

# VALLEY VIBES

Volume 10 Edition 6

BULLETIN

January – February 2021

## Guest Speaker 3 March 2021

### FLINDERS PEAK RURAL FIRE BRIGADE Commemorating 100 years of Rotary Service

The Flinders Peak Rural Fire Brigade was first formed in 1954 by five locals including Ian Weatherhead a former Rotarian and member of Fassifern Valley Rotary. It was formally recognised as a brigade of the Queensland Rural Fire Service in 1984. Its main function is to fight all back yard fires to major blazes. It has around 30 firefighting members serving an area surrounding Roadvale, Ripley, Harrisville and Purga. Last year it deployed to New South Wales during its major fire season and served in areas as far as Queanbeyan near Canberra.

We are privileged to have three guests from the Flinders Peak Rural Fire Brigade to speak to us including its Officer in Charge, Ken McKella.



Flinders Peak Rural Fire Brigade Command Vehicle



Celebrating 60 years of Fire Brigade Service 1954--2014

## Recent Speakers 17 February 2021

### ROSALIND & IAN MULLER "A Giraffe, The Moon and Make Up" On International Volunteering



Rosalind began by introducing Godfrey the Giraffe, 20 years old and named after a Kenyan man. He and his wife worked for ACDC ... not the band but The African Community Development Committee. It was the generosity of this couple that she recalled, who gave up an entire room of their small house to accommodate them for two nights.

Rosalind emphasized that it was their open, generous attitude of inclusion which led to her volunteering in Thailand, Tonga, South Africa and recently Cambodia as a Social Worker for 8 years.

Assignments she undertook included

1. Establishing a counselling service for the mental health needs in Thailand;
2. Working in a Domestic Violence Service and a Tertiary Training Institute in Tonga;
3. Providing training to sexual health workers for the prevention of HIV in South Africa;



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Rotary Opens Opportunities

4. Training a small social work team in a physical rehabilitation centre for people with disabilities in a rural town in Cambodia.

Ian and Rosalind volunteered their services to Australian Volunteers International (AVI) and the American Refugee Committee (ARC) working in Thailand (2014 -15) and on the Myanmar border running a medical clinic in the refugee camp of Ban Don Yang (BDY) while living in Sangklaburi, a small town a day's journey from Bangkok over very rough rutted roads through the jungle to BDY. Roads are not maintained in order to constrain road traffic. Permits are required from the Thai army guards at check points before entry.

Ban Don Yang is a small town of 4000 people which has been governed by a Camp Committee for more than 20 years providing clean water and sanitation, a school, a food distribution system, many churches and an open area used for sport.

People lived in small bamboo huts without electricity (generators only) and no mobile phones.

ARC ran a medical facility and midwife service. In 2013 mental illness was becoming critical threatening closure of the camps and refugees being repatriated. This triggered memories of persecution or the death of loved ones. This led to a Burmese doctor requesting a counselling service resulting in three Australians, including Rosalind, being recruited to different camps.

She advised being very apprehensive before arriving as "counselling" is a very unfamiliar concept in developing countries, let alone a refugee camp. How could she forget that first drive into the camp, rocking and rolling along a 4wd track at snail's pace, wondering "Is this what happens every day?" An hour and half later, they reached the camp and then walked along a track past small huts in front of which children played and people seemed occupied with daily activities. Even a barber cutting a man's hair!

Rosalind was very aware of her foreign appearance and only speaking English. Fortunately her Thai work colleagues were fluent in several languages. She wondered while waiting in one of the slatted bamboo rooms, looking at the chickens

scratching below the floor, how am I going to communicate with medics and camp residents?

She looked up at a wall of dense green foliage, and thought "how can I achieve anything here"? She had been cast into the darkest vine thicket of impenetrable jungle with no markers nor guide to show her even a hint of a way forward.

The friendliness of the ARC clinic staff encouraged her and two days later a miracle happened when she met Katherine, an Indian Burmese woman of a similar age, with excellent English while speaking several camp languages. She wanted to work with Rosalind as an interpreter providing a way forward.

Katherine and Rosalind worked together initially speaking to small groups about their circumstances, their worries and asked if it might be helpful to have someone to talk to about it.

Rosalind can't forget one woman who described her circumstances as feeling imprisoned. She said when she looked at the night sky it was as if "the moon is mocking me" as it moved freely - while she felt trapped.

They knew they could not change her situation but perhaps could provide a service which would help her change her feelings of helplessness?

How would we set up this service? How could we engage the community? How could we explain the "counselling concept"?

The answer .....Music!

Ian, Katherine and Rosalind performed a very "mini musical" around the camp to several groups. She and Ian sang and acted whilst Katherine translated. The theme was best summarized and sung.....

"WE CAN WORK IT OUT"

After recruiting two other women, Karen and Mon they had a multi lingual multicultural team testing her training and basic counselling skills. She said "they were very enthusiastic and drank up all my teaching".

The ladies decided to name their service "Counselling For All" (CFA). Rosalind recalled it was impossible for her to forget that bamboo room

overlooking a creek, a wall of jungle dripping beyond and those three women focussed upon her as she stood at a whiteboard.” How do you explain foreign concepts like “boundaries” in a refugee camp”?

Dealing with the challenges of refugees in a non-judgemental way Rosalind and her team built rapport and trust with the community. She applied for and received a small grant from an Australian NGO to provide morning tea . A very important treat in an environment in which people’s staple food is rationed and repetitive.

Meanwhile Ian had developed a guitar repair service and initiated a music group, most of whom were young men, while encouraging women also.

The women’s group began to develop some ideas for what they wanted to do together. Weaving and embroidering was already a common practice in their homes. This proved very successful and gave the women a sense of purpose.

Over a period of 12 months, she began to see evidence of “empowerment”. They studied hard for a formal assessment, proudly and happily graduating at the same formal Camp Ceremony as the ARC medic students.

Over 18 months Rosalind conducted numerous mental health workshops throughout the camp. She introduced a number of guest workshop presenters -Social Workers and a Psychologist-friends who provided specialist training, gratis.

The women’s group not only established a community garden but also developed enough confidence to sing with the guitar group.

To say farewell, the Camp Leader and staff conducted a final concert at which both the women’s and guitar groups performed. The Camp Leader in particular held a lot of power. She underwent major change to stand, sing and play in front of her critics? Imagine the anxiety she felt, but she did it. This is what she played..... a “Thong O Phone”, made by Ian from poly pipe and a thong!!!

Rosalind concluded saying “Helping people to help themselves” is what she does and hopes to continue in Australia.

Club President: Lindy Kirchner  
Assistant Governor : Cara Champion  
District 9640 Governor: Andy Rajapakse.  
Rotary International President: Holger Knaack



Hello everyone!

After our Christmas break, we commenced our year of 10 Years of our Club being chartered and 100 years of Rotary in Australia. What fabulous milestones!

Our first activity was on January 26<sup>th</sup> with an invitation only Thank you to the Community for their support with funds used from a Rotary Grant for such celebrations. Car Club enthusiasts who have supported our Club for 8 years and donated more than \$60 000 for use in our little Community in beautiful Fassifern Valley, were treated to our hospitality. Our first responders were also welcomed and saw a donation of \$500 to the Peak Crossing Volunteer Fire Brigade for their help in recent bush fires in our area. A top day was had by all, with meat pies, mashed potato and mushy peas, a thong throwing competition, Aussie music, Aussie Costume dress-up prizes and good old chin wagging and catch ups. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to the car clubs for their outstanding support, and bottles of bubbly were given to prizes won in the competitions. The formal presentation of \$5000 to Gerry Gerard to aid 4 Aussies Heroes, was made with an oversized cheque for that amount.

Our next significant fundraising activity is the Bunnings Sausage Sizzle so it will be all hands on deck on March 13<sup>th</sup> for that fundraiser.

Our first guest speaker for the 2021 year, welcomed Rosalind Muller and her husband Ian, who spoke of the work overseas in refugee camps. What a wonderful insight into the work done in these camps and how all communication barriers can be broken down with the use of music.

Our next and memory making Dinner Meeting, March 3, is welcoming the Peak Crossing Fire Brigade as our guest speakers and who also will help us carry the 100 Year Baton around our area.

Till next time, continue to be safe and let our kindness show to others.

**X Lindy - President**

Club Secretary: Jill Surawski  
Minute Secretary: Therese McInnes  
Club Treasurer: Neil Summerson AM  
Editor: Graham Porter OAM

## Australia Day Picnic

On Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January the Rotary Club of Fassifern Valley hosted an Australia Day Picnic at Peak Crossing.

The event was an invitation only picnic to thank the supporters of the Club. Rotary is 100 years old in Australia and the National Australia Day Council supported several Rotary Clubs with funding to hold "Thank You" events for supporters, community workers and those that have helped the community through adversities such as the Scenic Rim fires and Covid lock downs.

The invitees were several car Clubs who have supported the Fassifern Valley Rotary Club over the past decade. In total 66 vintage and classic vehicles and 120 people attended.

Lunch included pies with mushy peas and mashed potato. Morning coffee and tea was supplied with very large lamingtons. All of these were locally sourced.

There was a welcome to country by an Aboriginal Elder, a welcome by the Deputy Mayor of the Scenic Rim Council, Cr Duncan McInnes and a presentation and cheques to the Flinders Peak Rural Fire Brigade and 4 Aussie Heroes Foundation, a not for profit organisation located in Beckwith Road, Milora assisting first responders with mental health issues

In presenting the cheques Ms Lindy Kirchner, the Rotary Club President, said "the support the Club receives from the car clubs is vital in assisting members of the Scenic Rim community. The Club is extremely pleased to support the Rural Fire for what it has done to keep our community safe. In supporting Gerry Gerard and 4 Aussie Heroes Foundation this an extremely important organisation which is devoted to helping first responders like police, ambulance workers, hospital workers, military personal etc. with mental health issues.

The day could not close without a thong throwing competition with the winners receiving a bottle of bubbly.

### Neil Summerson AM - Convenor

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AG Cara with 4 Aussie Heroes Foundation Chair Gerry Gerard



Jaguar Car Club members



The Cooks



Deputy Council Mayor Cr Duncan McInnes OAM in a 1908 Humber



Popular thong throwing competition



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# 100 YEARS OF ROTARY IN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC (2020-21)

Rotary in Australia and NZ celebrated the First 100 years of Service in 2021. In 1921 four Rotary Clubs were created in Melbourne, Auckland, Wellington and Sydney. From there, Rotary and Rotaract clubs were created everywhere across Australia and NZ. We all share a centenary in 2021.

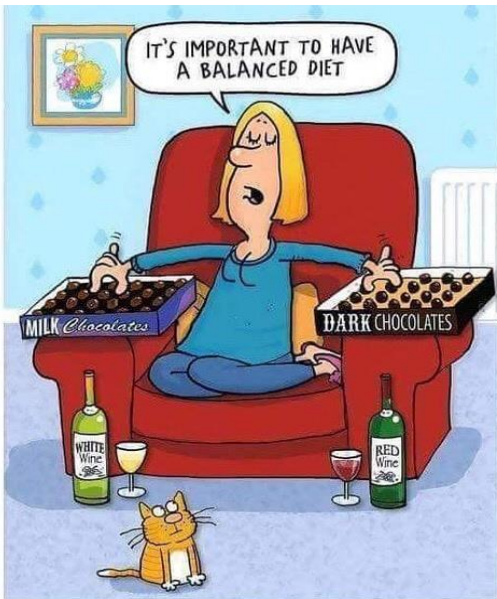
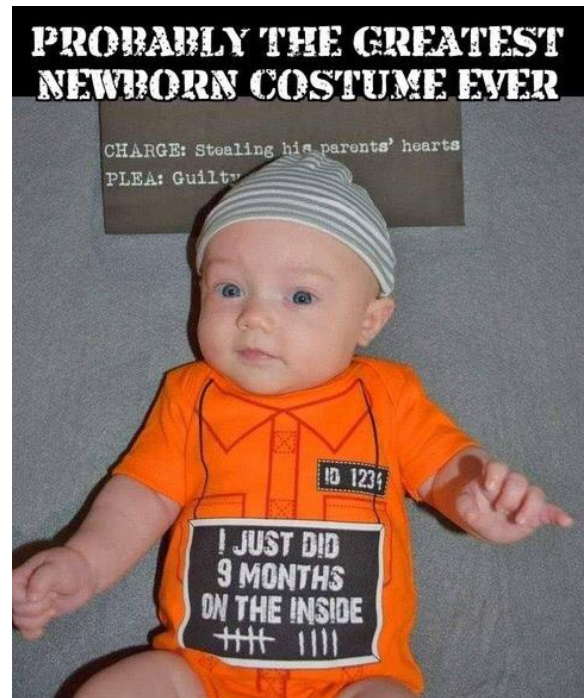
We are challenged by RI to bring local colour and culture to our centenary by participating in the R100 Baton Relay - an event to connect all Rotary Clubs across Australia and NZ with their communities.

Fassifern Valley Rotary is proud to participate in the District 9640 Baton Relay with President Lindy, on Sunday, 28 February 2021 receiving the baton from Warwick Rotary at Cunningham's Gap. The Club will have it for its meeting on 3 March and pass it on to Boonah Rotary for their meeting on 4 March 2021. Imagine Rotarians, local personalities, Councillors, community leaders, community groups and everyday people carrying the baton and passing it forward.



| Date  | Birthdays        | Anniversaries        |
|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| Jan 6 | Anna Martin      | Lindy & Jim Kirchner |
| 12    |                  |                      |
| 13    | Neil Summerson   |                      |
| Feb 1 |                  | Ross & Therese Mcl   |
| 2     | Eddy Waddy       |                      |
| 16    | Marjorie Porter  |                      |
| 24    | Duncan McInnes   |                      |
| Mar 7 | Therese McInnes  |                      |
| 12    | Jon Krause       |                      |
| 22    | John Braithwaite |                      |
| 27    | Scott Buchholz   |                      |
| 28    | Andrew Kay       |                      |

## It's a Laugh!



## Meeting Program and Duty Roster: March

| DUTY ROSTER              | Wed 3 Mar '21                        | Wed 10 Mar '21 | Wed 17 Mar '21   | Wed 24 Mar '21 | Wed 31 Mar '21 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Duty Office              | Pres Lindy Kirchner                  |                |                  |                |                |
| Chairman/<br>Reflections | Neil Summerson                       |                |                  |                |                |
| Meeting Venue<br>& Time  | Lizzy's Kitchen at<br>Mackaways Cafe |                | The Cottage      |                | The Cottage    |
| Program / Guest          | Flinders Peak<br>Rural Fire Service  |                | Business Meeting |                | Social BBQ     |

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