

## ROTARY CLUB OF PARRAMATTA CITY Inc. DISTRICT 9675

[www.parramattacityrotary.org.au](http://www.parramattacityrotary.org.au)

### COMMUNITY NETWORKER No 14/2018-2019

#### Rotary Four-Way Test

Of the things we say or do:

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

### *Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019*

#### Our Toast

PP Phil Brophy proposed a toast to the Rotary Club of London, the nearest club to the Abbey Road Studios where the Beatles recorded their first album on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1963. The Rotary Club of London was the first club chartered outside North America. That happened in 2012. The club now had 106 members. It meets on a Monday at lunchtime and on the day of our meeting was being addressed by a representative of the Salvation Army.

#### Our Guests

The club welcomed Greg Mellis, a past president of our club, and his daughter, Eilidh, a journalism student at the University of New South Wales. Eilidh has been to the Philippines on a foreign correspondents' course with a group of other student journalists. She made contact with our sister club, the Rotary Club of Ramon Magsaysay, in Manila. The club bent over backwards to assist her.

We also welcomed Cedric Fernandes, a former priest, later an English and Mathematics teacher, and his wife, Patricia, a career pianist who has taught in the Netherlands, Britain and Australia, and has the extraordinary privilege of being piano teacher to our president, Malcolm Brown. Cedric and Patricia have had problems with mental illness in their family.

#### Apologies

President Malcolm passed on an apology for Bob Rosengreen, who was spending the day with Rotarian Walter Bock helping to load a container with items for the Philippines. The club also noted an apology from Jerry Tan.

#### Christmas Trees

The club made \$5,622.01 from the last Christmas tree sales, which was only 72 percent of what we sold last year. In the board meeting, PDG Barry said he thought we might have to revamp the operation, perhaps restrict ourselves to intensive sale over a single weekend at our site in Pennant Hills, and another intensive sales weekend at another site, at Villawood. He pointed out that our previous program involved sales over two weeks but it meant that someone might be sitting at the site mid-week with minimal sales to show for it. He had seen other Rotary clubs succeed with the one intensive weekend, properly promoted.

In the board meeting, Secretary Joy Gillett said it might be an idea to start sales earlier in December. In the first week of our sales last December, we had sold more trees than in the later period. John Stamboulie said it had to be kept in mind that if the trees were kept longer in storage, their quality might decline.

### **Bharat**

PDG Barry said he had been in touch with a Nepalese immigrant, Bharat, who was very concerned about the mental health of fellow Nepalese in Australia, 60,000 of whom lived in Sydney. At the board meeting, Barry said many were students who had come thinking of Australia as a land of milk and honey but had seen that life here was tougher than that. Some had come here with finance from their families who had borrowed to acquire it, and there was pressure, sometimes intolerable pressure, on the students. Barry proposed we register a RAWCS project. This would involve our club providing money to help fund mental health workshops and we could start by putting money into such an event in April. It was pointed out that it would help if one or two people from our club were present at the meeting. PP Phil Brophy said he thought we might be able to recruit some Nepalese to join our club. President Malcolm proposed that we go ahead with this as a project. Phil Brophy seconded it. The motion was passed and it was agreed that PDG Barry would be project manager.

### **Bollywood Dancers**

President Malcolm said that the Hills-Kellyville Rotary Club would be putting on a Bollywood Dancers night at the Don Moore Community Centre, corner of North Rocks Road and Farnell Avenue, Carlingford, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, time 6.30 for 7 pm. The night is to raise money for development programs in India and Sri Lanka. PP Phil Brophy said we should support the night because the Hills-Kellyville Club had been closely associated with us in our Christmas tree sales campaigns.

### **Australia Day Barbecue**

PDG Barry Antees said the Australia Day barbecue had not been very successful, bringing in about \$1,200, less than we had received in the past. John Stamboulie said one of the factors had been that there was not a lot of activity in the area where we were situated. The Rotary Club of Granville was also running a barbecue at the vintage cars section of the park.

### **Mothers' Day Classic Barbecue**

The club has decided to provide a barbecue at the Mothers' Day Classic at Parramatta Park on the morning of Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> May. The event will be from 6.45 am till 11.45 pm. This means the club will have to set up earlier, perhaps from 5 am. John Stamboulie said there was likely to be 3,000 to 4,000 people at the event so we would have to cater accordingly, and we would need all hands on deck to make it a success.

### **RYPEN**

Applications to candidates for a RYPEN camp at Teen Ranch Cobbitty from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> April this year will close on 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

### **Rotary Peace Fellowships**

Applications for Rotary Peace Fellowships close on 31<sup>st</sup> May.

## **Ian Cochrane**

PP Phil Brophy said that Ian Cochrane, who had been a principal in the FOLIA project to assist the LAMB hospital in Bangladesh had been awarded an OAM for his work for people with disabilities, particularly in his work with FOLIA. Phil said he would pass on congratulations on behalf of our club.

## **PhD Scholars Night**

PP Keith Henning said the night would be on 1<sup>st</sup> April. The venue will be Oatlands Golf Club and ticket price will be \$70 per head.

## **Membership**

John Stamboulie said it might be useful to invite people to low-key community events in order to encourage membership. He thought there were potential members in the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce. PP Phil Brophy said that if approaches were made, it should be with the endorsement of the chamber's board. PDG Barry pointed out that with seven Rotary organisations headquartered in Parramatta, including RI, RAWCS and ROMAC, we should be able to achieve substantial club membership.

## **Cedric and Patricia Fernandes' Son**



**Cedric and Pat Fernandes**

Pat Fernandes said she had first encountered mental illness was with her father, who had a breakdown and was “bundled into a mental hospital” where he stayed for three weeks. The same thing happened six months later but nobody knew what was wrong. He died of a heart attack at the age of 67.

Her next experience came later when her son, for all the world a bright, successful, popular student, disappeared from his bedroom one morning, leaving a long suicide note. She and Cedric had searched for him, then called the police. It turned out he had gone into the front yard, collapsed, been found and had been taken to hospital, and that the ambulance officers had not bothered to knock on their door and tell them what had happened. When she and Cedric had gone to the hospital, they were told that “the guy is over 16 and has not given permission for you to see him.”

“Unbeknown to us, he was fighting two demons, one being that he was gay and the second depression,” Pat said. The first we dealt with unconditional love. The second was a nightmare.”

The son left home at the age of 18 and became an artist and a social worker. But he also made several suicide attempts. “I recall a number of times he rang and said, ‘Good bye Mum, I am going to kill myself,’” she said. “I kept on saying, ‘There is hope’.”

Pat’s son was diagnosed with clinical depression. But medication after medication failed to work. He saw a total of 17 psychiatrists. But when Cedric and Pat tried to get a grip on what was happened, they were denied access to their son’s medical records. One psychiatrist said: “You are not my patient.” Pat said: “But if anything happens to our son, it is us they are going to call! How do we treat him at home? What so we do when he says he wants to die? Who do we contact? I had a doctor hang up on me. I had a friend dying of cancer and I found there that doctors will speak to you. But with mental health, they don’t.”

Pat said that after her son took heroin and one dose of Nurofen, and went into the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, she tried to find out what her son’s condition was and the doctor said: Ask him”. When she pointed out that he was unconscious, he said: “Well wake him up!” She noted that the reception she got was quite different, and very positive, at St Vincent’s Hospital. “But we are still being judged as parents,” she said. “We need to overcome the stigma.”

Pat’s son went to the Black Dog Institute and was diagnosed with a bipolar personality disorder. He tried going overseas but came back worse than ever, the combination of travel and changing time zones not being good for someone in his condition. “Depression is totally devastating,” Pat said. “He is unable to eat or speak or communicate. He is now 41 years old and responsibility for him falls on his friends.”

Pat said lithium was a good mood stabiliser but it was not the answer. “There needs to be more research,” she said. “That is a message that seems to be coming from every direction. Not enough is being done. My son thinks his only future is to go onto a disability pension. And one in three bipolar sufferers commits suicide.”

Cedric said: “I share the pain but I am better at concealing it and suffer within myself. The other thing is that our son’s greatest pain is that he causes us to suffer. We try to reassure him that we are more concerned about him. Mental illness is something we cannot understand. We are ready to give him every support we can.”

Cedric said he appreciated the contribution Rotary had made through ARH to mental health research.

### **Eilidh’s Philippines Jaunt**

Eilidh made the two-week trip late last year with a group of journalism students and some mentors. It was a foreign correspondents’ course partly supported by the Federal Government. There was also an informal partnership with the Special Broadcasting Service. She found that everything in the Philippines was “different” and it required “a very different approach”. She got in touch with Rotary because she felt it would assist her and through the connection with Parramatta City Rotary she had got in touch with the Rotary Club of Ramon Magsaysay in Metro Manila, who had been a great source of help, taking her out to dinner and on sightseeing trips. “They gave me so much help in telling me what they were up to,” she said. The Rotarians had put her in touch with people in government, in the community and in education. They also put her in touch with the Philippines Department of Health and with the Australian ambassador.



**Eilidh and Greg Mellis with a Filipino class on display**

There were of course problems of geography. There were places where she could not get the right power adaptor and it was impossible to connect with the internet and call people. The traffic in Manila was so intense that sometimes if an interview was too far away, and it would take all day to get there, there was no point. "It required a different way to think about how we were reporting," she said. She also saw some stark contrasts, such as a shanty town right next to a massive, modern shopping mall. "It reminded me of my place in the world," she said.

The Rotary Club of Ramon Magsaysay had put Eilidh in touch with Bulabad Elementary School, which had 6700 pupils but was poorly resourced by government. Most books and other education equipment came from the community and from Rotary. The government did allocate money for education, Eilidh said, but so much of it went on to the bureaucratic infrastructure and not much filtered through to the schools. Of the two toilets at Bulabad Elementary School, one was not working and for want of \$50 to do the repairs, it remained not working. There had been a lot of damage to school buildings and she did not expect that a lot of that would be repaired. Because of shortage of facilities, the school had a program where 300 pupils came in the morning and 300 in the afternoon.

### **Funny Pictures**



## For Your Diaries

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019. RAWCS Eastern Region conference, hosted by District 9675, at Casula.

2<sup>nd</sup> March. Bollywood Dancers night at Carlingford.

16<sup>th</sup> March. Rotary District Conference



District 9675 Conference  
Bankstown Sports Club  
March 15-17 2019

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1<sup>st</sup> April. Aust Rotary Health Scholars evening. Oatlands Golf Club \$70 per head. Bookings  
<https://events.humanitix.com.au/australian-rotary-health-scholars-dinner>

12<sup>th</sup> May. Mothers' Day Classic barbecue, Parramatta Park.

15<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The Sydney Welsh Choir concert at Northmead High.

24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> August 2019. Rotarians Against Malaria convention in Melbourne.