



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

The University of Sydney and The Rotary Club of Sydney: An association going back 100 years



This relationship was further enhanced as **Chancellor Belinda Hutchinson AC, was inducted as an Honorary Member of the Club by His Excellently Governor General David Hurley** at the Centenary of Rotary in Australia luncheon on the 17 May 2021. The Chancellor said the luncheon “was impressive in showcasing the wonderful work Rotary does for Australian and international communities. The projects such as Rotary Give Every Child a Future and the new Indigenous student accommodation at UTS are outstanding and will make such a difference to Pacific Island children and young Indigenous Australians”. The Chancellor also talked of the “lovely contribution” Her Excellency, Mrs Hurley made to the luncheon with her song to Rotary and in leading the singing of “You Are My Sunshine”.

In 1921 it started with Sir T.W. Edgeworth David and Professor Arthur Mills

The Rotary Club of Sydney’s association with The University of Sydney predates the Club’s inaugural meeting which was held on the 17 May 1921 via Sir T.W. Edgeworth David; a worldwide acclaimed geologist and Professor of Geology at the University. He had served as the scientific officer on the Shackleton Antarctic Expedition and later led the party that first reached the southern magnetic pole. During WW1 he served as a Major on the Western Front with the title of “Geological Adviser to the Controllers of Mines in the First, Second and Third Armies”.

Sir T.W. Edgeworth David was one of eight prominent men invited to a luncheon on the 5 May 1921 with two Canadian Commissioners, James W. Davidson and Colonel J Layton Ralston, who had been sent by the International Association of Rotary Clubs (the predecessor of Rotary International) to establish Rotary in Australia and New Zealand. The purpose of this meeting was to select prospective members for the proposed Sydney Club.

Present at the 17 May meeting and becoming The Club’s first Vice President was also Professor Arthur Mills, who had graduated in medicine from the University in 1889 and would go on to be Dean of the Faculty, a Fellow of the University Senate and Deputy Chancellor.

This was the start of a long association between the Club and the University. Over the Club’s first 100 years many of its members have been academic staff or graduates of the University.

Rotary Club of Sydney’s Soukup Memorial Scholarships

The Club has partnered with the University of Sydney in a number of projects over recent decades. The most ongoing of these has been the Rotary Soukup Scholarships which have provided scholarships to young, post-secondary indigenous students. Since 2015 the Scholarships have funded students at The University of Sydney and The University of Technology supporting the Club’s belief that education changes the lives of individuals, communities and the nation and that these scholarships will ultimately contribute to a fairer and a more prosperous Australia.

Fundu Isin – Di’ak Timor-Leste Project

Starting in 2013 the Club under the leadership of President James Allen worked with the Professor of Infectious Diseases at the University, Peter McMinn and the Ministry of Health in Timor-Leste on the Fundu Isin – Di’ak Timor-Leste Project (East Timor Health Project) to eradicate two nasty parasitic diseases caused by lymphatic filariasis and intestinal worms. The five year mass treatment program with anti-parasitic drugs included training local health workers.



Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, then Governor of New South Wales was the Patron of the project and His Excellency Dr José Ramos Horta GCL, former President of Timor-Leste and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, the Vice-Patron and Ambassador.

Improve Indigenous Oral Health



In 2014-15 under President Diana Richard’s leadership and again in 2016-17 with President Alex Shaw the Club partnered with the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health at the University of Sydney to establish Rotary Indigenous Oral Health Scholarships and to develop a program to improve the uptake and delivery of Oral Health services by indigenous communities in regional areas.

International House

Throughout the 1950’s and 1960’s the Club and especially the International Services Committee devoted attention to the Asia Pacific region. The Club developed many programmes to support Asian students studying in Sydney.

“More ambitious than any of these projects was one that originated in 1956 following the District Conference held in the Great Hall at the University of Sydney... for additional accommodation for overseas students many of whom were postgraduates....

“Following discussions within the Sydney Club, President Bill Sherington put forward plans for the launching of a campaign to raise funds for an International House at both of the two metropolitan universities.

“...International House at Sydney University was opened by the Government of New South Wales in June 1967, followed a year later by its counterpart at the University of New South Wales.” (Brian Fletcher *The Rotary Club of Sydney 1921-2005 Achieving for Others pp 102-104*)

