

Rotary Down Under had a sit down interview recently with Noel Trevaskis - Rotary International Director

Getting to know Noel!

One only needs to meet Noel Trevaskis once to realise he is a straight talking, down to earth and practical Rotarian. We are proud he is our representative on the Rotary International Board for 2016-2018 and believe that much will be accomplished in our region with his hands-on approach.

It's interesting when you speak with Noel that he is willing to share his story of how, in his early years of joining Rotary, his wife Sue challenged his commitment. In her view, he wasn't committed and was neither in Rotary nor out of Rotary. She said he needed to make a decision – either commit or resign.

"Then two events changed my life," Noel says. "The first was Australian Rotary International president Glen Kinross. His words Show Rotary Cares from his year theme really struck a chord with me. I knew I could show people that I cared as a person, but I didn't know how I was going to do that.

"The second thing was that I read in Rotary Down Under how Australian Rotary Health were planning to hold a number of Community Mental Health Awareness Forums across Australia to help destigmatise mental illness. Because I had suffered from severe depression and had experienced the stigma associated with it, I knew this was how I could show that Rotary cares and that I cared as a person.

"I became involved with Australian Rotary Health and participated in numerous mental health awareness forums across Australia. Those forums played a significant part in me becoming completely well again.

"I was so passionate about this issue that I became a chairman of Australian Rotary Health. When I was the district chair I visited every club in the district telling my story."

Noel's commitment to Rotary, however, extends far beyond this issue and includes being a district governor 2005-06, membership coordinator for Australia and part of New Zealand, Rotary coordinator for Australia and also serving on the Rotary International Membership Committee, which he will continue as a director.

We asked Noel some questions about what he sees for Rotary in our zone.

(Q) What would you like to see accomplished in our region over the next two years?

As I travel throughout Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and internationally, I see so much great work being undertaken, but how much more could be achieved if we collaborated? It is One Rotary, we should be a united team, but sometimes we aren't. Clubs can work together – even if from different districts or countries. Rotary International is there to assist and guide you, and they are investing a lot into resources to help you. Let's really push the One Rotary model and get the best people to help on projects, especially using Global Grants, so we can achieve the maximum results.

We also need to embrace diversity in our membership. The majority of our clubs don't reflect the local community.

Finally, I'd like to see clubs embracing change and modernising the way they do things. The Council on Legislation has approved major changes allowing clubs to change the way and how often they meet. Clubs should have open and honest discussion before they decide to make changes to their club.

(Q) If clubs could do three things to assist you what would they be?

1. Every club should have a strategic plan, especially for membership, and all members need to be involved in it. Clubs need to be welcoming and inclusive of everyone. Clubs need active programs and projects so members can be involved. A lot of clubs have become fundraising clubs when in fact we are service clubs.
2. Upgrade your Rotary branding – count the number of ways the public sees your Rotary brand and ensure they are all well-presented in the correct format.
3. Encourage and assist all Rotarians to learn more about Rotary. Rotary Down Under is filled with inspiring stories; it is a tremendous resource for all Rotarians in our region. Rotary on the Move is also a good resource for clubs and members. It has stories of how clubs have increased their membership or how they have retained their members. Conferences and conventions provide so much information on Rotary – beyond what happens in your club or district.

(Q) If every Rotarian could do three things to assist you what would they be?

1. Invite someone to Rotary – they could come to a club meeting, volunteer to help on a project, come to an event or go to a District Conference or other event. Just invite them!
2. Be actively involved in Rotary – participate, don't just turn up.
3. Ensure you welcome everyone into your club and treat them as you would like to be treated.

A final word from Noel

We have to continue our support for the eradication of polio from the world. We are almost there, but the last stage is going to be difficult. There has been too much work and time put into this task not to see it finish. Of course this also takes money, so donations to the Foundation are still crucial.

Finally, I ask that everyone be tolerant and respectful of those that may do things differently to how it's always been; to those who are the change agents, to those clubs that look a little different to yours. Let new initiatives be introduced and let's all work together to build a bigger and better Rotary.