

ROTARY CLUB OF PARRAMATTA CITY Inc. DISTRICT 9675

www.parramattacityrotary.org.au

Rotary Four Way Test

The Four Way Test' challenges Rotarians, in everything they do, to ask of 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 10 March 2014

Keith's Introduction

President Keith said the Police Officer of the Year award presentation would be on 12 May. He had already had a meeting with representatives of Parramatta's two other Rotary Clubs and had met with police. Invitations had been sent to dignitaries to attend. Keith said application forms for the award should be available on our website this week. There would be a further meeting of the organising committee at the end of this month.

Keith reminded members of evening meeting for the club on 7 April when Australian Rotary Health Scholars will present. This would be Parramatta City Rotary's transfer meeting. Other Clubs will be coming so he expected the function to be well attended. It would be a good occasion to bring partners, friends and/or prospective members.

Keith said the barbecue for Parramatta Park on Sunday this week was desperately short of Rotary volunteers, at least at the time of Monday's meeting. He wanted numbers urgently. There would also be a barbecue at Bunnings North Parramatta on 5 April, starting at 7.30 am. There would be two shifts of volunteers. The afternoon shift would be from midday till 4 pm.

Our Guests

Natalie Cowell introduced her sister, Bianca Cook, who with Bianca's husband runs a business, Utter Declutter, which involved working with real estate agents and advising people selling their houses what they need to get rid of to make their homes more presentable for selling. Bianca normally tells people they are "hoarders" and there is a lot of stuff they could do without.

Ben Jackson introduced Don Thompson, who had been working with the Northcott Society for the last eight years and presently runs its Hornsby office, having previously worked with the society's employment section.

Natalie Cowell – our speaker for the day

A Walk Down Property's Memory Lane



Natalie Cowell, being a mortgage broker, said that unless someone was in the market for a home or investing, the nitty gritty of her profession might be a bit dry. So she thought she would revisit the rises and falls and major shifts in the property market in Sydney and Melbourne over recent decades, a very relevant subject to most people because Australians had had an ongoing “love affair” with the property market.

The “Great Australian Dream” of home ownership had begun after World War 11, when there was a lot of reconstruction, manufacturing was doing well and unemployment was down. The 1950s and 1960s was a boom period, when rent control had been abolished, creating a belief in people that home ownership would lead to a better life. The specifics were “a fully detached house, a quarter-acre block, a Hills Hoist and a barbecue”.

In the first half of the 20th Century, up to 50 percent of Australians owned their own homes. In the 20 years after the war, that became 70 percent. The typical Australian family followed unwritten rules, such as having an annual summer holiday. The traditional family had 2.2 children and a white picket fence. On Saturday, the man of the house mowed the lawn and washed the family car, either a Ford or Holden, while his wife stayed inside and baked scones.

Natalie said her parents bought their first home, a three-bedroom bungalow, at Enfield, in 1973, for \$36,500. It was sold last year for \$780,000. Her uncle and his wife bought their home unit, in Factory Street, Parramatta, in 1974 for \$19,500 and it would now sell for \$400,000. The average price of a home in Sydney in the 1970s was \$17,750 and in Melbourne \$12,760. The banks imposed strict rules regarding deposits and the ability of the customer to pay the rest. They imposed a 30 percent Rule, being that the repayments should not exceed 30 percent of the customer's income. Today, Natalie said, there were different benchmarks. The average loan last year was \$678,700 and it now exceeded \$700,000 and people repaying these enormous sums could pay up to 50 percent of their income to service the loan.

The 1980s was now seen as the decade where debts that had been accumulated in business caught up and that led to recession. The interest rates went up to 18 percent and people were forced out of their homes. People began to sell their assets. Unemployment rose and there was a huge rise in the welfare bill. There were collapses of businesses such as the State Banks of Victoria and South Australia, the Teachers' Credit Union of South Australia and Christopher Skase's empire. The Howard Government did a lot to revive the economy and brought the budget back to surplus. Interest rates were lowered and unemployment dropped from eight to five percent.

Natalie said there was talk now of Australia experiencing a property bubble as occurred in Australia in the early 1990's. There had been quite an undersupply of properties then and prices were rising. There was a scramble for properties, some people paying above the asking price just to get in. Banks were lending 100 percent or even 105 percent of asking prices. But because the excesses of earlier years, the property bubble burst and people then looked to putting their properties on the market. But the growth in values had not occurred and people were not recouping the outstanding debts.

The market did recover in the first half of the noughties. Last year, property values started to rise again: by an average of 10 percent in capital cities across Australia, 14.5 percent in Sydney and 8.5 percent in Melbourne. Most of the growth was in the latter half of last year. There were record low interest rates and investors had started to come back into the market. With low interest rates, property values were predicted to grow for the remainder of this year.

"Generations are asking how our children can afford to get into the property market but somehow they manage to do it," Natalie said. "But more and more parents are assisting their children by putting up their properties to guarantee the kids and we are purchasing more properties for our children."

Natalie said Sydney was ranked as the fourth most expensive city in the world, but still well behind the leader, Hong Kong, where the average home cost more than \$4 million. And young people setting out could not draw comfort from their thought that their wages and salaries were proportionally as high as those of their parents when it came to buying property. In the 1970s, the average property cost 3.6 times the average income. Now it had blown out to more than nine times.

Philip Brophy thanked Natalie for her most illuminating address and added the crack that people spent so much time buying homes and then left them out in the weather.

Model United Nations Assembly (MUNA)

Ben Jackson said Parramatta High School would be putting in a team in the Model United Nations Assembly event at a venue to be decided. He said that Our Lady of Mercy College, which was also a school our club had special links with, should also be involved. Keith said it was important to maintain links with the college.

Parramatta Lancers

Ron Edgar said the centenary of Parramatta Lancers would be celebrated in August. Parramatta City Rotary had been asked to provide a barbecue on the afternoon of Saturday, 2 August. This would be referred to the Board

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.

Liesel Yun Zhi Ingeborg Brown



The club congratulated this scribe on the birth of his granddaughter, Liesel, born 12 February 2014.

Dates for Diaries

- 15 March. PETS (President Elect Training Session) Liverpool Catholic Club.
- 16 March. BBQ Parramatta Park – Triathlon Pink
- 18 March. Board Meeting
- 5 April. BBQ Bunnings.
- 7 April. Australian Rotary Health PhD Scholars Evening.
- 13 April. District Assembly. Liverpool Catholic Club. **All incoming Board members.**
- 12 May. Police Officer of the Year.
- 25 May. Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal.
- 3 June. Special Club Night for Rotary International Convention
- 30 June. Changeover.

Why Vietnam's Dogs are Nervous

Being a lifelong dog-lover, never passing up an opportunity to pat a dog, I tried to befriend the dogs in Da Nang City. But they were skittish, never responding to a whistle and slinking away in surly solitude when I approached them. There were also not many of them, though it is difficult for anyone to live if they have a requirement for space in that ant-hill. Then one day, walking with fellow volunteer Neil Thacker along a side street, I chanced upon a culinary delight which might explain the nervousness of Vietnam's dogs.



That having been said, we must observe that we eat cows and sheep and chickens with equal relish. I am almost tempted to get a vegetarian dish at the next Rotary meeting.

But on a more serious note, I think there is a huge potential for Rotary International to do something about bringing out some of these bright Vietnamese English-language students to Australia for a month to get an exposure to the English language which they would never get in Vietnam.

In my teaching there, I found the students could read and write English well but were hopelessly at sea when it came to speaking or listening. Most of their teachers had had limited experience in an English-speaking country but were far from fluent. There are limited career opportunities for these wonderful young people. When I asked them what they wanted to do, they normally said “tour guide” or “English teacher”. A lot of them would not be leaving Vietnam.

Neil Thacker, who went with me to Vietnam and has a long commitment to English teaching there, said he had two young women at his home in Sydney for a month and it dramatically improved their grasp of the language. Being on a fixed income, I can no longer contemplate expenditure like that, but I thought it possible that Rotary might bring a scheme into being where a selection of such students might be brought to Sydney to stay that time with Rotary families. It is just a thought. I have spoken to Neil Adamson, of the Rotary Literacy Project – dedicated to improving English literacy overseas – and he is positively inclined to the idea.

I might add that there is opportunity to volunteers to go to Vietnam as I did to teach English. The costs are minimal while there, though the air fares have to be met from your own pocket. It is quite an extraordinary experience, the students love to have an English speaker to listen to and in your days off you can go to some extraordinary tourist venues.

Malcolm Brown