



Partnerships Advancing Community Engagement

Four pilot projects with Rotary



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Introduction

The Partnerships Advancing Community Engagement program (PACE) was devised by Rotary Youth Ambassadorial Scholar, Courtney Scala, during an internship with the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) in 2005. The stated goal of PACE was to:

... develop a working model of a whole of community approach to responding to community need [which would] improve the life opportunities and experiences of Victorians, as well as strengthen communities through engagement at the local level (Scala 2005).

A few Melbourne Rotary members decided to embrace the recommendations of the Scala report. They saw it as an opportunity to make Rotary more relevant and less focused on specific solutions, and to work more collaboratively with other community groups. It provided a chance to embed themselves in communities, better understand the complexity of local issues and use their resources—finances and networks. Scala also saw the potential for Rotary to benefit from becoming more externally focused and that, in turn, this could improve the organisation's relevance and lead to an increased membership.

Under the PACE banner, Rotary District 9800, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development (formerly the Department for Victorian Communities) have been working together since September 2005. In 2006 the three organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop and evaluate the potential of this initiative to address social exclusion and disadvantage. The Department provided the funding for the evaluation on the understanding that the BSL would work with Rotary to evaluate the pilot projects. This work has been directed by a Steering Committee comprising representatives of each organisation. This report forms an input to the Steering Committee's deliberations.

The current, pilot phase of the initiative involves four PACE projects and five clubs in Rotary District 9800:

- Rotary Club of Brighton, Bayside Community Information Support Service Inc. (BayCISS)
- Rotary Club of Brunswick, Brunswick Youth Art Show
- Rotary Club of Collingwood, Wellington Collingwood Inc (Wellington Centre)
- Rotary clubs of Melbourne and Southbank, Homelessness, Street Soccer Programme and the 2008 Homeless World Cup, Melbourne.

A review of the pilot program has been undertaken by the Research and Policy Centre of the BSL. A progress report was completed in May 2007 (Bedson 2007). As the final report on the PACE pilot program, this paper aims to assist understandings of how PACE can translate into practice and to identify the most effective components and processes for the future development of the initiative.

Methodology

The report provides a review of the four projects selected by Rotary to trial the PACE program. The review is based on interviews with a range of respondents associated with each of the projects. The first stage of the review was undertaken by Lois Bedson of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and involved a review of the progress in establishing the projects, a brief literature review and the development of working arrangements with each of the project groups.

The final report is largely based upon consultations with a range of individuals associated with each project. These interviews were conducted through a mix of focus group style discussions and one-on-one interviews with members from PACE-sponsoring Rotary clubs, project managers and

board members. The BSL consultant also attended the PACE Steering Committee meetings for the duration of the project.

Interview-based information was supplemented by referral to the annual reports of the BayCISS project, by a visit to the Street Soccer Programme by the BSL researcher and by reviewing other publicly available data such as that published by The Big Issue on the Community Street Soccer website (The Big Issue 2008).

A layman's guide to Rotary

Rotary is an international service organisation built on a base of local service clubs. As the Rotary District 9800 website states:

The magic of Rotary is that it allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things. For over one hundred years, ordinary people around the world have been enjoying Rotary so that the power of one unites with the power of many to bring about exceptional change in the world (Davis 2007).

'Rotary District 9800 encompasses the City of Melbourne ... surrounding and Bayside Suburbs and country clubs that stretch as far as Echuca Moama on the Murray River in northern Victoria' (Rotary District 9800 2007).

Rotary members tend to be leading members of the local business and professional community and may be either local residents or employed in local businesses. Rotary provides opportunities for fellowship and community service. Until the late 1980s, Rotary was a male organisation and while most clubs remain predominately male, increasing numbers of women are joining Rotary and playing a major role in the clubs and districts.

Rotary members are committed to serving the community in a variety of ways. They are persons of goodwill and typically possess strong expertise in their chosen fields. Rotary clubs have proven to be very effective fundraisers and providers of labour and support to specific projects. Long-term projects adopted by Rotary have often been characterised by their fundraising and educational roles, with the exception of some international projects where Rotary members commit labour to building programs in Third World nations.

Rotary has a strong organisational structure based on clubs, which are all part of a district headed by a governor, appointed for one year. There are some 29 districts in Australasian Rotary including Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The districts have annual conferences, and national institutes are also held annually.

Key strengths of Rotary are the enthusiasm and skills of the members, the network it provides locally, regionally and internationally and its reputation as a reliable partner and as a highly accredited organisation. As one study participant commented, 'it opens doors'.

Rotary, however, has tended to provide community service in many local communities as a fundraiser and working bee provider. It has not tended to become engaged in long-term projects driving change in the community. The PACE Steering Committee has characterised this as a 'Hand Out' mode. PACE aims to drive Rotary towards providing a 'Hand Up'.

The PACE pilots

The PACE pilot projects are not all new projects, two of them predate the PACE initiative but were included in the pilot phase because of their close fit with the aims of PACE.

Each Rotary club, and the projects they initiated, used different methods of engagement and sought to address particular local issues. This report does not aim to measure and compare the projects'

individual successes and achievements but to tell the stories of these unique projects and learn from the reflections of those involved. It will also include further analysis and discussion of the impact of Rotary on the organisations and communities that it has interacted with and the way in which the project has shaped the face of Rotary. In addition, it will identify some of the key success factors of the project.

Bayside Community Information and Support Service (BayCISS) – Brighton Rotary

The Rotary Club of Brighton became involved with the predecessor organisations of BayCISS (Bayside Community Information and Support Service)—a volunteer-based information and relief agency—in 2005 after a Rotarian approached Bayside City Council specifically to discuss if, and how, the club could help any local groups in need of organisational support. The approach was made with the support of the Brighton Rotary Club by Rotarian Peter Sherman.

Some 20 years ago when he was previously a Rotary member, Peter had involved Rotary in supporting the Brighton Recreational Centre Management Committee. The centre, then operated by the YMCA, was threatened with closure. Rotary wanted to see what could be done as an alternative to giving money, which they felt would not achieve much. It was decided to help the centre restructure, which they considered was essential for the centre's longer-term viability. The Rotary involvement helped turn around the centre's fortunes and it continues to operate with a Rotarian on its committee.

The council's new group manager of Community and Leisure Services, Carolyn McLean, states that Peter's request in 2005 was most welcome. At the time Carolyn was missing some key staff members, the BayCISS president had resigned due to ill health and, while the financial affairs were sound, both the committee and organisation were struggling. Peter was directed to BayCISS and he also brought Stuart McIntyre from Rotary. Peter had management and organisational change expertise and was keen to assist BayCISS. He was subsequently elected president of the Committee of Management. In organisations run largely by volunteers, expertise in financial and organisational management can be difficult to find, as the volunteers are understandably more interested in service delivery, therefore the support of the Rotarians was keenly welcomed.

Project background

The BayCISS (Hampton East), Brighton Community Information Service (CIS), Sandringham CIS and the Castlefield Neighbourhood House were all financed through council grants but council had to deal with four separate committees and make four different grants. While the four organisations were nominally linked, they did not function in any joint way. From a council viewpoint this was administratively cumbersome and inefficient.

Council were also concerned about the problems facing the services as they form the backbone of community services in the Bayside community. As a relatively affluent area, Bayside has no community service organisation operating in the city and the CIS programs provided this support. There are six public housing areas within the Bayside City's boundaries, none of which has a Neighbourhood Renewal program operating. The issues associated with these areas and the lack of community welfare agencies made the CIS role critical and the potential loss of one or more services would severely impact the city.

Peter, Stuart and some CIS board members identified the potential benefits from a merging of the boards and the council was also very supportive. They believed that organisational change was necessary to improve the financial position of BayCISS and, in turn, enhance the delivery of assistance and services to all local residents.

As the three CIS organisations and the Neighbourhood House were largely staffed by volunteers, it was essential to gain their support for, and commitment to, the amalgamation. The support of the

volunteers was facilitated by BayCISS Co-ordinator Eileen Blake, who was serving as co-ordinator in both of the other CIS organisations and understood their concerns and issues very well.

A logical extension of this goal was the amalgamation of BayCISS (Hampton East), Community Information Sandringham Inc. and Community Information Brighton Inc. to form Bayside Community Information and Support Service, or BayCISS. BayCISS continues to operate out of the same locations as its component parts but now operates under the direction of one Committee of Management rather than four.

The president engaged in extensive discussions with the other organisations' presidents and management committees. The amalgamation was agreed to by all parties because it was felt that one united, larger organisation would be in a better position to negotiate with key stakeholders and contributors, including Bayside and Kingston councils, state and federal government departments and philanthropic organisations. The Brighton Rotarians were both elected to the new Committee of Management, with Peter Sherman as president and Stuart McIntyre as treasurer and public officer.

Figure 1.1 The BayCISS centres



Rotary role in the amalgamation

While Peter provided the big picture, drive and lots of patient negotiation, along with the staff and volunteers, the amalgamation process was also helped by Stuart. Using his accountancy experience he developed amalgamated accounting and business systems as well as providing strategic planning support.

Operational benefits

The amalgamation was approved by members on May 25, 2006 with the new entity, BayCISS, incorporated on June 1, 2006. Benefits of this new organisation have been seen in a number of

areas: a more streamlined and efficient management structure, an increase in the level of donations, and increased funding from Bayside Council and the federal government. The Rotarians have put their networking, advocacy and professional skills into practice to support BayCISS by:

- Using links with local council to inform them about the work BayCISS is doing, leading to an increase in donations from the community
- Finding an auditor to do pro bono work for the organisation
- Setting up a dedicated fundraising committee
- Encouraging local churches to support these organisations, resulting in the installation of an up-to-date telephone system in one of their centres
- Undertaking a survey of volunteers and staff to determine their interests and concerns in order to identify other ways of supporting the community.

BayCISS's nine paid staff and over 80 volunteers provide information and referral services, childcare, family counselling, emergency relief and other programs and services, with around 14,000 individual attendances a year.

Smart Kidz program

The Smart Kidz Education Support program emerged from the volunteer and staff survey. This concept was further developed by Peter and the BayCISS board members. Through Rotary, Peter contacted the late John Ilhan who established contact with Grant Gaston, who now chairs the Education Support committee. The aim of the program is to provide support to local children in families who are finding it difficult to meet the basic education expenses required in primary and secondary schools. The support provides specific assistance with:

- School fees (other than voluntary fees)
- Payments for elective subjects
- Sporting programs and equipment
- School books
- Uniforms.

Local schools must become accredited in order to take part in the program and make the applications on behalf of particular students. The funds must be spent on the stated purpose.

For this program Rotary provided a cheque for approximately \$10,000 and has given the idea a great hearing at their meetings, as well as good publicity and support. The Education Support Program operating committee has one member, Rosemary Farrow, whose husband is a member of Sandringham Rotary, and they are now getting this club involved in the Education Support Program.

The education grant plan has received good support from council and through joint contacts of Peter and Grant it was identified that the Highett branch of the Bendigo Bank were keen to establish something similar but did not have a delivery agency. The project is being sponsored by the Bendigo Bank's Community Enterprise Foundation. It is providing a grant for \$20,000 per year. Rotary have advised that \$100,000 per year is required. The bank has said that if they spend the \$20,000 quickly but wisely, they are prepared to extend to \$100,000. The program is being piloted in the Kingston-Bayside area but the Bendigo Bank want to take the program to a state level and then nationwide.

The idea has also been endorsed by the Bayside Council and there is interest from both local schools and potential corporate funders. This program began operating towards the end of 2007. At BayCISS, Rotarians, staff and volunteers continue to work together to strengthen the organisation and improve the services that they provide to the community. In talking about new future programs they might offer, Peter adds: 'There is limitless scope'.

Impact of, and on, Rotary

Discussions with the council, the BayCISS vice president and Rotarians have identified a range of benefits for BayCISS from Rotary's involvement.

The restructuring of the organisation has placed all the constituent parts on a more sustainable basis. The Committee of Management is now more stable and has developed a more outward focus in its deliberations. While the organisations were operating well they had tended to simply repeat what had been done before. They are now actively seeking to identify new ways to help their community.

Communications between council and BayCISS have improved considerably and each party now feels free to consult the other on matters of common interest. The involvement of Peter and Stuart has also widened the range of professionals willing to provide assistance on specific issues. The profile of the CIS programs has risen and council is now seeking to use BayCISS to sponsor other programs. The Rotary network has helped with fundraising and awareness-raising for the organisation as well as injecting some (relative) youthfulness into the committees.

For Rotary, Bayside Council will now seek to consult them on matters where there may be a common interest. Council has now initiated an annual appreciation night for service clubs which also serves as an informal forum for raising issues and service opportunities. In the Brighton Rotary club there is strong board support for the program but direct involvement has been limited to a few members.

Homelessness in the City of Melbourne – Melbourne and Southbank Rotary

The Rotary Club of Melbourne, some of whose members were involved in establishing the overarching PACE initiative, responded to its call to act locally to address disadvantage. It invited the Rotary Club of Southbank to join them in this endeavour. Incorporating interested members of both clubs, a working group was established in the second half of 2006.

The working group took up the broad agenda of PACE—to improve the life opportunities and experiences of Victorians, as well as strengthen communities through engagement at the local level—and began to explore how they might best achieve it. The group started by meeting with Melbourne City Council to ask their advice and to help them identify local issues that might be tackled.

Program selection

After this consultation and other considerations of the issues in the city area, the group decided to focus on homelessness, as the council had identified it as a significant local issue and it complemented the analysis and consideration of community issues that the Rotary Club of Melbourne had undertaken. Council then put them in touch with 22 organisations which worked in homelessness in the City of Melbourne, so they could better understand the issues and the existing service sector.

The working group was keen to ensure that they worked in a collaborative and useful way. To achieve this they focused on gathering and analysing information about homelessness and its causes in the City of Melbourne, discussing potential solutions with local services, and getting to know organisations who were potential project partners. Participants took the information and ideas back to the working group to discuss how Rotary might best contribute to addressing homelessness, narrowing their focus to a few key issues and projects that they felt would have an impact. From these discussions and the club's analysis they identified the need to somehow 'Raise Awareness' and 'Break the Cycle' of homelessness and social disengagement as key issues.

Among the potential projects the working group identified, the club decided to support The Big Issue's Community Street Soccer Programme and the associated Homeless World Cup to be held in Melbourne in December 2008. It was felt this program fitted well with the 'Break the Cycle' and 'Raising Awareness' approach and provided a practical way for homeless people to become reconnected with the community. Hosting the Homeless World Cup in Melbourne in 2008 provides an excellent opportunity for raising public awareness of homelessness in Melbourne and assisting to change community perceptions of homeless persons.

Program operation

The working group felt that Rotary was well placed to assist with the Community Street Soccer Programme, with its stated aim of helping homeless people to reconnect with the community and regain self-esteem and independence. The Big Issue¹ aims to establish soccer training centres for local homeless people in sites across Australia and through these centres help people reconnect with the wider community. Funding support to establish 30 of these sites was secured from the federal government in the 2007 Budget.

Rotary members have assisted The Big Issue to think about logistical and local governance issues associated with this roll-out, and have used existing Rotary channels to gain the support of Rotarians for the project in the new sites. The Rotary network has proved particularly useful in finding locally based champions to promote the idea to local authorities and community groups. It has also proven a useful source of management committee members.

A key to the Community Street Soccer Programme and the Homeless World Cup in Melbourne organisation has been the establishment of a project board. This is a widely based board with representatives drawn from the business, government and the community sectors. This has been critical to its success.

Melbourne Rotary has focused on providing organisational support for the expansion of the Community Street Soccer Programme and in providing contacts with the business community for The Big Issue in trying to get this established. James Pullar of Melbourne Rotary has been the main source of support. James has helped to prepare documentation to enlist support for the roll-out of the program to the 30 new sites. Melbourne Rotary has regularly participated in events and launches associated with issues related to homelessness and is increasingly being seen as a partner in working on these issues.

Southbank Rotary has focused more on the December 2008 Homeless World Cup in Melbourne. It has commenced working to provide volunteers to manage the cup and the lead-up events. These will include training/selection weekends, which will be combined with informal social engagement sessions which are designed to provide the participants with requisite social skills in handling international visitors, media attention and generally building participants' self-esteem.

Both clubs provided members to assist with the preparations and team practices for the last World Cup in Copenhagen in 2007. This involved assisting with timekeeping, logistical support and simply being around, interested and supportive.

¹ *The Big Issue* is an informative, independent magazine with a sense of humour. It's sold on the streets of towns and cities throughout Australia by people experiencing homelessness or long-term unemployment. The magazine is published fortnightly and sells for \$4, half of which is direct income for the vendor. *The Big Issue* is a magazine that helps people help themselves and gives them the break that will hopefully start to improve their circumstances. In Australia, more than 3000 vendors have joined The Big Issue family and sold the magazine as a way of getting back on their feet and gaining confidence.

The Big Issue is affiliated with 55 papers in 28 different countries. Every member of the International Network of Street Papers (INSP) is committed to supporting the homeless and unemployed, and producing a high quality publication that raises awareness about social issues' (The Big Issue 2007).

Rotary continues to assist The Big Issue with practical, administrative and other support for events linked with the Homeless World Cup. To date, the working group has facilitated relationships between The Big Issue and Rotary clubs in Sydney, Ballarat, Geelong and Shepparton, and it is confident that these clubs will help support the Street Soccer training centres in their towns. The working group is also looking at developing a mentoring program to be delivered to homeless people, perhaps including those involved in the Community Street Soccer Programme.

Impacts of the program

The Community Street Soccer Programme and Homeless World Cup have been highly successful at re-engaging homeless and disadvantaged persons with the community. The benefits start from individuals simply making contact and having a point in common with other homeless persons. Coaches observed that players would avoid drugs and alcohol, and go to bed early before training because fellow players were relying on them and would follow up their absence. A Players Impact Report indicated that 94 per cent of players felt a new motivation for life, 85 per cent reported improved social connections and 77 per cent of participants said that their lives had changed in a significant way (The Big Issue 2007).

At another level, engagement can develop through informal relationships which evolve with organisers and other teams. Steven Persson, general manager of The Big Issue, said football provides a basis for a conversation and removes some of the anxiety that the mainstream may feel about connecting with disadvantaged people. Corporate and government teams have become involved and this has included a team from Victoria Police. For many of the participants this was the first time they had spoken with the police on anything other than routine police inquiries.

Steven added, people watching the Homeless World Cup don't see homeless people but athletes; it changes the dynamic. It creates a platform of commonality and the opportunity for natural mentoring: 'At the end of the day everyone looks the same in shorts'.

Figure 1.2 Community Street Soccer action



One of the positive outcomes of the working group's involvement with key homelessness organisations was that members gained a better understanding of homelessness. This process has equipped these Rotarians to use their advocacy skills to advance the cause of homeless people in the City of Melbourne.

Since Rotary has become continuously engaged in this program there has been a change in the way that council and community organisation staff see the organisation. There has been a willingness to involve Rotary in a wider range of projects and to extend invitations to community events and working groups.

Rotary has been actively used to network and engage with the city business community on issues of homelessness and housing affordability. Those involved believe that Rotary's profile has been lifted, though there is still a long way to go.

Within the Rotary Club of Melbourne the impact is still to be really felt, reflecting the difficulty of achieving change in a large organisation. However, in the smaller Southbank Club the PACE process and Homeless project have changed the club's approach to community engagement. While a few members have committed themselves to working on continuous projects, there has also been good support for assistance with smaller tasks with a more specific commitment of time and effort.

The key problem is trying to match the needs of the issue with the Rotarians' skills and available time. However, the continuous engagement model provides the clubs with a greater involvement in the community and hence more understanding of a greater range of opportunities for community service.

While it is still early days for the working group and its projects, the networks and knowledge that they have gained so far are likely to serve them well in their future efforts. The working group is aware that the success of their projects is reliant on maintaining good relationships with project partners and key homelessness organisations. The working group are also keen that their initiatives have the full support of their respective clubs and, to this end, club board members are kept up to date with project progress.

Wellington Collingwood Inc (The Wellington Centre) – Collingwood Rotary

The Wellington Community Centre was conceived by Collingwood Rotarian and St Joseph's Parish Priest, Fr Ernie Smith. Fr Smith previously established the Sacred Heart Mission in his last parish in St Kilda, and the Wellington Community Centre is a second example of his very active approach to addressing disadvantage and social exclusion in his parishes. The idea for the Wellington came about after the St Joseph's church hall was declared unsafe. The parish could not afford to fix the hall and therefore Fr Ernie Smith decided to seek external resources to help restore it for community use.

A skilled advocate, networker and fundraiser, Rotarian Fr Smith, raised \$100,000 for the restoration project. He then took a proposal to his club, the Rotary Club of Collingwood, to seek further necessary financial backing. His proposal included the idea that the club fund a research component to inform the goals of the new community centre, which would be undertaken by a community development worker who could explore the needs of local high-rise public housing residents. The club decided to support the project and contributed a further \$100,000 to the cost of the restoration, planning and set-up. The club also placed a caveat on the funds suggesting that the hall should be available for general community activities and not be limited to parish activities.

Before this was done Fr Smith established a Board of Management and asked Rt Revd Dr Peter Hollingworth to be the chairman. Other members included two representatives of Rotary, a parish representative, community members and Jill Maher of Concern Australia, a welfare organisation

serving the Wellington Street flats. By coincidence, five members of the board were Rotary members. The board set the direction for the Wellington Centre and asked Collingwood Rotary for the \$100,000 donation to support the research and program development.

Fr Ernie believes a key to the success of the project was the establishment of a broadly based, competent board, which was not prescriptive in deciding how the project should be rolled out. Rather, it researched the community needs and assisted the community worker to develop an appropriate set of programs. The board has provided advice, governance and contacts for fundraising.

Maria Attard-Dickson was appointed to undertake the research project, and was subsequently kept on to manage the centre. The findings of her research shaped the focus of the centre's programs and activities—to combat social exclusion of all persons in the housing estates within the City of Yarra, offering programs particularly relating to poverty, isolation and health issues. Through networking and involvement in local committees, the community development worker ensured that the centre did not duplicate programs and services already available locally but targeted unmet need.

In creating the Wellington Collingwood Inc Board of Management, Fr Smith said he made sure:

It was community from the beginning. It wasn't Rotary, it wasn't church—it was the partnership of those key players. The committee [has] broadened out in different ways since then.

Without a continuing funding source the centre faced a number of financial hurdles. After much hard work from the board the centre was recently awarded tax deductibility status, which is an important achievement. Sponsorship by Doxa Youth Foundation and the Pratt Foundation allowed the centre to meet its operational costs in 2006 and into 2007. Support has also been secured from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund.

To achieve its goals the Wellington Centre works in partnership with local service providers and government (state and local). It continues to research and network to identify key local needs and opportunities, and largely meets these needs using a network of skilled volunteers willing to provide services. The centre delivers a wide range of health and wellbeing services, including 'Hands on Health' (chiropractic clinic) and Tibetan healing, and a program of social activities all either free or at nominal cost. As well as having members on the board, the Rotary Club of Collingwood funds one of the centre's programs—HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents of pre-school Youngsters). The hall is also regularly hired by community groups to hold meetings and events and so serves as a valued community resource. One group that has used the hall as a community centre is the Liberian community of Melbourne. Other programs have been developed specifically to support North African immigrant groups.

When asked to describe the main achievements of the Wellington Centre, the manager said:

I think seeing people smile. That sounds small but to see a smile on someone's face ... when I've first met them they're sad, they're sad people. Also I think breaking that isolation cycle, then people build relationships, and it's health-improving. And the 'drop in' space, that's so important for people.

While the centre was looking forward to consolidating their financial position, establishing a fundraising program and looking for opportunities to expand the services they already provide to the local community, the situation drastically altered when a fire destroyed neighbouring St Joseph's church in early April 2007. This was a terrible loss for the local community. Church services now occupy the hall on Sundays and many Saturdays, which has led to the development of a roll-out altar (an interesting innovation). It remains unclear how long the church will need to remain in the hall.

The centre's existing programs must fit in around the needs of the church, and some programs may need to be relocated at least in the short term. Unfortunately this is likely to put extra financial pressure on the centre as the hall will be unavailable for rent on weekends for a while and they may have to meet hire costs for their relocated programs.

Figure 1.3 The Wellington Centre



Rotary and the Wellington

Rotary provided the initial funding for the refurbishment of the hall and program development. Rotary has been prominent in the establishment and operation of the Wellington Centre Board working with a range of community organisations and representatives.

Specifically, Rotarian Chris Smale has used his legal expertise to develop the centre's constitution and to help with other legal and administrative issues. Fr Smith who has retired as the parish priest continues to tap his extensive range of community and philanthropic contacts for organisational and financial support. Likewise, Frances Laurino has provided great support and understanding of local issues, through her role as a Rotarian and principal of Collingwood Secondary College.

The project has helped give the small Collingwood Club a stronger focus and has led to a strong partnership with Carlton Rotary Club. These two clubs are now jointly supporting rehabilitation clinics at St Vincent's Hospital and in Papua New Guinea. The club has a permanent display and archive collection at the Wellington Centre and has gained strong community acceptance throughout its involvement in the project. The City of Yarra has developed a stronger relationship with the club and has been very supportive of the Wellington Centre.

While the club has seen some growth in membership and the involvement continues to be strong this is largely via four or five members. There does appear to have been a strengthening of the club since the project was commenced. However, the club has only a small catchment area, which is undergoing substantial demographic and industrial change, and this remains a problem.

Brunswick Youth Art Exhibition – Brunswick Rotary

The Rotary Club of Brunswick put up their hands to be involved in PACE after hearing about the pilot at the 2006 Rotary District Conference. The club began discussing the idea of holding a youth art exhibition, with the goal of engaging with Brunswick's young people and promoting their art. It was envisaged that the exhibition would become an annual event, raising the profile of the club and the arts in Brunswick, as well as providing the club with an opportunity to strengthen relationships with local organisations. Brunswick Rotarian David Kennedy said an overarching goal in the next 12 months would be:

To develop positive relationships ... Obviously we [the club] want something to happen, we want an event to happen, but developing ongoing relationships with school and community is probably far and beyond the art exhibition. I mean the art exhibition in a round about way is probably the vehicle to develop better relationships.

The initial project proposal which was presented for discussion at a club meeting in the second half of 2006, suggested inviting entries from all young people in the area, aged 13 to 25 years. The proposal also noted that further consideration needed to be given to the types of art that would be accepted for inclusion, potential venues and exhibition dates, and project partners to be cultivated. Talks with Moreland City Council met with enthusiastic support, as the project meets a documented need for more arts activities for Brunswick's young people and is in keeping with the council's Youth Strategy goals. The council has agreed to assist with the promotion of the event, including printing information flyers or posters. The council's art space, the Counihan Gallery, is booked 12 months in advance and so was not used for the 2007 event but may be booked for a follow-up exhibition to be held in Youth Week 2008.

In developing the project, members of the project team were keen to ensure that the exhibition went ahead this year. To this end they decided to focus on ensuring the participation of a smaller group of young people, local high school students, and once this was confirmed to use this as a base for promoting the event, gaining sponsorship from local businesses, and potentially including a broader range of young people (if not in 2007 then in subsequent years).

The club initially concentrated on building a partnership with Brunswick Secondary College, speaking with the principal and then members of the school's art department. The club's approach to developing the partnership was collaborative and flexible to help enable full participation by the art department and their students. The club is also pursuing partnerships with a couple of other local schools, aiming to broaden participation to encompass a wider section of the Brunswick community. The scope of the show is still evolving, and will be determined in the end by the schools and other organisations that become involved.

In consultation with Brunswick Secondary College, the show was scheduled for 22–24 November 2007 to allow time for the art department to work it into their teaching program and for the club to secure an appropriate venue. Alongside the main event, the club considered setting up a mentoring program, linking young local artists (perhaps RMIT students) with high school students, and also running a competition in the schools to design the exhibition's promotional poster. The club is also keen to involve local businesses as sponsors of the event and local business people are also potential future Rotarians.

The art show attracted some 130 entries from 50 to 60 students. While the opening night was enjoyable and the attendance was good, the organising committee believed they could attract more visitors to future exhibitions. There had been little investment in marketing of the event, though the local paper did run a post-event article. Council assisted by paying a local group (the Anti Racism Action Band [ARAB]) to perform on the night and to act as the MC.

The organising committee felt the event provided a boost for the students who saw their art exhibited in a public place and that the project generated good interest among many students.

Providing an exhibition is particularly important as only the very top works from VCE students are exhibited in the show at the National Gallery of Victoria, but most students gain confidence from other people being interested in their work.

Figure 1.4 Student and Art and Craft, Brunswick Youth Art Exhibition



The teachers involved with the project were very impressed with the commitment the Rotary members showed to the normally onerous tasks of cleaning up and post-event logistics. This task was achieved painlessly. During the three days of the show 15 club members were in regular attendance at the exhibition, setting it up and then packing up upon completion.

The teachers and council staff member on the committee also noted that they now had a greater understanding of what Rotary was and what it could achieve. In fact, even David was amazed at just how effective the Rotary networks were. The council representative and teachers all felt they could approach Rotary for assistance with projects and issues, and that a certain trust had been established.

Unlike the other PACE projects, the Youth Art Exhibition project was run by an informal committee, driven strongly by one Rotary member but with substantial input from other members. This seemed suitable given that, in the first event, only two schools were involved and the Brunswick club is relatively small. The club has already appointed a committee member or convenor for the 2008 show, as David will be the club president in 2008. This succession planning has ensured the other members of the committee are comfortable with the level of commitment from Rotary.

The Rotary Club of Brunswick, and particularly the three or four members most heavily involved in the project, worked collaboratively with local council, schools and other interested parties to build the momentum and success of this event for the local community. By establishing and consolidating these grassroots connections, the club hopes to be in a position to contribute and more effectively support the local community. One of the early spin-off benefits of this project is that a Rotarian, who is a qualified accountant, has been invited to serve on Brunswick Secondary College's finance committee.

Reflecting on the aids to project success so far, David touched on how well placed Rotary is to engage successfully with organisations in the local area:

One of the big strengths of the [Rotary] brand, it does open doors. I've found with it that [the name] is highly respected ... You don't get your doors slammed very often. And I think that's one of the leverages we can position ourselves with ... people are not suspicious about why you're doing things.

Reflections

While each of the programs has its unique features there are a number of common factors in the programs. The pilot programs were each quite different and reflected the nature of the local community. The lessons learnt here will be built upon in other communities.

Success factors

- A project champion or driver has been central to the success of each of these pilots. In two cases the champion identified the project concept themselves and in the other two, consultations with local councils helped to identify the project theme, and working groups were built around these ideas. Nevertheless, project drivers (not necessarily a single person) have emerged in both working groups.
- A close match between the professional skills of the Rotarians involved and the needs of the project is evident in all sites. The skills Rotarians have used to undertake these projects have included: organisational management, financial management, chairing committees, community development, networking and fundraising. It is likely that if people's skills are used effectively then they will be more enthusiastic and driven to see the project through.
- Community development practices, including networking and community consultation, feature in the stories of all the pilots. In each of the projects, flexibility in project design and consultation on what works for all partners is evident. This helps ensure wider buy-in and support for the initiatives.
- Each project has either established or redeveloped a strong board or committee of management. These are broadly based bodies often with specific Rotary representation. These structures require a continued commitment but also provide great opportunities to widen the network of Rotary and to improve knowledge of the projects and the organisations supporting them.
- The assistance of Rotary has been critically important in providing seed funding and initial administrative assistance. A key has been that the Rotary members provide assistance as part of a team rather than being the team.
- Rotary's networks provide a powerful support for the projects in fundraising, finding specialist expertise and in generating publicity. These include the networks of the individual Rotarians as well as the organisation. The Rotary network has been particularly important in the local roll-out of the Community Street Soccer Programme. In turn, this program has provided Rotary with a stronger international recognition, through its involvement in the Homeless World Cup.
- Stronger relationships have been established with the local government in each of the municipalities in which the PACE programs have been operating.
- In each case there have been substantial benefits for the participants or clients of the projects. A common feature is the re-establishment of connections between the participants and the rest of society. This is particularly so for the Community Street Soccer and Wellington Centre

programs. This connectedness is a key step in building the links for participants to begin the process of changing their lives where possible.

- For the BayCISS programs, the clients have been served by the ensured continuation of the service in each area, and a range of individuals and families have directly benefited from the education support program. This has ensured many children can maintain their educational and social development at a similar level to their peers.
- The link with the Brotherhood of St Laurence initially helped the Steering Committee to identify the key elements of the engagement process and provided a broader understanding of the nature of the problems able to be addressed by the scheme and how to approach the community engagement process.

Challenges

- The programs do not appear to have engaged more than a few members of each club on a continuing basis. Hence it has fallen to a small number of Rotarians in each club to maintain the necessary administrative and strategic involvement.
- As most Rotary clubs have relatively busy programs they are often reluctant to embrace a new approach, believing that PACE is an extra obligation rather than an alternative approach which can improve the delivery of community services.
- In all but the Brunswick project, a member of the Rotary Club who was semi-retired was able to devote substantial hours per week. The time needs for effective engagement may preclude many members with active business lives from contributing.
- Matching the skills of the Rotarians with community concerns will remain an issue. This was achieved well in Brighton by the strong networking capacity of the key Rotarian but it requires members that have these skills.
- Project sustainability remains an issue for the Wellington Centre and possibly the Brunswick Youth Arts Exhibition. However, one successful year of operation often provides the basis for generating funds from a range of philanthropic and government agencies.
- While stronger relationships between councils, local agencies and Rotary clubs have been developed, as yet there has not been a strong growth impact within the clubs involved with the program.
- Developing a continuing role for the Brotherhood of St Laurence and other appropriate non-government organisations will assist in the project identification and development phase of most PACE-type projects. In addition these organisations will be able to extend their community of interest and support within the Rotary network.

Implementing PACE

In promoting the PACE initiative the benefits which have flowed from each of the pilot programs, as well as the lessons, need to be identified. The PACE program provides for an effective and continuing engagement with each club's local community. It provides scope for initiatives and a process that can revitalise clubs and strengthen clubs' links to their communities. In turn, the links to Rotary provide community groups and agencies access to an effective network of concerned and interested business and professional persons, often with valuable skills and contacts in their local and broader communities.

Key features of PACE initiatives

- The club itself must recognise the need to engage effectively with its community on a sustained basis and be prepared to provide board/administrative and financial support to members willing to undertake PACE-style projects. Club members must be willing to assist with the application of their professional and business skills when called upon.
- In seeking to identify areas for engagement the club must enter the research phase with an open mind. A clear understanding of the club's skills base and interests should exist and provide the basis for further engagement. Determining the appropriate types of projects for the club requires community consultation. This can be as simple as approaching council for ideas on the issues facing the community and perhaps adopting an existing project or program which needs support (e.g. BayCISS and the subsequent development). Alternatively it can involve a longer process of engagement with council, community groups and agencies until an issue that captures the imagination of the members is found, a philosophy developed and a practical delivery agency or method adopted. (This process was undertaken by Melbourne and Southbank clubs with homelessness and the 'Break the Cycle' approach.)
- In each initiative, Rotary must be prepared to work effectively with other members of the community. Effective, broadly based committees or boards of management appear to be a common denominator in each successful project. Rotary can bring organisational and management skills to these boards as well as contacts, confidence and occasionally person power for physical projects.
- Within each initiative the community agency and Rotary members must be aware of their strengths and aims and be prepared to embrace new ideas as they arise and/or to consider existing issues which have not been effectively addressed. This can be done by ensuring all contributors' views are able to be considered effectively. The successful BayCISS Education Support Program is a good illustration of this principle.
- The Rotary clubs' role in networking within and beyond the local community can provide an essential component of a sustainable community engagement project. Rotary has great capacity to open doors, an advantage that often does not reside with local community groups.
- Once a project has been established, the Rotary Club should maintain an involvement and continue to offer special assistance where appropriate. Again this should be in association with community members and beneficiaries of the project.
- The PACE initiative offers the opportunity to develop a strong and effective relationship with the club's local community and associated community groups and services. Through demonstrating the relevance of Rotary in an initial project in a local area, a greater trust and interrelationship between the community and club can be developed. This, in turn, will provide greater opportunities for effective community service and bring Rotarians into contact with a wider range of community members. This may provide a valuable source of new members.
- The continued support of the projects will include the maintenance of strong communication between the club and the associated PACE project. Not only are the projects promoted within the clubs but club members often provide a means of further publicity and contact-making through their discussions with other colleagues and Rotary members. Knowledge and awareness of issues and projects is critical for the success of many community projects.
- The roll-out of the PACE program has been assisted by the partnership between District 9800, the Rt Revd Dr Peter Hollingworth, the State Government of Victoria, and the Brotherhood of

St Laurence. The latter organisations can provide assistance and direction with project evaluation and selection as well as another source of effective contacts to skills, knowledge and finance. The link between these organisations has provided context for the development and evaluation of the pilot program. While each pilot project has been largely driven by the enthusiasm and expertise of the local Rotarians, project management and volunteers, the broader roll-out of such a scheme requires the co-operation of professional agencies, government and the Rotary districts to ensure the relevance and sustainability of PACE is maintained.

Conclusion

By using and building on the skills, networks and enthusiasm of Rotary, communities can be assisted to address vital issues in a way that is tailored to local needs. Similarly, by becoming engaged in long-term local issues aimed at providing a ‘Hand Up’ rather than a ‘Hand Out,’ Rotary can become an integral and vital member of a local community.

The relationships built in the four pilot projects—between the projects, Rotary and individual Rotary members, local governments and local communities—all illustrate the strength of co-operation between what may seem to be apparently diverse, if not divergent, community groups. The PACE initiative offers yet another path to engaging all members of a community in common issues.

Rotary members can bring considerable expertise, networks and knowledge to community groups and, in turn, each party can gain great benefits. While the success of the projects depends to an extent on the individuals who give of their time and effort, a major problem is often finding these people. The PACE initiative provides another means for finding and harnessing the skills of club members within Rotary and engaging with the community in a more sustainable way than previous modes of operation.

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