

## **ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION - Melbourne 2023**

This amazing Convention was attended by Daryl Ferguson, Ray & Lorraine Davies – a first for them all, even though Ray was a member of his previous club for 20 years.

Lorraine spoke briefly about how much she enjoyed every minute of the five days they spent there, meeting Rotarians from all over Australia and around the World – over 15,000 were registered. She was inspired so much, as was Ray, that the Davies have already registered for the Convention in Singapore next year. Daryl covered the daily speakers featured each morning at Rod Laver arena:

### **Opening Ceremony:**

- Icelandic presenters Ashildur & Maria
- Indigenous speech
- Flag ceremony
- Lord Mayor Sally Capp
- The Tenors

### **Day 2, Imagine our Dreams:**

- Leymah R Gbowee, Nobel Prize winner talking about Women's rights.
- Nakeeyt Dramani Sam, a 10-year-old talking about climate change - one tree, one girl.
- Gaby Marini, a Spanish folk singer

### **Day 3, Imagine Change:**

- Dr. Shankar Asif Baig, about polio in Pakistan and Afghanistan
- Emmanuel Katangole, a gentleman from Uganda who lost all his family and now owns a large pharmaceutical company.

### **Day 4, Imagine our Future:**

- The Greatest Show
- Promotion of the 2024 Conference in Singapore
- President Elect, Gordon McNally, with his 'singing' wife, and family.
- World President Jennifer Jones being presented with an aboriginal painting.
- The Bee Gees tribute show.

Daryl's highlight was the ShelterBox project, and meeting with likeminded people from around the World.

Ray covered all that was happening at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The original part of the Centre, as many would know of, featured the House of Friendship, where there would have been over 400 stands covering the many Rotary projects and fellowships, sales of everything to do with Rotary, non-stop music by schools, choirs, individuals, and many food vans.

Every time you sat to enjoy something to eat, or a coffee, you got to speak to some amazing people. Also on display were two shelter boxes, which were fitted out with the basics for people in areas of disaster – both here and overseas.

At the far end there was an assembly line of Rotarians and volunteers packing over a hundred thousand meals to be sent to countries like the Philippines and Ukraine. (Each pack of FORaMEAL contains life-giving cereals – rice, oats and lentils. This is fortified with a sachet of vitamins to enhance the nutrition. When hydrated with boiling water, this pack can feed 5-6 people.)

The many break-out sessions each day were held in the new 3-story high extension to MCEC, where there were so many choices of sessions to attend. Lorraine and Ray mainly attended sessions to do with Membership, and the main theme seemed to be how much Rotary needed to change to survive, and what they have been working on to change. Speakers spoke of Impact Companion Clubs, Corporate Clubs, Passport Clubs, E Clubs and Satellite Clubs.

One session attended was conducted by two Rotarians, one from Wagga Wagga, the other from the United States. They are both District Governors, and aged 32 and 30 respectively!! The young lady from Wagga Wagga was married, with two children. Amazing.

Ray finished off with a few moments that touched him:

- The number of **young** Rotarians from around the World.
- The story of the President of a Rotary Club in Turkey who had lost 41 relatives in the devastating earthquake, but continued on with his Rotary work to provide food and shelter for those affected, via shelter boxes.
- The Ugandan Rotarian, who had lost his father when he was young, shot after he went to work in a bigger town nearby. He lived with his mother and two sisters in a thatched hut. After the death of her husband, his mother had no choice but to take the two girls out of school and concentrate on the education of her son. The two girls died, one aged 15 at childbirth, bleeding to death. The son was helped by a Rotarian to complete his education, where he attended Universities in America and Finland. He now is the owner of a large Pharmaceutical Company based in Uganda and Europe and provides free medicine for 2 million Ugandans. He finished off with how proud he was to be a Rotarian, as over the years Rotary had completely transformed his life – and where his Dad, Mum and 2 sisters had sacrificed their lives for him. Not a dry eye in the arena.

And the wonderful job Rotary has played in eradicating Polio around the World. Only two countries now, Pakistan and Afghanistan with very few cases recorded, and volunteers in these countries are working very hard immunising babies. The sad side to all this is that the Pakistanies were originally very worried how these vaccinations would affect their babies, hence 62 volunteers have been killed just doing their job.

Ray's wish was that he would have loved to have transported all of his Club to the Convention, to gain the big picture of Rotary.

Dates to consider for next year:

Our District Conference in Warrnambool Feb 23-25.

The next International Convention in Singapore May 25-29.