

## VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE DINNER

2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER 2009

Thank you chairman.....

It is a pleasure to be here tonight and to be a part of this important function.

Many of you will not know very much about Rotary. And I certainly do not have the time to fully explain the ideals and principals of Rotary in the time allocated to me this evening.

Since the first Rotary Club Meeting held in Chicago on the 23 February 1905, there are now 1.218 million Rotarians in 33,170 clubs in 532 Districts in 210 countries.

Rotary is probably best known for its involvement and fight against Polio.

Due to Rotary's mass immunisation programs Polio, once a worldwide crippling virus; is now limited to just four pockets, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nigeria. Accessibility and security issues remain a problem in these areas. But such is the power of Rotary that on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2009 (on one day) in Afghanistan, polio immunization activities saw 880,000 children immunised the highest number on record.

Rotary Clubs, across the world, are also concentrating on similar activities, daily, in their fight against Malaria, illiteracy, health, hunger and implementing clean water programs.

Is there a need for service clubs in the world today?

As we were coming out of the Second World War, Service clubs were in big demand; some of us can remember it well, others of us known as the baby boomers, will remember there was not much money around in the 50's and 60's.

Councils and governments were busy rebuilding infrastructure, so service clubs were needed for those additional items such as BBQ's, bus shelters, water bubblers and even community centres.

You might argue that we are in much more affluent times now. And you would be right. However conflicts between nations continue today, as do natural disasters. We have experienced that in our own back yard with the recent bush fires. **The reason for being here tonight.** The disasters with the storms and tsunamis, hitting our northern neighbours recently, and the floods in the north of Australia.

The need for Rotary is as great today as it was coming out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war.

Rotarians from across the nation and across the world sent money to **our** Districts, to assist their fellow human beings. Rotary Districts from countries who struggle to service their own needs and usually receive aid, still sent small amounts, because they said it was their turn and even though it was a small amount, it could mean a lot to one person, in need.

How does a Rotarian in Australia a developed nation make a difference in the world?

A Rotarian in the Strathmore or Sunshine Rotary Club may not get to physically be a part of that massive immunization program in Afghanistan. But by being a part of the BBQ fundraiser, charity golf day, organising the Bushfire Dinner or selling raffle tickets they are playing just as important a role in our efforts towards world peace and understanding amongst nations.

By eliminating ignorance, poverty, hunger, disease and thirst; peace amongst nations must and will come. But to achieve our goals we need more hands to administer the vaccines, to erect the rota homes, to dig the wells, to administer the medical aid and education programs all run by Rotary Clubs across the world. We need more members.

I have found that people who help other people are usually happy and successful. They do not look for thanks or reward. Their reward is knowing that they have helped someone less fortunate than themselves. These people are true Rotarians.

Now this has only been a thumb nail sketch of Rotary.

So in closing I will quote Ralph Waldo Emerson. To me this quote sums up what is a successful person. A true Rotarian.

“To laugh often and much;

to win the respect of intelligent people

and the affection of children;

to earn the appreciation of honest critics

and endure the betrayal of false friends;

to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;

to leave the world a bit better,

whether by a healthy child,

a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;

to know even one life has breathed easier  
because you lived.

**This is to have succeeded.”**

**This is a true Rotarian.**

**Thank you enjoy the evening.**