**Rotary Change Over Night 25 June 2019**

Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou Katoa . Welcome, Welcome. Welcome.

I now feel weighed down by the burden of responsibility.

Thank you Past President Russell for your kind words, and also thank you for your diligence in attending to the responsibilities as our President for 2018 – 2019, and also we must acknowledge Ruth for your support of Russell during his tenure. Russell, I believe that all here would agree that you can stand down comforted in the knowledge of a job well done. Enjoy your time now as Past President, but understand that you are not entirely off the hook, as you will remain on the Board bringing a wealth of experience to the table Thank You Russell.

Well the notion of ever being President of a Rotary Club was the furtherest thing from my mind, and so it was, I suggest, a bit of surprise when approached by Keith about 20 months ago and asked if I would consider the position of President Elect and ultimately of leadership of your Rotary Club.

I set out to undertake some forensic due diligence on this proposal and I decided that the sensible solution would be to embark on a one on one discussion about this with 3 very respected and reliable members of the Club.

I invested a significant amount of time and money in this research by shouting Chris Taylor, Ron Mackersy, and Derek Bulman a coffee each, ostensibly for the purpose of them talking me out of accepting Keith’s generous offer and seeking from them clear and compelling argument as to why I would not be suitable, would not be capable, and should not accept this role.

Talk about useless, these 3 respected members of the club were of no assistance at all, and it seems to me that as a consequence, that my significant investment of $14.40 has been a wasted.

And, so as a result of their lack of support a new era is about to commence. I do trust for your sake that era is spelt ERA and not ERROR, however if during the year ahead you have any complaints then I suggest you invest $14.40 and take, Chris, Ron and Derek out for a coffee and give them a serious piece of your mind.

Talking about complaints, I also spoke to my guest here tonight, Past President Christine about the role while we were both on a team with Fountain of Peace in Uganda in November 2017. She was also disappointingly, absolutely no assistance either, however, I understood that between us that we came to an agreement that if I were to become President of the Queenstown Rotary Club, that Christine would be the DG during my year.

So what happened to your end of the bargain. That said, thank you Christine for taking the time to travel through to Queenstown tonight to share with us in this event.

To the new First Lady, Rosanna, thank you also for your support, as always behind every average bloke is an excellent woman who typically provides significant support, comment, and assistance from behind the scenes. You also were part of the due diligence team who said, “you should do it, and at least they won’t ask you twice”. Cheers for that.

In light of current world events the concept of holding the title of President is no longer as compelling as it may have been in the past. On the basis that the notion that an obnoxious property developer, could become the President and Leader of the free world, it is therefore no longer hard to imagine how an Electrical Contractor from Invercargill could finish up in the role of President of the Rotary Club of Queenstown.

Clearly though, the Rotary Club of Queenstown is smarter than the United States of America as 2020 for you guys and girls will simply be the end of my Presidential Term and the end of an ERA, for the USA it may mean another Term and a further 4 years. The good news is that unlike the aforementioned President I do not have a Twitter account and I promise not to take up tweeting.

At this juncture I would like to take the opportunity to introduce you to those members of your Queenstown Rotary Club Team who will make up your Board for the year ahead.

Secretarial Services are in the safe hands of Chris Taylor, Finance is with David Tait, Club Administration under the guidance of Ron Mackersy, Continuity and Support by Past President Russell McGrouther, President Elect Lee-Ann is looking after all things Youth, Social Activity and Membership will be in the hands of Keith McIntosh, and Community Activity & Fundraising will continue to be ably managed by Ashley Adams.

And of course they will be ably supported by each of you as you undertake your allocated tasks for the benefit of the Club, you the members, and the wider community.

If I have a focus for the year ahead, I would have to say that my focus would be to ensure that you the members and partners of this Club are recognised and respected for the contributions that you make for the benefit of the local Community.

We as the members of Rotary International and specifically the Rotary Club of Queenstown come together to do truly remarkable things, profound things and, in my opinion, audacious things because, as an organisation we have the capacity and capability to improve literacy and numeracy, we can house the homeless, we can feed the hungry, we can influence children in our community about the right way to do things.

While all of that is entirely appropriate I do hold a view that Rotary has lost sight of some of the core values that the founding fathers launched this organisation on.

When Paul Harris and his friends congregated in a cafe in Chicago all those years ago they did not immediately suggest that they should organise a BBQ for the NZ Golf Open. No, they were trying to join together to help each other, not just to do business with one another, but to do business better. Their gathering was Social by nature and not immediately Service by nature.

You hear people say Rotary is the greatest service organisation in the world. And as a consequence I have grappled with that very question, has Rotary become so focused on its ethos of “service above self” it has forgotten to serve the very people it was established to help. To that end I personally believe that we are a membership / fellowship organisation that does great service.

With that in mind I have asked Keith to work on the development of Club events, and to provide a lift in priority on the social aspect of Rotary for this Club this year. The intention being to remain mindful of you our membership and so are placing some emphasis on your enjoyment while also delivering those service outcomes that benefit our community.

We will also see this year a heightened focus on Youth Activity with two Outbound Students, currently in Europe , while we will also host an Inbound Student, Hanna here in the Club. Hanna arrives on the 19th July, so I encourage you to give her all the support that she will require. We will also hopefully have young people sponsored to Outward Bound, some joining the crew on Spirit of Adventure, while we will also continue supporting the local high school students with scholarships where appropriate. Lee-Ann is a strong advocate for the Youth and we as Club must support her to bring a taste of the Rotary spirit to the next generation of Rotarians.

Under the Leadership of Ashley and his Community Team we will also embark on the tasks that provide a service to the community through working and fundraising for those in the Wakaitipu area that require our resource and support. As we speak we do not necessarily know what we will be asked to contribute, or to whom we will need to provide support, however when the call goes out I just know that you will respond to the call by providing your time and your expertise. Thanks in advance.

The incoming Board is also showing some leadership and introducing some initiatives to support new members into our Club. We have set a financial budget, and have included a membership growth aspiration by introducing an Associate membership category for individuals under the age of 35, while also establishing an incentive for Active members who may join between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020. Doing nothing in this space is not an option, so I believe that these initiatives will assist us in reversing the trend of declining membership.

Continually increasing annual subscriptions year in year out for the Benefits of RI and the District Committee are in my view counterintuitive moves, particularly when our member demographic here in Queenstown is so niche.

While I accept that there is a role for a District Committee, I do not accept that it should hold unrealistic reserves and continue to dispassionately levy the Club membership for the benefit of District while creating an impediment to existing member retention and acquisition of potential new members alike.

 So to that end we have advised the District Governor that we are reviewing our financial support to District this year to ensure that we remain wise stewards of the funds that pass through this Club, and to ensure that these funds remain available for the benefit of our members and our community alike.

When it is all shaken down, what will always be important to me, is you the members of the Rotary Club of Queenstown. My only aspiration is to fulfil a task that is line with your aspirations, because in my mind this is your club, not mine, therefore the year ahead should be your year, not mine.

So in summary with respect to the year ahead let me know your views, how can we be united in the notion of adding value to this club, what is your role in supporting me to add value, how do we change the fortunes of this club, and let’s remember to have some fun while navigating the landscape ahead of us this year.

Beyond that I simply seek your support ,and understanding that I do not wish to be carrying the burden of this Clubs future on my own.

Let me digress for a moment before I wrap up.

The next time I speak to you will be on the 16 July, as tomorrow Rosanna and I fly out to Uganda to reconnect with the work of Fountain of Peace Children’s Foundation in Uganda, which this club and some individual members generously support.

We will be working in the Village in Rwenjazza with 49 kids under 6 who are directly in our care along with the 500 kids that turn up for an education. Rwenjazza is 5 hours by road West of Kampala, and based in the South Western Quadrant of Uganda, North of Rwanda and East of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

On our last trip 19 months ago many of our school students had been the recipients of a Solar Buddy Unit, which is a small solar powered lighting source.

This shipment was assembled by students from the Remarkables Park primary School and the Kingsview Christian School both here in Frankton, and these kiwi students 10 or 11 years of age assembled these as part of a school technology project.

When I was in Uganda last time I sat under a tree and had a discussion with a group of the boys from the school, who amongst other topics of discussion, spoke of the benefits of Solar Buddy, in that as a result of not having electricity in their houses, they now had the ability to read and do homework, help with chores in the house after dark, because now they had a light source. They also spoke of the fact that they no longer needed to suffer the health consequences of smoke inside their homes as they traditionally burnt wood or oil products to create a light source.

One of the lads told me his Solar Buddy had lasted about 4 months and then died and he had not read a book since. Another said his unit had died after he left it outside in the rain.

Another of the lads asked me if there was any reason why Ugandan kids couldn’t build their own units, and was there any reason why I could not teach them to make and when required repair their Solar Buddies

So as a consequence of that question, one of the projects that I will be working on will be teaching some of the older students how to construct and repair Solar Buddy units. I have had 150 sets of components shipped into Uganda from Australia, along with some spare parts, so for me it will be a privilege to honour that request. Hope my electrical skills are up to it. !!!

On our return home we will be accompanied by William and Stella Raharuzza. William is our Project Manager in Uganda and it will be our honour to host William and Stella here in Arrowtown. William and I will endeavour to do a tag team presentation at Rotary on the 16th July.

However on the Sunday afternoon 14th July we will have an open home at our place and so invite you should you choose to do so to pop in and say hello.

So back to Rotary and in summary let me leave you with this thought.

Martin Luther King never said I have a strategic plan, he simply said I have a dream, and so what I have presented tonight does not represent a strategic plan, but hopefully articulates my dream and hopefully your dream for this Club this year.

Thank you for your confidence to elect me to this role, I trust your faith is rewarded.

*He waka eke noa* We are all in this together.