

Rotary for Beginners

ROTARY OVERVIEW - Rotary International (RI) is a worldwide organization, comprising 1.2 million members, in over 200 countries and 34,000 clubs. It was the first service club in the world and was founded on February 23rd 1905 by Paul Harris in Chicago USA.

Its structure is as follows:

- **Head Office** - Chicago USA
- **Regional Offices** – Generally there is one in each major geographical region of the world. The one that services Australia is in Parramatta
- **Districts** – These are groups of Clubs that are overseen by an executive structure similar to that of Clubs. Our District is 9790 and comprises 63 Clubs. Its geographical spread is from Deniliquin in the West to Holbrook in the East and in a wedge down to Coburg and Preston in Melbourne.
- **Club** - This is us. We are an autonomous Club which controls its own destiny, although we do follow guidelines and recommendations from the levels above. Clubs are the most important part of Rotary - they are the basic units or building blocks for the Rotary International organisation.

CLUB STRUCTURE - Like most clubs, ours has a Board through which most decisions pass. We follow a board structure, for a club of our size as recommended by RI and District.

Our Board Structure is typically as follows:

President

Vice President – Immediate Past President

President Elect

Secretary

Treasurer

Service Projects Director - usually President Elect

Foundation Director

Public Relations Director

Membership Director

Federation Market/Festival Director

Under these directors are numerous committees and it is these committees which help implement the programs of Rotary International and the Club.

Under the guidance of the Board are a number of other key positions:

- **Sergeant at Arms** - This job is to receive apologies, to set up the meeting venue, call the meeting to order and run the fine session. They are helped each week by a club member, nominated on the roster, who is called **Sergeants Help**.
- **Program Director** - This role is to organise the guest speakers, or other weekly activities and the roster for the week, which are published in the Bulletin each week.

The jobs on the weekly roster are as follows:

- **Sergeant's Help** - Helps the Sergeant at Arms set up the items needed for the meeting, serves the drinks during the meal and assists in the fine session. At the end of the meeting helps put everything away (although in reality everyone chips in and helps to get the job done).
- **Treasurer** - Collects weekly dinner fees and records raffle numbers
- **Chairperson** - After the President's welcome, takes over the running of the meeting, introduces and thanks the guest speaker(s) and facilitates questions to the speaker(s).
- **Grace** - Says the Rotary Grace. There are a number of options for this with some being non-religious for those so inclined.
- **Loyal Toast** - Proposes the toast to 'The Queen and people of Australia'
- **International Toast** - Researches another Club, generally overseas, tells our Club about them and then proposes a toast to that Club. The purpose of this is to help members learn about what other clubs are doing.
- **Rotary Information** - This is a short presentation about something in Rotary, or one's career. Again the purpose of this is for members to find out something of interest about Rotary in general.

- **Bulletin Editor** - Reports on the activities of the meeting and promotes future Club events, then sends each member a copy of it before the next meeting - generally by email, as well as to post it on our website. The District Governor, Assistant Governor and District Bulletin person are also emailed a copy of the bulletin.

WHO'S WHO IN THE ZOO - Like all organisations RI has in it a great number of positions. However the ones we are involved with the most from outside the Club are:

- **DG - District Governor** - the person who is responsible to RI for the performance of the Clubs in their district. He/she is also there to help the Club Presidents with any problem they may have.
- **AG - Assistant Governor** - persons who work with a group of Clubs - assisting the District Governor perform his/her role. Our District has nine Assistant Governors. AG's must have three years in this role before they can be considered for a DG position.
- **DGE - District Governor Elect** - Next year's District Governor.
- **DGN - District Governor Nominee** - The next DGE and the DG the year after that

ROTARY PROGRAMS - There are a great number of programs that Rotary runs and no Club can be involved in them all. Below are the ones we are involved in on a regular basis.

- **Youth Exchange** - A Rotary Program that our Club embraces. It involves High School Students (normally year 10) spending a year overseas and attending high school in that country.
 - In most cases the students return to the year that they would have gone into had they not gone overseas. That is, if they were about to start year 11 before they went overseas, then they will return to year 11 when they start their next school year.
 - Students we send overseas are referred to as Outbound and ones we host are referred to as Inbound.
 - If a Club sends a student out, it is obliged to host an Inbound student.
 - Students should still be under 18 by the time they return home from their year of exchange.
- **Polio Plus** - This is Rotary International's major program and has been running since 1979. Its aim is to rid the world of Polio and this has almost been completed, with only three small pockets of Polio active in the world. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is a major contributor to this cause. Our Club contributes to this specifically on a regular basis, through various events and special efforts
- **Foundation** - Rotary International's primary fund from which it can contribute to major worldwide projects such as Polio Plus.

Our club contributes to this every year. Our primary method of doing so is through a donation method called Every Rotarian Every Year (EREY), where either \$1 or \$3 from the members' weekly dinner fee goes to not only Foundation, but into their personal donation record. These donations are then eligible for a tax deduction.

Donations build up over the years and help with contributions towards a member's Paul Harris Fellowship award.

 - **Paul Harris Fellow** - *Technically this is someone who has given \$US1,000 to Rotary Foundation. However, in Australia, Clubs may treat this as an award to a member for services rendered to the Club and wider community over the years. Clubs may also give Paul Harris Fellow to people outside the Club for work done within the community. When considered appropriate, the Club Board may top up a member's account to \$US1,000 so that an award can be presented at a suitable time.*
- **Australian Rotary Health** - This is a body that funds health programs throughout Australia.
- **Ian Murphy Memorial Debate** - This is a District wide program for Year 11 students. Clubs sponsor a school debating team who then debate one another in a knockout competition throughout the year, culminating in a final, which is held at Conference.
- **Ride to Conference** - This is another District wide program. This one was however started in our Club. Cyclists throughout the District ride a planned route to finish at the District Conference venue on the Sports Day. Participants from our Club are sponsored by individual members and the Club, with all funds going to a Rotary charity chosen by the ride organisers, such as Polio Plus or Australian Rotary Health. In all cases, donations over \$2 are tax deductible.
- **Bowelscan** - This is program of Australian Rotary Health and provides a pack that can be purchased through a local pharmacist for people to have a test for bowel cancer. The Club has done this for many years and is one of the best performing Clubs when it comes to getting responses to this program.

OUR LOCAL PROGRAMS - While the club contributes to and is involved in wider Rotary programs, we are also involved in a number of local programs and fundraising events. Some are ongoing, or occur every year and others are only done once to meet a specific cause.

The projects we are involved with regularly are:

- **Christmas Giving Tree** - This is a Club initiative where we work with Corowa IGA and the local branch of St Vincent de Paul to get donations of toys and non perishable food, to help needy local families at Christmas time. A Christmas tree is set up at the front of IGA and the people of Corowa are asked to donate as they see fit. St Vincent de Paul volunteers then make these up into hampers and distribute to needy families. It is non denominational.
- **Federation Festival** - Over the Corowa Federation Festival weekend we have several areas of involvement. These include organisation of: the Federation Dinner, the fireworks, the Federation markets, the Federation Parade and the B & S Ball. Our commitment in this function is currently evolving, but the events of the Festival form one of our major fundraising activities for the year.
- **Cleanup the Highway** - An initiative of Rotarians Graham Campbell and David Talbot, the Club has adopted a section of highway - between the saleyard roundabout and Corowa tip - to keep tidy. Once every three months or so we have a working bee to collect litter and other rubbish from this section of highway and take it to the tip.
- **Whitehead Street Wetlands** – This is the Clubs long term project and involves us installing bird hides, signage, boardwalks, native vegetation and other facilities at the wetlands, which are just near the Corowa water filtration facility.
- **Race Gates** – This is a long-standing arrangement where we staff the ticket box and gates for the Corowa Race Club on race days.
- **School Bursaries** - Money raised in the fine sessions is used to give all schools in our area a bursary cheque ranging from \$150 to \$300. This money is to be used as scholarships for their student(s) at the end of the year and totals about \$1,300 each year. How the schools allocate it is up to them. Rotarians normally volunteer to attend Presentation Ceremonies and present the bursaries to the student(s).
- **DG's Partner's Charity** - Each year the DG's partner selects a charity which the clubs are requested to support. Our club contributes by means of the 'small change box'. This passed around at the start of each meeting and members may choose to put in any loose change. At the end of the year a cheque is sent off to the District Treasurer who consolidates it with contributions from other clubs to pay one contribution to the charity.
- **Fred Taylor Memorial Scholarship** – This is a new initiative of the Club as a result of a bequest in the will of Rotarian the late Fred Taylor. The scholarship is for local students undertaking full time tertiary studies at either University or TAFE. Applicants need to fill in an application form and be interviewed by a panel.
- **Fortified Wine Pack** - Another new initiative. The Club acquired 3 X 450 litre barrels of fortified wine, (Muscat, Topaque and Tawny), from Fairfield Wines when they were closing. We have bottled off 20 dozen from each, then topped up the barrels, and are now selling them as a 3-pack. When these are sold we will follow this procedure again.
- **New Years Eve Fireworks** – This is a community funded project administered by the Club, with funds donated used to provide a free fireworks display on New Year's Eve.

ACRONYMS - Like all large organizations Rotary is full of acronyms and most new and some longer term members have no idea what they mean. Below are a few of the more common ones this club uses when talking about programs, on top of the one's above used to describe office bearers.

- **RAWCS** - Rotary Australia World Community Service
- **ROMAC** - Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children
- **RAM** - Rotarians Against Malaria
- **ARH** - Australian Rotary Health Fund

FELLOWSHIP - This is a term used quite a bit by the Club and is an important part of our culture. It refers to the time before and after our meetings when members and guests get together to socialize. Some meetings are also set aside as purely social, where little or no business takes place. Also we have additional social events outside of normal Rotary meetings such as BBQ's at people's places.

MEETINGS - Meetings are weekly, on a Wednesday, except over Christmas when we have a 2 or 3-week break and whenever a public holiday coincides with a meeting date. Every second meeting is now an informal social night, where little or no business is discussed.

- **Cost** - Our normal meetings are \$25, this is made up as follows:
Meal - \$20
Raffles - \$2 we have two
Wine - \$2 optional
Every Rotarian Every Year - \$1 or \$3 depending on whether or not wine is chosen
- **Structure** - While some people see this as being too formal, having a structure is the only way we can keep meetings to a controlled time period.

Normally our meetings run as follows and aim to be finished between 8:00 and 8:30:

- 6:30 - 7:00 Fellowship
- 7:00 Called to order for start of meeting
- President welcomes members and asks for visiting Rotarians to introduce themselves and members to introduce their guests.
- Grace
- Loyal Toast
- International Toast
- Rotary Information
- Announcements and Notices - normally done during the meal
- Fine Session
- Guest Speaker
- Close

During the meeting we also do a little bit of fundraising. The first is the "*small change box*", as mentioned above under the DG Partners charity.

The second fundraising each night is the *Fine Session*. This is where we have a bit of fun. Firstly the sergeant at arms fines members for something they have done during the week, real or imagined, then members have the opportunity to fine each other for similar indiscretions. Fines are a \$1 for each, but after being fined a couple of times in a night it is up to the individual if they wish to keep paying. The fine session is meant to be good natured and in good taste.

ATTENDANCE - This has continuously been a sticking point for potential new members, as they feel they need to attend every week. This requirement has now been dropped and as far as the Club is concerned members can attend whenever they like.

ANNUAL FEES - Currently the club charges \$240 p.a. Basically this charge covers the costs we are charged by District, RI and Insurance and is set for the start of each Rotary year, i.e. July 1st. New members are charged on a pro-rata basis, as well as a joining fee of \$50, which covers the cost of purchasing a Rotary pin, dinner badge, literature and club polo top.

Our fees are amongst the lowest in our Rotary District as we are only looking to recover costs.