

Rotary District 9685 Redistricting Workshop

Hornsby RSL 27 April 2019

I attended the Workshop and made notes of the introduction by my friend and colleague PDG Ian Scott. We worked together on the committee to implement the redistricting of D9680 and part of D9690 in 2013.

I set out my notes of his introduction and Ian has no argument with my reading of how he put the concept and its key features. I then set out my brief and respectful comments on each aspect raised:

Introduction by PDG Ian Scott

WHY AMALGAMATE DISTRICTS 9685 and 9675?

1. Membership has been decreasing in the western world over the last 20 years and continues to decrease. Australia is no different. The minimum under RI Rules for a District is 1,100 members. If current trends continue:

D9675 will be required to redistrict in 5 years;

D9685 will be required to redistrict in 12 years.

2. The Proposition put forward in favour of amalgamating the two Districts is that it will lead to a change in the District arrangements that may lead to a reduction in the decline of membership numbers.
3. The amalgamation will FORCE the District organisation to change.
4. For example, the District might be reorganised such that:
 - a. AGs do more of the operational duties;
 - b. The DG moves to a more leadership and inspirational role;
 - c. There may be set up two separate Boards chaired by the DG for leadership and vision and the second chaired by the DGE being tasked for Operations;
 - d. The Service Chairs may be distributed on a Zone basis.
5. It is foreshadowed that a bigger District can have:
 - a. One Voice in representing Rotary in Sydney;
 - b. A bigger talent pool;
 - c. Economies of Scale.

I will not attempt to summarise the various points raised, “advantages” “disadvantages” and “risks” raised by the many (about 50) Rotarians present. They were compiled by DGE Kalma.

Comments by PDG John Dodd

Dealing with each of Ian’s points in order:

1. D9685 does not have to do anything for many years. It can wait for D9675 to be required to redistrict and then have a rational discussion about the content of a new Sydney District.

For example, the 10 Clubs in the Wollongong/Shellharbour area do not fit naturally into a “Sydney” District. Different combinations could be considered suitable for Rotary’s needs at the time.

By waiting, D9685 will not have to deal with the culture of the leadership of D9675: it can retain its own systems and leadership model.

2. Nothing is suggested as to HOW amalgamating the two Districts would lead to a lessening of the decline in membership (other than changes in the structure of the District – see below). Membership is largely a CLUB responsibility for which District can lend support in providing training, materials and “branding”. Other than possible increased “brand awareness” of a single Sydney District, no suggestion is made how the Clubs would maintain their membership numbers by amalgamating the two Districts.
3. District 9685 can change its structure NOW if that would be thought to assist Clubs – change does not need to be forced upon it. Every DG has their own approach to Club visits (PDGs Graeme and Ian adopted my “Zone” approach) and what they want their AGs to achieve (my AGs looked after the “administration” check-ups).

Most of the changes suggested such as different roles for the DG and AGs are only required to overcome the obvious pitfalls of the proposed amalgamation.

4. As above in 3. If D9685 were to enlarge from 70 to (say) 100 Clubs (taking on about half of D9675 and so doing the “right thing by RI and our fellow Rotarians to the south), it would still be viable to have our current structures. We don’t need a District of 125 Clubs and there is no basis for the claim that the optimal size for a District is 2,500 to 3,000 members (made on the promotional video).
5. When is ever “One Rotary Voice” needed? The example is given of the recent drought relief fund raising with Channel 9, but is that currently in anyone’s consciousness and did it lead to anyone inquiring to join

Rotary. Even the specious “brand awareness” raising has probably dissipated in a few months. It is cringe worthy to suggest a “bigger talent pool” of the “best and brightest”: we should rely on our Rotarians who do the service. No particulars are given of any economies of scale from amalgamating the two Districts.

It seems to me that the proposition of amalgamating the two Sydney Districts has come from RI and now some justifications are sought for that to occur. The supposed justifications do not stand up.

D9685 is in no danger of being required to redistrict by RI for another decade or more. We can wait to see what happens, choose our best options and timing, and learn from other Australian Districts that are redistricting now (regarding their structure and how they cope with enlargement).

We do not need a District running from Toukley in the north to Shellharbour in the south, Picton to the southwest and Lithgow to the west. We can and should wait.

PDG John Dodd
28 April 2019