shared their journeys and experiences of making a difference in our world. The City of Warrnambool provided a wonderful welcome and setting. The first session commenced with our MC being gallantly 'rescued' onto stage by a local group of junior lifesavers. Then following an inclusive 'welcome to country', the Mayor and the Director of City Growth gave interesting insights into Regional Victoria, emerging trends, challenges and some of the differences we would see in Warrnambool in years to come.

Presenters came from a variety of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences with the common thread of the theme running throughout. While most speakers were not well-known names, much of the anecdotal feedback highlighted that this did not diminish from a very pleasing program. Local talent included a paediatrician-magician, an upcoming young songwriter -artist, and local historians. We were taken on a moving and emotional journey by several speakers, together with entertaining and quality educative presentations.

To complement the theme, when the formal sessions finished, approximately 80 people participated in a practical Hands-On project packing dried food for disaster relief in developing countries, conducted at a nearby community centre.

The Location and Venue

Warrnambool was chosen for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the delightful coastal setting and the ability to host 700+ people. The economic benefit brought to the community by our conference would be considerable and the staff at every location were very welcoming. The home hosting and local assistance by Warrnambool Rotarians was very much appreciated and links between clubs and individuals strengthened.

The state-of-the-art Lighthouse Theatre accommodated 590 people in comfortable tiered seating with the adjacent Studio room offering further seating with a live camera feed to a big screen. The quality of speakers together with some humorous videos to begin each session, helped to ensure the program kept to time.

The Rotary Market and Exhibition was held in marquees on the Civic Green in front of the Warrnambool Art Gallery. This location was excellent for showcasing Rotary to the Warrnambool community but windy weather on Saturday night meant some disruption for Sunday. It did, however, provide a good outdoor setting for morning and afternoon teas and lunch. Further to the weather of Saturday night, Warrnambool was declared an emergency evacuation centre for surrounding bush fire affected areas. A quick decision was made on the Sunday morning to dispatch over a hundred conference packed lunches to the emergency relief effort.

The Conference Dinner was held at Emmanuel College in their recently built gymnasium/hall facility with a local catering company providing excellent food and service. Being St Patrick's Day ensured some delightful green themed costumes and a terrific band added dancing to a very enjoyable evening.

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Sponsorship and Support

We received great support from the Warrnambool City Council and sponsors. The Mayor, Robert Anderson, provided a light hearted introduction to Warrnambool, including welcoming those he recognised as former residents. When others indicated he'd omitted their names, he responded, he had only consulted Police records.

Haronvale Digital Media followed on from their sponsorship from the previous conference, including recording some of the videos which were beamed during the Conference.

Over the weekend, Subaru provided a visual presence of four vehicles on the Civic Green and two entertaining 'Subaru Do' advertisements were aired to delegates. Local Subaru dealer principal, Greg Kelston, also interviewed Rotarian Ian Salek on his local radio show which gave exposure to Rotary in and beyond Warrnambool.

i-Travel (Carlingford) together with Avalon Waterways also sponsored the Conference and provided insights into their travel programs, including offering a special European river cruise in May 2019, exclusively for Rotarians.

On behalf of RC Balwyn, and in particular the organising committee, I extend our thanks and appreciation to all those who assisted, supported, contributed to and attended the D9800 Conference of 2018.

Di Gillies
District Conference Chair

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Conference Committee

The Conference Committee comprised:

DISTRICT GOVERNOR	Peter Frueh
CHAIRMAN	Di Gillies
CLUB PRESIDENT	David Jones
SECRETARY	Murray Wilkinson
TREASURER	Andrew Miles
MASTER OF CEREMONIES	Amanda Drury
PLANNING	Clarke Ballard
PROGRAM	Anthea Rutter
CATERING AND EVENTS	Philip Lambers
LOGISTICS	Brian Mathieson
VOLUNTEER OUTFITS	Sue King
PRE CONFERENCE TOURS	Anne Frueh
REGISTRATIONS	Kevin Walsh
REGISTRATION MATERIAL	Trevor Pang (Richmond)
ROTARY HIGHLIGHTS	Ian Hovey (Werribee)
MARKET PLACE	Brian Pollock
SPONSORSHIP & MARKETING	Ken McQualter
STAGE MANAGEMENT	Peter Shephard (Altona)
WARRNAMBOOL LIASION	Anne Frueh
USHERS	Members and Partners of Rotary Club of Balwyn

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Message from District Governor

Thanks to the over 700 who attended and participated in some way as delegates, partners, speakers, volunteers, etc. We aimed to have a fun conference which had interesting and diverse speakers, Rotary ideas, some local tours and events as well as plenty of social interaction.

The feedback has been very positive on these aspects and will help planning the Multi District Conference in Feb 2019. Anne and I would like to thank the many volunteers and participants who made it such a good event.

I would like to thank Conference Chair Di Gillies for her leadership of our many volunteers.

Finally, my thanks to Anne for her support and significant contribution to the Conference.

Peter Frueh

Feedback from Past District Governor Brian Hall

Rotary International President's Representative and a member of the Rotary Club of Covington, Louisiana said

"I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the weekend. The conference was easily the best conference I have attended as a President's representative. It was a stellar conference from top to bottom and you should all be very proud of the job that you did in making this conference happen. It was fantastic. It has been a pleasure to meet many of you, it's been wonderful to be with you; your hospitality has been astounding and I've made so many friends this weekend. It's been wonderful to be part of this. We will certainly miss Melbourne; I got to tell you the Great Ocean Road is one of the most spectacular things I've seen; it was just fantastic.

Thank you again for your hospitality, thank you for your friendships. I do look forward to our Districts continuing to work together and cooperate. I think there is a lot of room for our Districts to work together. I think there's a bright future for that. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you."

The Journey

This was a fantastic achievement for the Club. With a budget of \$250K and the enthusiasm, skills and effort of many members, our Club set out on a two-year journey to create the best conference possible.

The first major responsibility of the District Governor Nominee is to decide the location of the District Conference when they are district Governor. After much reflection on previous conferences, research, discussion and a few road trips, Warrnambool was the decision. D9800 had never been there for a conference and there were some challenges ahead.

This decision started a two-year journey. As the team gradually grew, we meandered in what seemed like circles at times and took side roads that led nowhere but, we were making progress. Certain deadlines kept us on task – an advertisement for inclusion in the 2017 conference booklet, a flyer and marketing material for the 2017 conference marketplace, a website to setup and registrations to open. With nine months to go, we were well down the road. The team expanded almost exponentially, and the pace picked up as detailed planning progressed – tours, speakers, presenters, food, beverages, logistics, budget, uniforms. With two months to go, we were in top gear taking only the road ahead.

The Balwyn team arrived on mass to a sunny, windless Warrnambool delivering the fun filled, inspiring conference that we had promised.

Approximately one million dollars was injected into the local economy. "Days for Girls", a North Balwyn sewing group earned \$1,900 for making our uniforms. \$1,500 was raised towards the Maremma Penguin Project. Bonds were created with the Warrnambool Central Rotary Club. We sent lunches to the fire evacuation centre in Warrnambool. Almost 20,000 meals for disaster aid were packed using the ForAMeal method.

Anne Frueh

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Planning

Planning included taking a good look at last year's Conference in Shepparton, noting its good points and possible areas for improvement. It also included establishing contact with D9800 stalwarts Peter Shephard and Ian Hovey, who have vast experience and provided invaluable help and expertise behind the scenes. It also involved many visits to Warrnambool by team members in the year (and more) leading up to the Conference. The Steering Committee, at its monthly and the weekly meetings, dealt with an amazing variety of issues and, perhaps inevitably, became largely an information exchange.

Much of the work and detailed planning was done by the group leaders and their teams in smaller sub-committee meetings.

All put in a huge amount of time and effort and did it extremely well, as of course did Di Gillies in keeping the whole juggernaut pointing in the right direction.

Perhaps the trickiest part was the role of allocating jobs to volunteers and identifying all the tasks. This included much discussion and continual adjustment as more information came to light at weekly meetings. The eventual list included something like 30 substantial tasks containing 170 individual volunteer jobs, with about 70 volunteers available to do the work.

As it turned out, there were generally more people than really needed for each task, which was partly intentional and much better than the other way around.

Thanks to all the volunteers.

Program

Putting together the program for the conference was an 18-month labour of love!

First Challenge: Unlike other more academic conferences there was not an immediate field of people to draw from. So the committee – Anne Frueh, Bob Batrouney, Gill Merzvinskis, Gavin Wayland, Noel Halford (Hawthorn Rotary), Pauline Wilson, Bill Goodwin and the wonderful Garry le Get (who imparted his wisdom from previous conferences) – had to start from the beginning. (Unfortunately Garry has since been called to Higher Service).

Themes were developed and then brain-stormed into ideas of speakers. Relevant speakers were then approached for the developed themes. This took time as some of the potentials were not quick to say yes or no. In fact there is one who said yes at the beginning, then never got back to us! The process of assembling the group of speakers took the best part of a year.

A spreadsheet was developed for controlling the logistics for all the speakers, when they would arrive, where they would stay etc. Only Michael Crossland, sourced from an agency was paid. However he gave a fantastic presentation and in the opinion of the committee, he was worth every penny. Accommodation was sourced; some speakers stayed with Warrnambool Rotarians, others stayed in hotels, others had their own accommodation organised. In general mileage was paid for, but as was said above, no one asked for remuneration for their actual presentation.

Anne Frueh, Gavin Wayland and Pauline Wilson organised and liaised with the breakout presenters, and from all accounts the registrants were pleased with the variety of offerings.

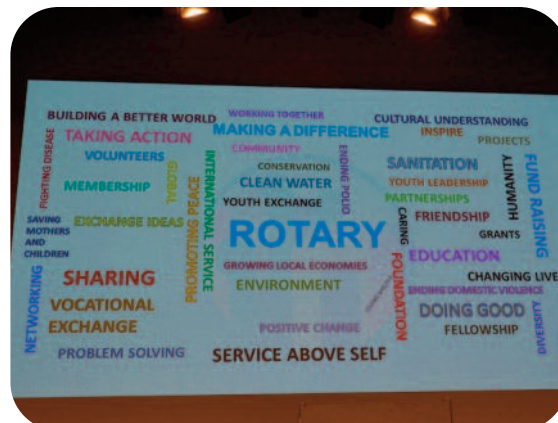
On the actual conference days, Gavin, Bill and Gill played a tag team, meeting the speakers and taking them to the Green Room. That was the worrying part: would they all turn up!! Yes they did, and generally quite a good time ahead of their presentation.

From feedback received we believe that the program was a success. The assembled speakers, although not well known in the community, delivered great presentations. The themes worked and each speaker addressed their particular theme. They all delivered.

The program team did a great job as during the leadup time to the conference they met every month, and then in the last three months met every two weeks. This was in addition to the overall conference committee which met every week for the last three months of the lead time.

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Catering and Events

What a great weekend it was. There was fire and there was smoke!

Official cannon fire opened the conference during the welcome function at Flagstaff Hill. Drinks flowed, served by Flagstaff Hill staff and canapes were served by Tasty Plates.

Wynton catering, the local company who looked after all the catering on Saturday – morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea in the Marquee – followed by the dinner at Emmanuel College and then with more energy were back in action on Sunday morning for morning tea and lunch. They did an excellent job looking after such a big number of guests in improvised surrounding.

On Sunday morning we heard and could see that some Rotarians and partners left Warrnambool because of the fires. The road to Colac was closed and some Rotarians were worried about getting home safely. It was estimated at morning tea, that we had “lost” around 100 Rotarians and partners so we released 100 lunch boxes and the catering company Wynton arranged for them to be delivered to the SES office for distribution to the fire crews and SES volunteers .

Logistics

The prime duty was to arrange the venues associated with providing the Conference with operational spaces. There were five; the Flagstaff Hill Marine Village; the Archie Graham Community Centre; the Lighthouse Theatre; the Emmanuel Function Centre (arranged by Philip Lambers); and a venue that had to be 'created', being the House of Friendship/Marketplace, a temporary marquee structure to be situated on the Civic Green.

Associated matters included the procurement of permits, insurances, and security. During the Conference an operational requirement was to ensure that each of the spaces was appropriately set up for its intended function be it for a speakers presentation, or delegates registration, or for refreshments.

Associated with logistics, massive workloads were carried out by Kevin Walsh related to delegate registrations, Clarke Ballard related to organising the army of Balwyn Rotarian volunteers, and Brian Pollock for Marketplace stalls and supervising the stall holders.

Volunteer Outfits

It was decided that a nautical theme would be appropriate for the Warrnambool location of the conference. One of the Balwyn members had a contact at Kookai who provided the striped tops free of charge and Bev Sofra who runs a North Balwyn ladies sewing group “Days for Girls” through Rotary made the navy vests in a variety of sizes for all the volunteers. The outcome was excellent and many compliments were received throughout the conference.

A further positive outcome was that the vests will be used again at another Rotary conference.

Registrations

The conference website was created and was a very professional source of information about the upcoming conference. Similarly a registration database was established using commercial software and this had to be customised to suit the requirements of the 2018 Conference. It is fair to say that a huge amount of technical knowledge and work went into these two tasks to ensure that everything started on the right foot. The club is indebted to Cath Stahel for all her efforts in this area.

The Conference website could be accessed on a mobile device via an App and the developers were approached to make the necessary changes to update the App to call information from the 2018 Conference website.

The major part of the role was to resolve any issues with bookings made on the Conference website, handling any request to cancel registrations, managing a waiting list of Rotarians who left registration too late when the conference was fully booked. The registration system seemed to present some problems to those Rotarians with limited computer skills. Quite a few thought they had completed

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registration but were not recorded – others registered for the conference, which included the social functions, plus the social functions. Another part of the registration role was to monitor the email address attached to the website “Contact Us” facility and respond accordingly.

The conference offered tours in and around Warrnambool. These tours filled very quickly and although additional tours were added, getting Rotarians to log in and book these presented another level of problems so we took the approach of informing all participants via email to give them an equal chance of success. It was realised that this step would cause a significant increase in email and it did !!! However it was considered necessary to ensure that most Rotarians had an equal chance of getting on one of these tours. In the end, nearly all tours were fully booked although there were quite a few who did not arrive as booked.

Another task for Registration and IT Support was delegate communications. It was felt necessary that conference delegates be updated with an email newsletter detailing answers to questions about the events. These were sent out 30, 27, 24, 12 and 4 days prior to the start of the conference and a thank-you was sent out four days after the conference. These emails were well-received and helped greatly with communication. Again a big thanks to Cath Stahel for her assistance.

Sponsorships and Marketing

Initially the Sponsorship Sub Group comprised Charles Smith, Stan Gawel and Ken McQualter. With the sad loss of Stan, Charles and Ken carried on with the support of Rob Nethercote.

It was agreed that the best strategy was to seek four sponsors to contribute \$5,000 each. With great input from Cath Stahel, a Conference Sponsorship marketing brochure was produced which outlined the value proposition of participating in the Conference.

The strategy of targeting warm connections proved successful with the securing of four sponsors namely:

- Ittravel Carlingford / Avalon Waterways; Emily and Darren travelled from Sydney to be part of the Conference;
- Subaru Australia; local dealer Greg Kelson provided great local media exposure and supplied four cars around the marquee; Subaru also provided entertaining digital adverts for showing prior to each session;
- Haronvale Digital Media;
- City of Warrnambool.

Financials

The 2018 D9800 Conference in Warrnambool was successfully run within its budget. With over 700 delegates, it was not necessary to use the \$36,000 District Conference Levy and a small profit estimated at \$13,000 will be provided to District Conference reserves for future events. Accounts are still being finalised at the time of writing this report.

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