

Networker

Rotary Opens Opportunities.

Message from the Editor

Greetings District 9800-ers. I'm delighted to take on the role of Networker Editor. I've been a journalist (ex-Age newspaper) and author (6 books) for more than 25 years and I'm a relative newcomer to Rotary; this is my third year but every day I'm inspired by what Rotary achieves. It's an exciting time for us all down under and I urge you to check out this [LINK](#) and learn more about what the centenary means for our future.

Now for a big thankyou shout-out to all the contributors who've helped me get this issue together, especially dynamo Club Service Director, Rowan McClean, and our effervescent DG, Philip Archer. For the future, I'd be thrilled to have the clubs send me stories featuring their top people and projects; in a word doc of course, with high-res photos attached. Please send to networker@rotarydistrict9800.org.au

And now for something completely different; at the end of each Networker bulletin is a competition with terrific prizes to be won. Let's network!

Jeanette Leigh, Rotary Club of North Balwyn

"Rotarians are the mainsprings of almost every kind of worthy endeavour."

Paul Harris, My Road to Rotary

Around the traps with the DG

Welcome everybody to the new Rotary year; a year that already presents unique challenges and vast scope for Rotary to initiate new projects, and to consolidate ongoing ones.

Rotary's theme this year is 'Rotary Opens Opportunities', which is timely given the peculiarities of the time we live in. However, as in the past, Rotary will recalibrate, adjust and go forward as people of action and agents of change.



The Centenary of Rotary is a time for immense celebration as well as a time for reflection on the 100 years of service, the challenges that have been overcome, and the decades-worth of wonderful Rotarians who've served our communities. But there still much to do and much excitement ahead.

On July 10 we'll launch the Centenary of Rotary at Government House in Canberra. I encourage you and your friends to join us online for a virtual celebration that spans the country ([BOOK HERE](#)) You'll meet our R100 Centenary Ambassadors as well as the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley as they initiate the launch.

I recently enjoyed some wonderful country hospitality when I visited the Rotary clubs of Rochester and Kyneton for their changeovers. Both clubs are enthusiastic, highly engaged and ready for the year ahead.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank Leslie McCarthy, last year's Networker Editor, and to welcome Jeanette Leigh and her team to the first Networker of the year.

Philip Archer

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Easy Rider

Wheelchair project in Hue, central Vietnam



To mark the 100 years of Rotary activity in Australia and New Zealand, clubs are choosing innovative projects in their local communities, as well as offshore settings. The Rotary Club of Werribee demonstrates that with a bit of determination and chutzpah (audacity), life-changing events can happen.

Thanh and Nhan are from different villages surrounding Hue, in central Vietnam, a romantic city where once the Nguyen Dynasty emperors resided. These two 10-year-old boys were born with spina bifida. Their impoverished families couldn't afford corrective surgery after they were born and coincidentally, each boy fell over at age three and became paraplegic due to severely damaged spinal cords. There was certainly no money for wheelchairs.

As luck and kismet would have it, in 2010 the current president of Werribee Rotary Club, Michael Redding, who had just retired, took a holiday in Vietnam. During his travels he chatted to some school boys in the street. A Vietnamese man joined the conversation who would become Michael's close friend.

"Dung (pronounced Dzung) and I bonded straight away and each year when I returned to Vietnam I would stay at his home. He'd been visiting remote tribes in the mountains since childhood so he took me on unique adventures to places no white people had been.

"Through our connection, I got to know a retired doctor who was head of a hospital that cared for disabled children in Ho Chi Minh City. We discussed what could be done to help because although Vietnam is a rapidly developing country, with a population of 97 million, the communist government faces substantial challenges. It's making huge efforts to provide for essential community needs such as schools, hospitals, transport and energy, however, people with special needs are way down the list of priorities."

Prior to the Vietnam War, seven Rotary clubs were well established in Vietnam but since 1975 they were no longer welcome. To this day, probably because the sins of the Americans are not forgot, Rotary International is still unable to establish any clubs. This presents big challenges for Australian Rotary clubs wishing to undertake community projects there. To get around this, some clubs have successfully partnered with NGO's and religious organizations in Vietnam.

As luck would have it, the doctor's son was involved in an NGO. In Michael's case, his talks to Rotary Club of Werribee and Rotary Club of Flemington raised the funds for four self-propelled tricycle wheelchairs, and with the help of the NGO, they could deliver the project.



Thanh with his mother and Michael Redding

Easy Rider (cont)



Nahn and his mother

These wheelchairs are easily propelled by pushing a steering column backwards and forwards. They're comfortable, maneuverable and can travel at speeds of up to 10 km per hour on the local roads. In 2019, these were purchased from the manufacturer in Ho Chi Minh City at \$380 apiece, which included trucking them to Dung's home in Bang Lang Village, near Hue. Next came the challenging task of locating the actual houses of four very disabled boys across villages surrounding Hue. Dung's family members and friends volunteered to help.

"Such profoundly disabled people spend most of their lives inside their homes cut off from the outside world so relatively few people know about them," said Michael.

After some effective detective work, the wheelchairs were distributed to Thanh and Nhan. The other recipients were Moi, a 30-year-old who was rendered paraplegic after falling off his motorbike at age 14. He'd spent his life immobilized on his bed, and Khan, a 16-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, who observed the world from his living room window.

"For Dung and I, it was incredibly satisfying to see the excitement and joy on their faces as they sat in their wheelchairs for the first time and propelled themselves into their new world. It was absolutely transformational for them to have independent mobility. It opened up their worlds," said Michael.

As the Rotary wheel moves us forward into our centenary year, we're being asked to be bold and unafraid to mount projects and form partnerships that will create an even more impactful future. We're to focus on ways to regenerate and enliven Rotary, and attract membership. Ventures like the wheelchairs for Vietnam project show us that so much can be achieved with so little.

So, what will your centenary project be?



Moi and Michael



Khan with his father and Michael

Celebrating new and long term members

Peace pioneer, Bob Fels

I come in peace

The peace program was established in 2002 and I thought it was phenomenal. Because of my intercultural sensitivity, my involvement in recruiting ambassadorial scholars, and my Rotary network links into organisations such as Red Cross, UNICEF and Victoria Police, I had ready access to candidates.

District 9800 is the only district in the world to have successfully nominated one or more Peace Fellows in every year of the program—total 40. We're the black caviar of the peace project.

Establishing seven Victoria Police peace fellows was revolutionary because they had never previously allowed external training. Their focus is on conflict resolution; largely in migrant communities.

Ultimate goal

My aim in getting involved with the project was to help people understand the causes of conflict and how to resolve it. Peace isn't just about the absence of violence. After signing a treaty, enforcers impose the rules of peace on the combatants, which doesn't foster accord. The parties should create understanding through talking, drop the anger about previous violent actions, and rebuild communities.

Why peace?

As a university student, I led a student delegation to India on a 7-week goodwill tour. We were guests of the Indian government. Amongst other things we spent an hour with Pandit Nehru at his home. The trip gave me a great understanding of cultural differences, but I didn't build on that until I became Warden (CEO) of International House (IH) at Melbourne University in 1982. That's when the benefits of this cultural understanding came into focus, and I was invited to join the Rotary Club of Melbourne. Rotary was one of IH's four founding bodies.

How to be a purveyor of peace

My roles in the peace committee over the six years included assisting with recruiting and mentoring peace fellowship candidates, because I had an in-depth understanding of the personal and academic qualities they needed to bring to their applications. I also led the international task force to review peace centres, and was chair of the District Peace Fellowship Committee.

A one-off

In 2020 my Rotary club surprised me and presented me with a newly created award; the Robert Fels Rotary International District 9800 Peace Award. I was elated and honoured.



Robert Fels is honoured

Sibonginkosi Moyo is new to Rotary Club of Wyndham Harbour

History of being a giving soul

I'm a passionate volunteer and have given service to various organisations in my home of origin, Zimbabwe. Rotary was appealing to me because I resonated with the organisation's values and I could see there were opportunities to make a difference to humanitarian causes. I want to help create community change and become a spokesperson for those without a voice.

I've been based in Melbourne for 6 years. While visiting my home town in Zimbabwe 3 years ago, I met a man who ran an orphanage. He told me they were experiencing challenges, particularly financially. I decided to sponsor a child but after visiting the orphanage and witnessing the hardships, I sponsored three. Friends and acquaintances teamed up to register a not-for-profit called, [Love Alive Foundation](#). I'm the director and we work to help vulnerable and disadvantaged children access education, and provide them with grocery packs, clean water, clothing and sanitary products.



Sibonginkosi's induction with President, Rotary Club of Wyndham Harbour, Rosemary Kinyua (L)

Rotary goals

As a Rotarian, I'd like to work on as many community projects as possible and connect with other Rotarians globally. One of the biggest challenges we face now is devising systems to make people safe post Covid-19.

Where education took me

I have a BSC in Industrial Engineering from Hofstra University in New York, and a Masters in Engineering Management from RMIT. Currently, I'm a social entrepreneur and speaker and I work on various projects including the Love Alive Foundation and Rotary.

In my spare time I love to write, volunteer, travel, dance, cook and blog about the positive things that young people are doing to change their community; mostly those with an African background. I make videos that celebrate my country of origin. Please visit my [blog](#) and see my recent post on Happy Africa Day.

My ethos

My motto is 'to thine own self be true'. I'm happiest when making people smile, when I've been able to meet their needs in some way, or just being a shoulder for them to lean on.

Club Service tool kit

Opportunity knocks

Frequently, Rotary clubs are faced with a large range of project opportunities, but only have sufficient resources to accommodate some of them. It can be hard to decide what to support. Having a rational process in place to set priorities and demonstrate that decisions have been made logically, will not only assuage the disappointment of those whose suggestions aren't taken up, but form a guide to sensible decision making.

The Club Services Committee has a two-part tool to rank domestic and international opportunities. It consists of a set of questions/criteria that will enable you to consider the relative importance of aspects of the opportunity, and a matrix by which you can plot the opportunities against the criteria.

Questions such as, does the project fit with the strategic priorities of Rotary and our club, what are the financial and political risks, how critical and urgent is it to potential beneficiaries, and how many people are likely to benefit, form the first step to reaching a sound decision.

For instance, education for children and clean water provision are reflected in the hypothetical model as top priorities. Irrigation, while attractive, would in this case need significant investment that may be beyond the resources of the club, even with Rotary Foundation assistance. And more definitively, Rotary cannot be involved in constructing roads and housing because they're clearly the responsibility of national governments. Rotary must steer away from anything that might be seen as political interference.

Of course, the results will be largely subjective because judgement plays an important part in scoring, but the tool will enable clubs to make better decisions about what they should adopt.

Using this process for ranking local and international opportunities will allow for considerations of efficiency and effectiveness, and prevent you from doing the wrong thing very well.

Evaluation model [LINK](#)



North Balwyn Community Men's Shed was created as a collaboration between RCNB and Boroondara Council.

Rotary tip

Don't forget to add the new year theme to your Rotary documents and electronic signatures. To download the logos [click here](#).

Rotary
Australia &
New Zealand

100
YEARS



Getting to know the clubs

Each week Networker will feature a District 9800 club, including interesting facts about the club, its members, and projects.

THE HAPPY TEAM AT HAWTHORN

Hawthorn's Rotary club has a reputation as a hardworking club with a long history. Chartered, August 24, 1953, it meets weekly at the Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club. It's provided five 9800 District Governors - Geoff Stevens, Ray Chambers, David Rosback, Bernie Walshe and Dennis Shore, and been involved in many and varied local and overseas projects. Significant amongst these are, the purchase and subsequent sale of a property that assisted newly arrived migrants, the funding of a neuro-sciences ward at Royal Melbourne Hospital, and helping to rebuild flood and fire-affected communities.

Internationally speaking, they've not only provided packing services at DIK for medical equipment for Cambodian hospitals, and items for Timor Leste, they've been running impactful long-term projects providing education and community programs for families in Northern India, literacy programs for Kurdish women in remote Turkey, and initiatives in Zambia and India.



President, Tilak Dissanayake

Clubbing with Rotary

International fellowship clubs

Other than being a Rotarian, what do you like to get up to in your spare time? Is it rollerblading, parapenting, enjoying fine art or perhaps philately? Whatever your penchant, Rotary has a group for you.

Rotary Fellowships are global, independently organised groups of Rotarians, their spouses/partners and Rotaractors, who share a common vocation or recreational interest.

These clubs began informally in 1928 when Rotarians who shared a flare for the international language Esperanto joined together. The longest running club is the International Yachting Fellowship of Rotarians, formed in 1947. They're a fleet of Rotarian boating enthusiasts.

Each edition of Networker will highlight an international fellowship group. There are even some local ones attached to D9800, some for more physically active members and some for members who just want to connect in a relaxed way, over a fine wine or a movie.

See what sparks your interest and embrace the opportunity of making new friends around the world, and generally enhancing your Rotary experience. Here's the extensive [LIST](#). They might even help to stave off insanity during the Covid-19 lockdowns.



Today's feature club is the Environmentarians



The environment theme aligns nicely with the exciting newly announced seventh area of focus for Rotary - the environment.

Rotarians can participate in the Environmentarians through email discussions and the bulletin board, which is a discussion platform for exchange of ideas regarding environmental activities within Rotary worldwide.

You can read about what others have achieved, discuss future plans, and contribute your experience of global activities. Recent topics include acidification of oceans, wildlife preservation, the effects of drought on plants and the use of ocean wave technology for low-cost electricity.

As Rotary Australia determines how it will contribute to this important seventh area of focus, you'll have a chance to contribute your ideas about local action.

To check out or join the environment fellowship use this [LINK](#)

BE A WINNER

The competition



Where do you do your best thinking? I know I come up with inspired ideas while walking long distances. (Never mind that some of them might be best left on the road.) So, here is your challenge for this week. Please write a 50 word response to;

If you had the freedom to do anything in Rotary, what would it be?

The editorial team will judge the most inspirational response, which will be printed in the next edition, and awarded a terrific prize.

Email responses to me at networker@rotarydistrict9800.org.au