



The Regional Pilot Project offers us the unique opportunity to work together to ensure that Rotary flourishes in our region for another 100 years.





Regenerating Rotary

A Transformational Regional Pilot Project

An illustration of a person in a blue shirt and dark pants standing on a blue ladder. The person is holding a black watering can and pouring water onto a large blue gear. A paper airplane is flying in the background, leaving a dashed blue trail. The background is white with some yellow and blue abstract shapes.

In January 2019, Rotary International approved a pilot project for Rotary in our region to help address membership challenges and ensure our organisation thrives long into the future. To do that, we need your help. Regional Pilot Project co-chairs PDG Ingrid Waugh and PDG Peter Frueh are urging Rotarians both established and new to jump onboard and get involved.

*Words by PDG Ingrid Waugh & PDG Peter Frueh
Co-Chairs, Regional Pilot Project*

Rotarians who attended the recent Rotary conference in Christchurch, NZ, were astounded to see the impact of the destructive 2011 earthquake, which resulted in the loss of 1200 CBD buildings, 6000 suburban homes and 185 precious lives. But the city is getting on with its massive regeneration task, which, along with the recent mosque attacks, has brought the community together like never before.

The courage and resilience of the Christchurch people is outstanding and is a great example for Rotary Zone 8 (Australia, New Zealand and the South West Pacific) as we face our regeneration challenges.



PROJECT VISION

To significantly increase the reach and impact of Rotary in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

PROJECT PURPOSE

To build upon our past and transform Rotary in our region to provide relevant and engaging experiences that better serve our communities and enable us to grow.

Our membership has declined 12 per cent in the past five years, with 127 clubs closing in the same period, continuing a trend that's been happening for the past 20 years. In presenting these trends at the recent Regeneration Conference, Zone 8 coordinators Tim Moore and John Prendergast encouraged delegates to embrace transformation or face continued demise.

Rotary membership challenges are not dissimilar to those in organisations such as golf clubs, associations

and churches. We are all dealing with significant societal changes in volunteering patterns led by social media and other developments. An ageing demographic adds to the challenge, bringing about a growing sense of urgency for us to work together and act now.

In environments of mounting complexity and rapid change, it is a fact that traditional hierarchical

organisations tend to be risk-averse and resistant to change, which is the reason why Rotary International has approved a Pilot Project for our region to help address the challenge.

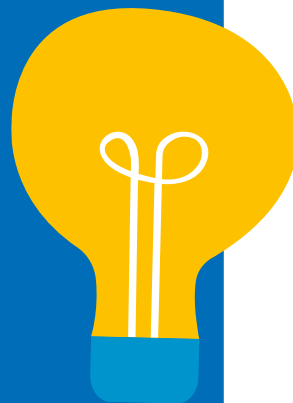
With Rotary International's support, this is an exciting and unique opportunity to regenerate Rotary for those passionate about our future.

Outcomes & Objectives

The need for a regional approach to these challenges has been recognised for many years, but it was galvanised in September 2018, when last year's Zone 8 governors unanimously agreed to petition RI to develop a pilot regional structure that aims to:

- Promote a strong and relevant brand;
- Grow national and state community partnerships;
- Develop a coordinated public voice; and
- Provide more supportive and proactive change management for clubs and districts.

To help achieve the project vision, purpose and aims, working groups are being set up for five objective areas – communication, culture, governance, public image, and leadership and development.



“This is a changing world; we must be prepared to change with it. The story of Rotary will have to be written again and again.”

– Paul Harris





Volunteers with knowledge, passion, energy and enthusiasm, who are keen to see Rotary flourish in the next century, are now being sought. Both longer serving and new generation volunteers are required for working groups that will recommend how we will achieve our objectives (Objective Groups) and for Reference Groups that provide regular feedback on the changes being considered.



“Winston Churchill once said, ‘To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often’. As Rotary in our part of the world celebrates our centenary in 2021, it is vital that we continue to review Rotary and Rotaract to ensure we are relevant and effective in our communities.”

**– Ian Riseley
President, Rotary International 2017-18**

Rewards & Benefits

The rewards of being involved in this initiative are tremendous, and include fulfillment from pursuing a mission one believes in and the chance to collaborate with a broader array of people across Rotary in our zone.

The benefits for Rotary will be immense as the new strategic plan encourages us to:

- Increase our impact locally and globally by focusing our programs and leveraging partnerships;
- Enhance our reach by growing and diversifying our membership with new channels into Rotary;
- Support our clubs to better engage members with better leadership development and skills training; and
- Increase our ability to adapt by simplifying and reviewing our governance structures and fostering more diverse perspectives in decision making.

Get Involved

Successful change initiatives always build on the valuable and important past and tap into resources across the organisation. It is also recognised that in today’s fast changing world, traditional top-down change management methodologies just don’t work, particularly in volunteer organisations. Without the involvement of people throughout our clubs and districts, success will be severely limited – their participation, ideas, leadership, knowledge and skills are essential.

Accordingly, an army of volunteers from clubs, groups and various demographics is being sought.

Opportunities are available for people interested in contributing in two key ways:

1. Objective Working Groups are being set up for those with skills related to the objectives in the areas of communication, culture, governance, public image, and leadership and development. Their task will be to work out how we will achieve the vision, purpose and relevant objectives.
2. Reference Groups will be established for each Australian state, two for New Zealand, and geographically and culturally appropriate groups for the Pacific Islands.

To get involved in either the Objective Working Groups and/or the Reference Groups, please send an expression of interest to rotaryregionalpilot@gmail.com succinctly explaining your interests, location, club or district role, demographic group and background.

Participation in Reference Groups will be mainly online, with the purpose of providing ideas, feedback, validation, feelings and opinions on proposals being developed. Clubs may wish to collaborate in clusters and opportunities may be available for demographic focus groups as well.



“We can’t fall into the trap of addressing 21st century challenges with 20th century solutions.”

– John Hewko
General Secretary,
Rotary International



“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

– Charles Darwin



Timeline for Transformation



A club at the crossroads: Lessons in transformational change

In 2016, the Rotary Club of Port Adelaide, SA, was at a crossroad. Membership had been steadily declining, and members were facing the very real possibility of losing their charter.

Weekly meetings were steeped in tradition – formally chaired with procedures strictly adhered to – and

most of the members were retired businessmen who had been long-term, loyal members of the club.

An ingrained belief that the club’s shaky future was the result of external factors had negated the need for the club to take ownership of its predicament and take a long, hard look in the mirror.

Traditional recruitment strategies were failing, and the occasional new member didn't hang around for long.

They knew something had to change... and that something was the members themselves.

In adopting a strategy of transformational change, members set about redefining the entire culture of the club – new ideas, new attitudes, new customs and new behaviours. Underlying strategies and processes were rethought and a new vision looking to the future was embraced.

In order to attract new members, they stopped trying to attract new members. Instead, they focused on creating a club that was both relevant and valuable to the community.

A number of strategies were adopted.

The club's weekly bulletin, solely distributed to the club's 20 members, was transformed into a marketing tool to advertise what they have been up to in the community. Two weekly publications are now distributed to two different audiences, with a combined readership of approximately 2000. Both Rotary members and community businesses pay to advertise in the publications.

The established Business Awards took on a new life, thanks to the fostering of community partnerships, and now consist of two different categories – Business of the Year and Entrepreneur of the Year. The change has seen a massive increase in businesses applying for the awards, which now attract sponsorship from the local radio station, local council and a range of local business and community groups. Two major events – a Gala Launch and a Gala Presentation – have attracted strong attendance and gained high profiles in the community.

One weekly meeting has been replaced with a monthly Business Network Lunch, which attracts more than 40 non-Rotarians and high-profile speakers from the business, political and entrepreneurial world.

Another weekly meeting now takes the form of an Open For Business breakfast event – aka an informal networking catch-up.

These initiatives, among others, have given the Rotary Club of Port Adelaide a new lease on life, but 2018-19 president Steve Smart said it would be wrong to surmise that this new-found success is built on one or two of the initiatives it has introduced.

"It has been mentioned that the success of our club is because 'we have gone back to business networking'. This is far from the truth," Steve said.

"Our club is transforming to achieve our vision by looking forwards to the future, not backwards to the past. This transformation has included strategies, processes, ideas, attitudes, customs and behaviours. It is because of ongoing transformational change that the future of our club is looking positive."

While an increase in membership has not been the focus of the club during its transformational process, this has indeed been the result.

"For the first time in a number of years our membership will increase this Rotary year and we have a number of prospective new members," Steve said.

“Transformational Change is a shift in the culture of an organisation resulting from a change in the underlying strategy and processes the organisation has used in the past. A transformational change is designed to be organisation-wide and is enacted over a period of time.”

– Zone 8 Coordinator Tim Moore



Characteristics of Transformational Change

- An acceptance that the club must change as society changes.
- A flexible approach: While there needs to be an over-arching strategic vision for change and direction, the details will evolve during the journey.
- An organisational approach: We must look at the way we do things at all levels of the club.
- High levels of leadership and communication: It involves challenging processes of giving and receiving feedback, learning, problem-solving and negotiation.
- Unique solutions: Don't just duplicate another club, analyse your club's strengths and weaknesses, and develop your own vision, goals and strategies.
- Patience and belief: Fast-tracking transformational change will only create an illusion of true long-term change.
- Good communication: All members of the club need to be regularly informed of the changes that are occurring and the reason for those changes.
- An open mind: Understand that transformation will change some of the traditional roles and responsibilities of club leaders and members.
- Empathy: The changes can be challenging and even threatening to some members.
- Involvement: If members are not actively supporting and participating, they will ultimately undermine and reject the change.

