

Rotary Introduction for Newcomers

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** – Rotary International is located in Evanston, Illinois, USA
- **Regional Office** - There is generally one Regional Office in each major geographical region of the world. The one that services Australia is in Parramatta
- **District** – Districts are geographically defined and the clubs within the area are overseen by a District Committee, led by a District Governor. Our district is 9790 and comprises 63 clubs. Its geographical spread is from Deniliquin in the west to Corryong 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, for without clubs there would be no higher levels.

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 - Generally President Elect

Foundation Director

Public Relations Director

Membership Director

Under the board are several other key positions:

- **Sergeant at Arms** - This job involves setting up the meeting venue, calling the meeting to order and running the fine session. The Sergeant is helped each week by a Club member, nominated on the roster, who is called Sergeant's Help.
- **Program** – The Program Director's role is to organise the guest speakers, or other weekly activities. This information is published in the Bulletin each week.
- The jobs on the weekly roster are as follows:
 - **Sergeant's Help** - Help the Sergeant at Arms setup the items needed for the meeting, serve the drinks during the meal and assist in the fine session. At end of the meeting, help put everything away - although in reality everyone assists to get the job done.
 - **Treasurer** - Collects weekly dinner fees and records raffle numbers
 - **Chairman** - After the President's welcome, he/she takes charge of the running of the meeting, introduces the guest speaker and controls the flow of questions to the speaker.
 - **Grace** - Say the Rotary Grace. There are a number of options for this with some being non religious for those so inclined.
 - **Loyal Toast** - Propose the toast to "the Queen and people of Australia"
 - **International Toast** - Research another Club from overseas, tell the members about them and then propose a toast to that Club. The purpose of this is 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, promotes future club events and publishes the weekly roster. This is then sent to each member by email before the next meeting. The bulletin is also posted on our website and emailed to the DG, the AG and the District Bulletin editor.

ROTARY HIERACHY – Like all organisations there are a great number of District and International positions. However, the ones we are involved with the most from outside the Club are:

- **DG** - District Governor - the Rotarian 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 problems they may have
- **AG** - Assistant Governor - Rotarians who work with a group of Clubs, assisting the District Governor perform his/her role. Our District has ten Assistant Governors. AG's must have three years in this position and may then progress to be a DG – should they aspire to this role.
- **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

DISTRICT and INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS - There are a great number of programs in Rotary and no Club can be involved in them all. Below are the programs that the Corowa Club is involved in on a regular basis.

- **Youth Exchange** – This is a Rotary Program that our Club embraces. It involves High School Students (normally year 10) spending a year overseas and attending high school in the exchange country.
 - In most cases the students return to the school year that they would have entered 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. This is at the discretion of the school principal who looks at pre-requisite studies.
 - Students we send overseas are referred to as Outbound and those we host are referred to as Inbound.
 - If a Club sends a student out it is obliged to host an Inbound student.
 - Students should be between 15 ½ and 17 ½ when they depart for 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 two or 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** – This is Rotary International's primary fund from which it can contribute to major worldwide projects such as Polio Plus. Clubs can apply to Rotary Foundation for a financial grant to assist with a specific program.
Our Club contributes to Foundation through a donation method called Every Rotarian Every Year. Either \$1 or \$3 from the member's weekly dinner fee goes to not only Foundation, but into their personal Foundation donation account. These donations are then eligible for a tax deduction.
This personal donation account builds up over the years and goes towards a member's Paul Harris Fellow award.
- **Paul Harris Fellow** - Technically this is someone who has given \$US1,000 to Rotary Foundation. However, in Australia, Clubs treat this as an award to a member for services rendered to the Club and wider community over the years. Clubs may also give a Paul Harris Fellow to people outside the Club for work done within the community. As members of our club give to Foundation via their dinner fee, when the Club Board deems it time the member should have a Paul Harris, it may top up the member's Foundation account to \$US1, 000. Any subsequent Paul Harris Awards after the first one (sapphire etc) must be earned or paid for by the individual Rotarian alone.
- **Australian Rotary Health** - This is an organisation that funds health programs throughout Australia – specifically research into mental health and PTSD.
- **Ian Murphy Memorial Debate** - This is a District wide program for Year 10 and 11 school debating teams. Clubs usually sponsor their local school in a knockout competition which takes place throughout the year, culminating in the final which is held at District Conference in March. We partner with Corowa High School
- **Ride to Conference** - This is another District wide program which was started in 2009 by Graham and Margaret Brown from our Club. It involves a group of cyclists drawn from throughout the District who will ride a set route over 6 days, finishing at the District Conference site on the day that Conference starts. Participants are sponsored by individuals and Clubs, with all funds going to a Rotary Program chosen by the ride organisers, such as Polio Plus or Australian Rotary Health. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

- **Bowelscan** - This is a program of Australian Rotary Health. Our club provides Bowel Test Kits to local pharmacies and promotes the use of these kits through local media. Consumers can purchase the kits at a significantly reduced price and send them away for testing. Our club has been very active in this program for many years.

OUR LOCAL PROGRAMS - While the Club contributes to and is involved in District and International Rotary Programs, we are involved in a number of local programs and fundraising events. Some of these are ongoing and others are only done once to meet a specific cause, which is occurring at the time.

We are regularly involved with:

- **Christmas Giving Tree** - This is a Club initiative where we work with Corowa IGA and the local branch of St Vincent de Paul to obtain donations of non-perishable food which 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 up hampers and distribute to needy families.
- **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 the Corowa tip to keep tidy. Once or twice a year we have a working bee to collect litter and rubbish from this section of highway and take it to the tip.
- **Race Gates** – This program is a long-standing arrangement where we staff the ticket box, entry gates and horse gates for the Corowa Race Club at their race meetings.
- **School Bursaries** - Money raised in the fine session is used to give all schools in our area a bursary ranging from \$100 to \$300 to be used as scholarship(s) for their students at the end of the year. This amounts to \$1,250 each year and each school chooses how they distribute the funds. Rotarians normally volunteer to attend the presentation ceremony and present the bursaries to the students.
- **DG's Partner's Charity** - Each year the DG's partner selects a charity, to which each District Club is invited to contribute. Our Club contributes by means of the small change box which is passed around at the start of each meeting and members are invited to put in any loose change. At the end of the Rotary year our donations are sent off to the District Treasurer who consolidates it with contributions from other Clubs and sends one combined contribution to the nominated charity.
- **KVE (khaki vehicle enthusiasts) BBQ** – For many years, the Club has catered for this annual event which is the largest gathering of its type in the southern hemisphere. The Club provides both breakfast and lunch on the Saturday, and this is one of our major fundraising events of the year.
- **Fred Taylor Memorial Scholarship** – An initiative of our Club which resulted from a bequest in the will of the late Rotarian 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 have an interview.
- **Federation Markets and Federation Festival** – We took over the running of the monthly Federation Market in September 2014 and it has proven a great success. On the Australia Day weekend, we also run the Federation Festival, which includes the Tim Fischer Oration and the Federation Dinner on the Friday night. There is a family-oriented Saturday evening in the RSL Park with entertainment by parade bands and some food stalls, culminating with fireworks at 9.30pm. Also on the Saturday night is the B & S Ball and the Festival finishes on Sunday with the Federation Parade down Sanger Street and the large market in Bangarang Park.
- **New Years Eve Fireworks** – This is a community funded project administered by the Club, with the donated funds used to provide free fireworks on New Year's Eve.
- **Whitehead Street Wetlands** – This is the Club's long-term project. So far, the Club has installed a bird hide, signage, a boardwalk, walking paths, seats, shelters, native vegetation at the wetlands, which are just near the Corowa water filtration facility. We hope to provide drinking water, further signage and parking as the project continues.

ACRONYMS - Like all large organizations Rotary uses many acronyms. 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 referring to mostly international projects.

- **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 freely by the Club and is an important part of our culture. It refers to the time before and after our meetings where members and guests get together to socialize. Some meetings are also set aside as purely social, where little or no business takes place. We also have additional social events outside of normal Rotary meetings, and many Rotarians enjoy Rotary fellowship while engaged in volunteer jobs such as Rotary Markets, Race Gates, BBQ's and Clean Up the Highway.

MEETINGS - Meetings are weekly, on a Wednesday, except over Christmas when we have a 2 or 3-week break whenever a public holiday coincides with a meeting date.

- **Cost** - Our normal meetings are \$25, made up as follows:
Meal - \$20
Raffles (two draws) - \$2
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 by 8:30 pm:

- 6:30pm - 7:00pm Fellowship
- 7:00pm Call to order for start of meeting
- President welcomes members, the Guest Speaker, Honorary Rotarians, Exchange Student. He/she then 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
- Celebration of any Birthdays
- Fine Session
- Guest Speaker
- Close

During the meeting we also do a little bit of fundraising. The first is the "small change box". As the name suggests a box is passed around to collect any small change members wish to put in, with proceeds going to the DG Partners charity (as mentioned above).

The second fundraising each night is the **Fine Session** and this is where we have a bit of fun. Firstly, the Sergeant at Arms fines members for things 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 – In the past this has been a sticking point for potential new members who may have thought they would need to come every week. However, there has been a relaxation of the attendance requirements, with minimum attendance being 50% of Club meetings, but this is negotiable. Members can also do a "makeup" to help with their attendance percentage.

- A "makeup" can be done by visiting another Club, going online and attending an e-meeting at an e-club, representing the Club at an event and/or participating in Club events such as BBQ's, Clean up the Highway, monthly market, etc. When travelling, makeups are a great way to meet other Rotarians and see how other Clubs run, even if it isn't always in English.

ANNUAL FEES - Currently the Club charges \$240 p.a. This fee basically covers the costs we are charged by District, RI and Insurance and is set at the start of each Rotary year, i.e. July 1st. Partners who are both Rotarians can choose to pay the discounted rate of \$200 each. New members are charged on a pro-rata basis as well as a joining fee of \$50, which is to cover the cost of a Rotary pin, dinner badge, literature and a club polo top. Our fees are amongst the lowest in our Rotary District as we are only looking to recover costs.