

The Rotary Club of Murrumbidgee Canberra Inc.
2023-24 President's Report
by President Heather

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Murrumbidgee Canberra Rotary Club had another highly successful year. Murrumbidgee Canberra is now two years old but it builds on the foundations of over 110 years of service delivered by the former Canberra East and Woden Rotary Clubs.

We are justly proud of our achievements this year. As a result of our efforts, we have raised substantial funds that have enabled us to support 30 initiatives in our local community and beyond (details in box below). We are truly helping to Create Hope in the World.

Our donations encompass Rotary programs, community initiatives, youth initiatives and non-Rotary international initiatives. Among the Rotary programs: our Club has made significant donations to the Rotary Foundation to provided support for two Australian Rotary Health Indigenous Scholarships, a three-year PhD scholarship and a Rural Medical Scholarship; and we supported Shelterbox, ROMAC (the Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children), Rotarians Against Malaria, the Sundowners Birthing Kits and Teacher in a Box.

We have supported our local community through initiatives such as the provision of a smart screen to the Evelyn Scott School, funding for the Early Morning Centre (which provides support for Canberra's homeless) and for MyHome in Canberra.

At the international level, we donated funding for Professor David Croaker and his colleagues to perform paediatric surgery in the Solomon Islands. We are embarking upon a project, being led by our Club member John Jedryk, to assist in de-mining operations in Ukraine with metal detectors.

In support for young people, we are increasing the value of our annual awards provided to Year 12 students at Canberra College and the funding held in the Bob Harvie bursary, an initiative in memory of a long term member of the former Woden Club, that was established via the generosity of his widow Helen.

We were kept very busy with our highly successful major projects: the Antique and Collectable Fairs in August and March; Gnomes Painting at Floriade; the Five Peaks Bike Challenge bike ride in April; and several events where we provided parking services. In addition to raising substantial funds these, and other events, serve to raise awareness of our Club and of Rotary more broadly within our community. Their success was made possible by the leadership and support provided by Club members. I particularly acknowledge the outstanding contributions made by: Neal Fogarty and George McLean for coordinating the Antiques and Collectable Fairs; Debbie Whitfield and Greg Hooper for organising Gnomes Painting at Floriade; John Widdup and Jeff Ibbotson for managing the Five Peaks Challenge bike ride; and to Shukry Sahhar for organising parking services for several major events.

In addition to recognising the efforts of our Club members in conducting these activities, we acknowledge the crucial contributions played by family members, members of other Rotary and Rotaract Clubs, and others who gave of their time, expertise and, in some cases, their financial support.

As well as our major events, there were several smaller activities which helped to contribute to the distinctive character of our Club. These include: the annual Cherry Fundraising project led by Neal Fogarty; the Return-it recycling initiative led by Jeff Ibbotson; and Australia Day community BBQ.

Club members participated in a number of Rotary events during the year including the inaugural Rotary Community Service Award at which our Club acknowledged the contribution of Terry Peek in establishing and supporting Sailability, and other clubs recognised individuals who contributed to the community.

Our meetings were enriched by presentations by a large number of very fine guest speakers, drawn from Canberra and NSW, and from our own membership. We've had visits to local sites

including: Endangered Heritage in Fyshwick; the Air Disaster Memorial; the Greenhills Centre; the Hall Museum; the Buddhist temple in Kambah; and Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve. Our guest speakers and site visits were largely facilitated by George McLean with assistance from Walter Schoning, Harold Small, Ross Power, and Jeff Ibbotson – thank you.

Our Club welcomed a new member, Stephen Ponder, in November. Stephen has helped with several BBQs and was so keen that he even commenced doing this before he formally joined the Club.

I acknowledge the contributions of our Secretary, John Widdup, who keeps us informed via The Raven, our weekly newsletter, and who manages many other activities. Thank you to our Treasurers – initially this was Carole Fullalove, but following her departure, Ajit Banerjee very generously stepped into the breach. As our fund-raising activities have increased, our finances have increased in complexity, and include the requirement to manage GST and to lodge quarterly Business Activity Statements (BAS). Additionally, I thank Greg Hooper, who delivered interesting toasts at the commencement of each meeting, and Viola, who manages our bookings with The Commonwealth Club and who always helps individual members and the Club more generally.

I also thank the Board members for their support and to everyone who has participated in the life of the Club this year. It has been a privilege to be your Club President and I look forward to working with Ross Power in his capacity as President for 2024-25, the year of The Magic of Rotary.

Finally, I thank Lyn Selmes, Operations Manager of The Commonwealth Club, Tim and all the other people who have helped to make our meetings at this venue so enjoyable. We will no longer meeting at the Commonwealth Club.

Thank you to all Club members and friends of the Club for making 2022-23 a productive and enjoyable time.

MURRUMBIDGEE CANBERRA ROTARY DONATIONS 2023-24

Rotary Initiatives (excluding youth programs):

- Australian Rotary Foundation
- ARH Indigenous Health Scholarships
- ARH Rural Medical Scholarships
- ROMAC Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children
- ShelterBox
- Rotarians Against Malaria
- Children's Medical Emergency Fund
- Rotary Sundowner Club's Birthing Kits
- Teacher in a Box
- MHERV Men's Health & Education Regional Van

Community Initiatives:

- My Home in Canberra
- Early Morning Centre
- Dementia Demolition Squad
- Salvation Army
- Sailability boat 'George'
- ACT Wildlife Inc.
- Hall Museum
- Sri Lankan Buddhist temple
- CMT(Charcot Marie Tooth)
- Evelyn Scott School
- Pedal Power ACT

International Initiatives (excluding Rotary programs):

Paediatric Surgery in Solomons (David Croaker et al)
Nusa Tenggara Association (NTA)

Youth Initiatives (including Rotary programs):

NYSF National Youth Science Forum
Holder and Garnsey Award
Bob Harvie Bursary
RYPEN Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment
Bimberi Youth Award
Tournament of the Minds
ACT Kids in Care

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Awards made by President Heather:

Rotarian of the Year award given to Debbie Whitfield as the member who has contributed most to the Club in the past year, 2023-24. She co-led gnomes painting last year, served on the Board as the youth officer and as the Club's public officer, assisted at other events during the year including the provision of parking services, maintained contact with the family of the previous year's ROMAC child, Melanaite, and managed the relationships with the schools whose students are the beneficiaries of our Club's student awards. will be held for her until her return.

The Key Rotarian award went to George McLean as the member who has contributed to several projects over several years, mostly in the background. He has been a member of Rotary for 24 years, including two stints as the President of the former Canberra City Club, has given very generously to the Paul Harris Society, being a Paul Harris fellow 'plus 8', and as a Major Donor to the Rotary Foundation. George assisted Neal Fogarty in running both recent Antique and Collectable Fairs and managed the guest speaker and visits program for much of the past year.

The Gillespie Paulus community service award was given to Club member, Viola Kalokerinos. This award recognises the Charter President of the Woden Rotary Club, and is awarded to a member of the community – who may or may not be a Rotarian – who has provided outstanding services to Rotary, the community or their vocation. It is not necessarily given each year. Viola serves her community not only as committed Rotarian who is always there to help, but also in her capacity of decades of service to her family, to the Curtin community, the Greek community in Canberra, and more broadly. Viola and her husband Vince ran the iconic Curtin milk bar until Vince's death in 2003 whereupon she continued to run on it her own for a further five years. Viola has volunteered with many organisations over the years including schools, churches, Palliative Care ACT, the Greek-Australian Home for the Aged in Kingston, and L'Arche, a charity that provides services to people with a disability through supported living. She helped to establish a branch of the Bendigo Bank in Curtin, was on the Board of the Queen Elizabeth II Family Centre, was the deputy chair of the Government's Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, and a member of the Executive Committee of the ACT Division of the National Council of Women. Viola's contributions have been recognised in the past, including as the ACT's nominee in the Local Hero category of the Australian of the Year Awards in 2015.

Club Citations were give to:

- **John Widdup** for significant contributions to the Club by serving as the Club as Secretary, co-managing the very successful Five Peaks Challenge bike ride, producing the Club newsletter, and for assisting at other events.

- **Shukry Sahhar** for significant contributions to the Club by managing several successful parking projects, assisting at other events and for acting as Secretary during the Club Secretary's absence.

- **Neal Fogarty** for significant contributions to the Club by managing two successful Antique and Collectables Fair, providing outstanding support as the Immediate Past President, managing the Cherry Fundraiser, and assisting at other events.

- **Greg Hooper** for significant contributions to the Club by co-managing the very successful Gnomes Painting at Floriade project, delivering the national day toasts at Club meetings and by providing thoughtful and sound counsel.

Paul Harris pins, recognising members or non-members who provide significant service to the Club, to Rotary or the community were give to:

- **Peter Barclay** a Paul Harris pin with one sapphire
- **Jeff Ibbotson** a Paul Harris pin with three sapphires
- **Ross Power** a Paul Harris pin with four sapphires
- **John Widdup** a Paul Harris plus six, that is a Paul Harris pin with one ruby.