



President Hugh and Sue Wheeler, 2007/08

All long-term organisations I have belonged to have undertaken changes within their history. For any organisation or club to remain relevant to a new generation, it can be difficult for long serving members to understand and accept changes need to occur to attract a new cohort of potential recruits.

In 2007/08, President Hugh Wheeler, undertook to ensure if our club was to attract a new generation, what is required is: 'a year of renewal

and rejuvenation.’ Based on a new model developed by a Task Force in the past Rotary year, President Hugh planted the seeds to ensure our club in the 21st Century was ‘more reflective of the wider society’. The culture of our club also came into focus ensuring our club became a club that community members would want to join.

Membership

As a result. 26 new, younger members joined our club. This meant that 1/3 of our members held less than 2 years’ experience and our overall median age dropped. Furthermore, with 14 new women members, the percentage of women members grew to 33%.



With our Employment and Health program (in partnership with Bendigo Community Health) attracting interest Nationally and our Apprenticeship Drive making a difference locally with disengaged young people, President Hugh knew more could be done, particularly with our new members joining the club.

Pathfinder

Pathfinder was an exciting new program by President Hugh involving 3 experienced Rotarians working with the new members to the club to encourage them to find something they were passionate about and channelling such into a new Rotary project.



One example was new members decided to hold a golf event to assist 'Operation Cleft' which involves children in Bangladesh receiving free surgery to correct a cleft palate. This golf event has become an annual event. Hundreds of children's lives in Bangladesh have now been changed forever.

Star Thrower Project



With increasing numbers of women joining the club, the Star Thrower Project (coordinated by Larrie Winzar) involved bringing rural women suffering from a prolonged drought to Bendigo for a day of pampering and fellowship. \$3000 was provided to ensure every individual woman experienced a very special day out. As Larrie mentioned in her report: It was a rare chance for these women to put themselves first for a change.

High Profile Speakers

President Hugh understood one way to attract potential members to the club is the importance of having high profile, keynote speakers. During the year, Donald McGauchie, Chairman, Director of Telstra and Director of the Reserve Bank Board spoke at a specially convened meeting. Also, the U.S Counsel General, Earl Irving and sporting legend, David Parkin, were invited to the club as speakers.



International Service



During the year, 10 Shelter boxes funded by the Club's contingency funds (along with 5 others paid for by individual members) were sent to provide humanitarian disaster assistance in Myanmar.

Over \$7,000 was provided to our Samoa project which will be matched by The Rotary Foundation for our next project in Samoa.

Carols

One important change to the Carols during the year came with the idea to ensure the Carols became a collaborative event with the community. This would no doubt ensure it grew and was more sustainable in the long term.

As a first step, Bendigo Community Telco Ltd became the first naming rights sponsor for the event.





During President Hugh's year over \$72,000 was distributed to charitable causes. Apart from Shelter Box, Samoa and the Star Thrower Project, others to benefit include the Rotary Foundation, Operation Cleft, ARHRF (Australian Rotary Health Research Fund) and Bendigo Uniting Care Outreach.

