

RDU R.I.P.?

THE END OF OUR MAGAZINE AS WE KNOW IT?

TWO proposed enactments to the 2019 Council on Legislation in April, if passed, will force the closure of *Rotary Down Under* as we know it – your magazine for the past 53 years.

The Council on Legislation is Rotary's parliament and meets once every three years to consider amendments to Rotary's constitutional documents.

One enactment from South Africa is recommending that all Rotary magazines no longer be published and the other from Sweden and District 9980, Southern New Zealand, is recommending subscriptions be made optional.

Both enactments argue that with online and internet access to Rotary information there is no need for a published magazine anymore.

What this means, in effect, is that *Rotary Down Under* and the other 32 Rotary magazines, including *The Rotarian*, will not survive either in printed or electronic form, because their business model will be destroyed.

All Rotary magazines rely on subscriptions to be viable. Advertising revenue for *RDU* makes up only three per cent of the income. *RDU* is already challenged because subscriptions are steadily decreasing as our membership declines. We have lost \$100,000 in subscriptions over the past three years. However, with good stewardship, *RDU* has been able to keep its subscription price of \$40.00 stable for the past six years and the Board's intention is to continue to maintain this for as long as it possibly can. However, if *RDU* became an optional purchase, subscriptions are likely to decline markedly, and this would end the magazine as you know it.

We would also lose our only broad-based means of promoting Rotary across Australia, New Zealand and the South West Pacific. As you are aware, the magazine has changed markedly over the past three years so that it can be used as a marketing tool to the general public.

In Australia, it has already made an impact by influencing human trafficking legislation in the Federal Parliament.

Along with Channel 9, the National Farmers Federation and RAWCS, it is promoting the Drought Appeal, which has already raised over \$10 million.

District 9710, the official charity partner of Floriade in Canberra, with an expected 500,000 guests, requested an additional 5000 copies to promote Rotary.

Rotary clubs and Rotarians are also able to request free copies of the magazine that featured one of their projects for further promotional purposes, and many do.

RDU also provides copies of featured articles each month to other Australian media, as well as to RI and the other regional magazines, and many of these also receive additional publication.

Our other national and zone





TARGET YOUR FUNDS



**PDG Gina
Growden &
PDG Liz
Courtney**
*Public image
coordinators*



entities – ARH, RAWCS, RNZWS and ROMAC – as well as national and zone conferences, will have their marketing disrupted if *RDU* closes down. All take advantage of the marketing spread of 35,000 copies a month to reach not only Rotarians, but potential financial partners and influencers.

The suggestion that electronic communications have replaced the printed magazine has also proved false. Expert advice retained by RI shows that the website and *my rotary* are only accessed for three minutes at a time, while the magazines receive 30 minutes of readership time. Only 40 per cent of Rotarians across our zones' readership access *my rotary*, so the majority are preferring the printed magazine. In other Pacific countries, internet access is patchy and Rotarians there rely almost entirely on the printed copy.

Another argument put forward is that *RDU* is a significant cost of Rotary and we should be looking for ways to reduce the cost of membership. To the average Rotarian, *RDU* makes up 2.5 per cent of his or her annual cost of Rotary. The big cost of Rotary is weekly meetings, where food, drinks,

raffles and fines add up to \$1500 a year. Options to reduce these costs significantly are now available through decisions made at the last Council on Legislation. There are many clubs that now meet without a meal and many more that meet fortnightly or twice a month. Other clubs only "meet" and promote their fellowship through projects, without any financial costs to members.

If you would like to express your view on the issue, your club can participate in the process:

- Write or speak to your district Council on Legislation delegate and express your views on how you wish him or her to vote.
- Rotary International will be setting up a facility where clubs can submit online letters of support or dissent to any of the proposed enactments. The letters are limited to 500 words and the deadline is February, 14, 2019. More information on where to submit your letters of support will be included in the December/January issue of *Rotary Down Under*.

Euan Miller
Chair, Rotary Down Under

The old saying, "You have to spend money to make money" is true in most areas of life – in the sense that investment is required to get returns. This is definitely the case with public image activities.

Investing in promotion and your club's public profile can certainly have big pay-offs. Getting the word out effectively about what your club is working on can increase the success of your events and projects tenfold. It is also a sure-fire way to help reach membership goals.

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While you don't need to allocate huge amounts of club funds to public image to be successful (thoughtful effort is more important than a huge budget) some money will be required to cover costs such as printing handouts, website design and fees, purchasing signage, and more. Advertising expenditure is something else to consider – for example, placing ads in your local paper or Facebook advertising (which can be purchased very cheaply, but can add up over time).

Figuring out what your club can afford to spend overall will ensure you don't overspend promoting an event early in the year and have nothing left for others at the end. With targeted spends and an energetic team, you can expect clear results. •