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 **Women In Rotary joint district consultation**

**February 20 2019.**

The two districts have formed a joint membership committee and strategies ready for the merged district 9510 in 2020. As part of the recognition of the 30th anniversary of the admittance of women into Rotary, a consultation was held to identify how best to encourage more women to join and be retained in Rotary.

60 Rotarians from across both districts attended (45 women and 15 men) addressed 4 questions over a 2 hour period and came up with 246 ideas which were then voted on by everyone present and the results are tabulated below.

Mark Huddleston provided some statistics and observations. Australia records women membership across the country, as low to mid 20s percent. Since 2010 the numbers joining Rotary have been roughly equal between men and women. The most representative age group of new members from both genders has been in the 50s. However the retention rate for women is much less with most leaving in the first two years. Sexism, lack of respect and humiliation are reasons often given by women in exit interviews and there is a tendency where this happens that women will leave a club in a group.

**Question 1: What will attract and retain women in Rotary?**

“You can’t be what you can’t see” The comments suggested that clubs need to be willing to change their culture and focus to attract and retain women. The present service project mix, vocational interests and meeting formats did not necessarily take into account women interests and abilities and may need to be reviewed or enhanced. Women are attracted to the WOW factor in Rotary and want to see this reflected in the club environment when they want to feel valued and acknowledged. Clubs need to think non-gender and actively engage all new members if they want to retain them long term.

**Question 2: How can we work together to engage women and men together in Rotary?**

The overwhelming response was the need for more social events, perhaps including children and partners, so every member gets to know every other member much better. We are looking for shared activities exemplifying Rotary values which may mean a new way of doing things.

**Question 3: How do we guide and promote diversity and inclusivity in the club?**

Clubs need to active in this field with suggestions to have a mentoring plan for new members that recognises the need for nurturing all new members exposed to the breadth of Rotary. Also suggested were a written club policy that demands respect at all times, that challenges unacceptable comments, that trains leaders in managing diversity, and that ensures that all club members ‘walk the talk”.

**Question 4: How do we deal best with gender/culture disturbances in the club?**

The strong view expressed was the offenders were not aware of their offending in most cases and so they needed to be told immediately whenever and wherever it occurs. It was suggested most of the problems occur with older longstanding members of Rotary still imbued in 20th century Rotary culture before women joined. It also was suggested that clubs could seek out better projects that encouraged understanding of and participation in, diversity. Also need to show that disrespectful behaviour is no longer tolerated in the workplace and these standards need to be applied to Rotary.

Sue Graetz Membership Chair D9500

Euan Miller Membership Chair 9520