

COMMUNITY NETWORKER

ROTARY CLUB OF PARRAMATTA CITY, DISTRICT 9675

Rotary Four-Way Test

The Four-Way Test challenges Rotarians, in everything they do, to ask themselves:

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 25 November 2013

Our Guests

Past President Greg Mellis put in a plug for the charity work he and his wife have been doing at Emu Plains. The couple have been raising money since 2009 with a Christmas Lights display at Emu Plains, to raise money for Bear Cottage, a children's hospice, at Westmead. To date, they have raised just over \$10,000. They hope to be switching on the lights again on 1 December at 14 Emerald Street, Emu Plains, and all Rotarians are invited to go and have a look.

Also present was my son, Douglas, aged 26, who graduates in Law from Sydney University on Friday this week. I had asked him to come to a Rotary meeting before but he said they were all "too old". But he agrees that he too, if he is lucky, will become old and there are a great number of benefits from belonging to a service club.

Julie Owens, ALP Member for Parramatta, is a member of the club but she is very busy with electoral work and we are naturally pleased to see her when she can find time to drop in.

President Keith

President Keith referred to the letter of appreciation from our sister club in the Philippines, Ramon Magsaysay. Our contribution was greatly appreciated and members of the sister club were already distributed much needed aid to outlying regions.

Keith mentioned the District Conference on March 1 next year, with its potential to reach out to many non-Rotarians as well as Rotarians.

On Bunnings barbecues, he said there would be another barbecue on 4 January and in Parramatta Park on Australia Day next year. We needed someone in the club to coordinate the Australia Day event.

There would be no regular meeting on Monday next week. Instead, there would be a Rotary Health Christmas Dinner on Thursday, 5 December, at a cost of \$65 a head. The function will be at the Epping Club, 6.30 for 7 pm, when six of our PhD students would be interviewed about their research. Stephen Bradbury, Olympic Gold Medal winner, would be the Master of Ceremonies.

Secretary Joy

Joy Gillett said the annual general meeting on 9 December would decide on board membership for the next year and, as at the time of the meeting on November 25, there were precisely zero nominations.

She said brochures for the Christmas Tree campaign were to be distributed.

Past President Johnny

Johnny Ching stressed again the need to register now for the Rotary International Convention next year.

Christmas Function

Natalie Cowell reminded us of the Parramatta City Rotary Christmas Dinner at the Ribs'n'Rumps restaurant in Church Street, Parramatta, starting at 7pm on Saturday, with a show to follow at the Riverside Theatre. The cost would be \$27.50 per head for the show.

John Surian

John, who was to give a talk on Parramatta Now and in the Future, gave us a rundown on what makes him tick. His parents came from a town 40 kilometres north of Venice in North Italy. His father, born in 1910, had to go to work early because his own father died from injuries sustained in World War 1. John started his career in real estate with Philip York Real Estate in George Street, Parramatta, in 1972. From there, John went to James Laing Real Estate, selling industrial property. Retrenched during the recession in 1974, he went to Raine & Horne and managed their office in Burwood. There he had "a brand new experience", selling houses. In 1976, managing director Max Raine started the Raine & Horne franchise network and John has stayed with that ever since, surviving the cycles of boom and bust in his calling.



Julie and John (thanks as ever to the keen photography of John Totonjian)

Parramatta Now and in the Future – John Surian

John said that Parramatta, close to the geographical centre of the Sydney metropolitan region, had great unrealised potential because of its location and the presence of “hubs” that concentrated administration, commerce, education, medical facilities, sport, justice, all of which had the effect of increasing the value of property. He said people wanting to invest needed always to do their homework, not rush into things, but to take into account factors which were not immediately obvious, such as the

potential of a region to acquire greater value through things that were happening or might be happening there.

There were 175,000 people in the Parramatta Local Government Area (LGA). There were 35,000 employees of whom 16,000 lived in the LGA. The total office space in the LGA, 702,000 square metres, was about 10 percent of the total office space in Sydney, which already made Parramatta a significant centre. The 16,000 people who lived and worked in Parramatta represented 7,700 dwellings. New units in the LGA were selling from between \$500,000 to \$660,000 and older units from \$320,000 to \$480,000.

According to demographers, Parramatta would have about 50,000 employees by the year 2035, which would require an additional 300,000 square metre of office space.

“You would need 15 buildings of 20,000 square metres each to accommodate the growth of the workforce by the year 2035,” he said. “You would need 10,000 or more people in the LGA, that is 4,000 to 5,000 more residences. If you would looking at 4,500 dwellings at \$500,000 each that is between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion in property that would have to be invested in Parramatta.”

But looking at the hubs in Parramatta brought in additional factors in evaluation of property. Space could be rented from between \$350,000 and \$450,000 in Parramatta. But if 100 square metres of space was rented and the area converted into a medical clinic, that could raise the rental value of the property to perhaps \$700 per square metre. With other medical infrastructure nearby and the value that represented, the value could rise to \$850 per square metre.

The education hub, which centres on the campus of the University of Western Sydney at Rydalmere, had the potential to grow dramatically. “one of my visions is the university campus linked by cycleway directly to Parramatta,” he said. “We could virtually make it a university town, with a user and transport facility to the city. But we have dropped the ball so badly that we have let the University of New England establish a campus in Church Street.”

He said the Rydalmere James Ruse Drive “spine” had the potential to service not just Rosehill Racecourse but the international students attending the university. Rosehill Racecourse itself was becoming a venue to conventions and events. “They are spending a huge amount of money there and hopefully it will be one of the world’s greatest racecourses,” he said.

There was a problem area of Camellia, which was compounded by the asbestos pollution problem and there had recently been a meeting to consider its long-term future. But once those issues were resolved, John thought Camellia also had redevelopment potential.

There were other hubs that had readier potential. A \$20 million redevelopment of Parramatta Stadium had been promised. The heritage precinct, which incorporate so much of the early history of Australia, also had potential, with the development of the historic gatehouses as restaurants and similar venues.

Julie Owens was most impressed by John's presentation. After hearing it, she said, "one can work away with an understanding of what an extraordinary place it is to live and invest."

Dates for Diaries

28 November. District Training Day, Liverpool Catholic Club. . The subjects this time will be Building Consensus, Time Management and Presentation Skills.

9 December. Annual General Meeting of the club.

The next Bunnings barbecues will be on 4 January next year, following by barbecues on 5 April, 5 July and 18 October.

Apologies and Guests

Apologies to Joy Gillett on 8837 1900 before 9.30 am on Monday morning.

This is the latest time apologies can be accepted as numbers must to be given to the hotel by this time.

If you are bringing a guest please also advise this to Joy by that time to ensure a meal is prepared.

The Club is required to pay for the number of lunches ordered. Invoices for the cost of a meal will be sent to members by Vandana if you do not apologise for non-attendance by the time stated.

Voter Moods

I have no intention of being overtly political but it seems to me that the present sensation over falling polls for the Coalition Government deserves comment. Government in my view has become too sensitive to such polls, which so often reflect the mood of the masses on one particular day. It was a concern over superficial appearances that caused Labor to replace Kim Beazley in 2006 with the more urbane Kevin Rudd as Leader of the Opposition. It was panic over perceptions of Kevin Rudd that caused Labor to dump him as Prime Minister in 2010 favour of Julia Gillard, and it was panic that caused Labor to reverse its decision before the last election. Now the same kneejerk reactions of both the public, reflected in the polls, and Government, responding to the polls, that threatens to derail things again.

In a sense, these polls are tending just a little to mob rule. The mob rule is reaching extremes at present in Thailand, where mobs are howling in the street for the removal of ministers. The same thing happened in Egypt with the downfall of Hosni Mubarak in 1911 and in Libya with the downfall of Gaddafi the same year. But as events have shown in Egypt and elsewhere, a popular revolt is no guarantee of a satisfactory replacement. There is often a struggle for power, a period of anarchy, and eventually a regime that is as bad as the one done away with.

In a very minor way, the public polling puts the shadow of mob rule over an elected government. Sensational reports adverse to government, political attacks, stirring by

radio commentators and other journalists, are of course part of our system. But there has always been need for caution. My view is just to leave Tony Abbott to it and support him. It is his misfortune to be hit with the spying crisis with Indonesia, clashing hopelessly his stated mission to deal with the asylum seeker issue. But that is what happens to governments. Gough Whitlam could have done without the world economic downturn in 1974, Jimmy Carter could have done without the Iranian hostage crisis in 1977, George W. Bush could have done without the 9/11 crisis of 2001. Nobody will ever say government is easy. Some of these crises wreck governments. But all governments should be given the latitude to attempt to deal with them and the public should resist being swayed by volatile emotions.

The problem of the modern age is that the instant communications, often fed by irresponsible people through the social media, have the capacity to stir up public (ie mob) feeling in a way that was never done before. Kevin Rudd acted sensibly in the huge expenditure to steer Australia through the Global Financial Crisis. But the achievement was overshadowed by four accidental deaths that were really not his fault, but that of the contractors. It happens all through public life that the objective view of any given situation is overwhelmed by hysteria. I took special note of, the Victorian Police Commissioner, Christine Nixon, was spotted by a Victorian Police Union officer at a restaurant on the Black Saturday bushfire day in 2009 and the resulting furore ruined her commissionership. She argued that generals have done their job before the battle starts. But she could not live down the controversy.

There is too much of this mob feeling in the community. The worst thing a Federal government can do is to let it affect their policy decisions and their leadership. There is too much nervous watching of daily shifts in public opinion. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Thursday this week, the paper reported: "The federal government has gone into damage control over school funding reforms, promising extra cash and blaming the media for not understanding the issue, as the row over the backflip continues." The government has to make long-term decisions and endure some hardship along the way. This attempt to deal with the hardships simply takes the focus off the long-term objectives. As Julie Owens MP observed at our last meeting, disenchantment with the incoming Coalition Government is happening with extraordinary speed. But the temptation by government, when things look bad, to make drastic revisions of policy or change leaders, should be avoided.

Malcolm Brown