



The Klingensmith Challenge

Think tanks perform important research and advocacy roles in areas such as social policy, political strategy, economics, military, technology and culture. They are of rising prominence in our main political parties, playing an important role in promoting policy debate and discussion and engaging and informing the public on political issues. Why not then, take that same formula and apply it to Rotary membership? Essentially, taking the Rotary out of Rotary to give us a fresh future, while still retaining our core values. The Rotary Club of Pakuranga, NZ, did just that... and the result was spectacular!

Think tanking a new future for Rotary membership

WHAT would a group of diverse people come up with if they could design their own Rotary club? It would be non-negotiable that these people would have to be highly ethical, well-organised, community-minded and deemed successful in their own organisations. They should have no interference or contamination from existing and experienced Rotarians, often entrenched in the culture of their own club, not only unaware of how younger people operate, but also of other clubs and the more flexible approach now adopted by Rotary International.

In mid-2017, Sylvie Wilkinson, of the Rotary Club of Pakuranga, gathered together a group of 20 people to form a think tank. The group was mainly sourced from recommendations from



Then District 9920 governor Malini Raghwan in her splendid pink sari, with the newly inducted Rotarians.



Eighteen-year-old club members Penelope Franca, left, and Rachel Wong, with fellow Rotarians Crystal Leung and Pauline Puckey.

school principals and deputy principals (a teeming pond of community knowledge). Amusingly, keeping both club and district people away from this group was a challenge.

Once aware of the *Objects of Rotary* and the *Four Way Test*, off they went, working in groups to design their ideal Rotary club under the headings “We do not want to see...”, “We

do need...”, “Our meetings will be...” and “Suggested projects”. The results were fresh, fascinating and highly achievable. Out were old traditions, hierarchies, elitism, meetings for meetings’ sake, talk fest, gender, age and ethnic inequality.

With much delight, in late June, 15 people were inducted into the Pakuranga Tamaki River Rotary Auxiliary, NZ, a Satellite Club of the Rotary Club of Pakuranga. They even chose their own name, mindful that they needed to include the title of their mother club.

Members’ ages range from 18 to 69, with 11 born in other countries. They have a wide range of classifications, from research to real estate,

management to medical; a truly diverse and effective group of people. The three youngest members, all 18, have a Rotarian part funding them, thus taking an interest in their study and career and becoming, in their words, their Rotary Grandpas! They will also have three “Rotary Supporters” from the “Mother Ship” to call on and guide, should things start to stray.

Induction night saw then District 9920 governor Malini Raghwan in her stunning sari and many of the group in their national dress, flags flying! Several primary school children confidently and delightfully introduced members from their school communities, and quite frankly stole the show. Bubbles followed, at what was a truly happy, positive and delightful evening.

This think tank approach to fresh membership was such a simple idea to plant and watch germinate, and a true joy to see bloom into a viable, enthusiastic youth-focused Rotary group. An approach that would be easy to replicate in other clubs.