

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON A ONE-SYDNEY DISTRICT CONCEPT

SIZE

Q. What are current club and membership numbers for the two districts?

A. The figures vary over time. At end of January 2019:

D9675: 1,433 – 61 clubs

D9685: 1,887 – 71 clubs

Q. At what stage does a District become geographically too large to manage?

A. The drivers for District size are the number of Clubs and Rotarians, balanced against cost and geographic limitations. Bigger Districts need new approaches to management and a clear focus on what that management provides as a value-add to Clubs. Western Australia will become one District, as will South Australia.

Q. Why not one District for all NSW, or Australia

A. In most parts of the world, Districts will have around 3000 members. One District for the whole of NSW or Australia would be completely out of kilter with the current RI model. In considering our merger, there are quite a few things to understand like holding multiple District activities such as PETs, training and conferences, and looking at the ways technology and regional leadership can deliver a meaningful experience to offset the travel alternative in large Districts. We also need to ensure that Rotarians still have ready access to District personnel. There has been no suggestion of creating one 'maxi' District where these issues would require a total rethink.

Q. Will the size impact on camaraderie?

A. We expect that Clubs in clusters and geographically close to each other will still enjoy their network of Rotarian friends and joint activities. These networks have an opportunity to expand as Clubs wish them to.

Q. What will this mean for travel times to District events?

A. Notionally travel times will increase for some folks. Avenues such as better use of technology and multiple events in different locations will be considered for practicability and cost-effectiveness. Rotarians will have the choice of attending events at different locations on different dates allowing for some increased flexibility.

Q. Have we considered forcing smaller Clubs to consolidate also?

A. No; as long as Clubs meet the minimum requirements, they decide their own future. We can encourage Clubs to work together on joint projects and events though.

Q. Will a new District be top heavy and constrained on being able to deliver?

A. We will need innovative ways for District to deliver services to Clubs, and expanding the number of representatives for Avenues of Service at cluster level should enable this. We do not want more people in “HQ”, we want them “in the field”.

MEMBERSHIP

Q. How does this address the real problem, aging of club members and lack of new members?

A. This can't address the ageing issue. Membership can only grow at Club level and District can only encourage Clubs to open new avenues to attract and involve new members. We know however that we are standing on the edge of a membership precipice, where many of our long-standing and experienced Rotarians will be 'ageing out'.

Q. How does this make more people join Rotary?

A. Having a “1-Sydney” District gives greater leverage for PR (as with the drought appeal) and this will help raise awareness. Clubs can capitalise on that awareness by providing more flexible opportunities for new members to join and serve.

Q. The real issue for all Clubs is membership. How are we embracing new technology to address the busy lives of people to enable them to be part of Rotary in a leveraged and meaningful way?

A. There are so many contemporary ways to run Clubs that address the busy lives of people. Passport Clubs, Satellite Clubs, e-Clubs and Coffee Clubs for example. Technology for meetings and training are either in-place or being developed.

OPERATIONS

Q. If we compare Rotary Clubs to a premiership football team. The team will falter if there is not a focus on junior player development in the lower grades. How are we developing the junior players to become future Rotarians?

A. Clubs and Rotarians have to keep their networks active and value-add to younger Rotarians; as an example- rebuild our links with schools and businesses – promote the personal development Interact, Rotaract, and Rotary can provide – public speaking, team building, leadership, project management, financial accountability etc

Having said that, we also need to address the 'lost generation' of Rotarians... those in their 50s & 60s – the pre-retirement demographic. There has been a serious lack of recruitment in this age bracket, and now is the time to address it.

Q. What are the cost impacts?

A. The aim is for there to be no cost impact, however costs will shift a bit, for example, increased training for AGs perhaps offsetting less travel for the DG. If Clubs approve of the continued investigation of a new District, a task force will be set up to manage the detail, aiming for a “no increase in cost” to Rotarians as a principle. The process of amalgamating two districts will have some costs associated with it, but both districts have enough reserves to cover this short-term cost.

Q. What are other Districts doing? Lessons learnt?

A. We will have lessons from the one WA District, the one SA District and the 9710/9750 amalgamation well before we commit. Already we are seeing how they are approaching training, District activities (RYLA, MUNA, etc), finance and the like. We will be requesting access to their documentation so that we don't have to start from scratch and can use their learnings to guide us.

Q. What have we learned from previous mergers/changes that we will apply here?

A. As above, plus we know that input from Clubs and Rotarians is vital to getting it right – you have experts, experience and commitment that is needed for any amalgamation. The last redistricting involved splitting a district in half and that caused a lot of angst. It was triggered by low numbers and was mandated by RI. It's important to note that neither of our two districts have low enough numbers to have an 'enforced amalgamation' but with a significant reduction in numbers, due to current Rotarians aging out, we could be looking at this scenario within 2-3 years. This time we will be joining the two halves that were split in the last redistricting back together as part of the amalgamation process. And we have learnt that involvement and communication with the clubs is vital to a successful outcome.

Q. What did previous mergers achieve?

A. We know that merged Districts still work, but they get more of the same where no changes were made to the delivery model for the District team, hence the importance of reviewing how the new District will operate and having club involvement in the process. This is reflected in Club mergers, where, if it is planned with a vision of the future and changes are made to achieve the goals of that vision, it works.

COMMUNICATION

Q. Isn't this change for change sake? Nothing is broken...

A. The modern thinking on change is that if you don't, the world will change around you. The opportunity here is to recreate Rotary in our District to attract new members and to refocus how we can engage with 'partner' organisations, speaking with one voice for the Sydney basin. The strategy is to take advantage of that greater awareness and partnering to better deliver services at the Club

level. This is what Clubs need to grow membership. As mentioned above we need to be strategic and think of how our Districts will look in 5 years' time.

Q. How will the DG relay information and messages from RI to the Clubs?

A. The DG will be expected to use technology effectively and to meet with groups, or clusters of clubs, on a regional basis, rather than individually. AGs will play a bigger role in the communications from RI and District, to assist the DG.

Q. Why aren't we presenting the negatives?

A. Of the potential negatives found by the initial concept committee some are largely attitudinal;

- Clubs/members not seeing the advantage of change and being disgruntled
- Lack of commitment to the change by leadership at District and Club level
- Some members feeling very attached to the present District and not being supportive

Others are tangible but are risks that can be dealt with strong guidance to any task force developing the detail;

- Potential for increased District dues if financial processes are not carefully watched
- Less opportunity for senior leadership positions in the new District for members to aspire to. We believe the service delivery model and an enhanced role for AGs will address this.

We want to hear of any negatives Clubs can see, that are not addressed in this FAQ sheet.

CURRENT SYSTEM

Q. Why can't we solve the problems in our own District (why is a new District better)?

A. We could do so, hence your input in this discussion is important as to whether we proceed to a new District or not. If we do not, we are going to have to review how we do business anyway as declining membership numbers tell us we need to do something. A new District does give us significant advantages of scale, talent pool, and a single Sydney voice **if** we choose to use them.

Q. Isn't this the same as forcing a merger of two old Clubs – nothing changes?

A. Firstly, this is not a forced merger, but a proactive approach to what is inevitable in the next 3-5 years due to the aging out of our long-standing Rotarians. We know that merged Districts work, but they get more of the same where no changes are made to the delivery model for the District team. This is reflected in Club mergers also where, if it is planned with a vision of the future and changes are made to achieve the goals of that vision, it works. The idea of getting clubs to contribute ideas towards the merger of our two Districts is to get as many ideas as possible as

to how we can best operate in the future using current methodologies, but also emerging technology to enhance communication.

Q. How will we make sure the new District does not just deliver more of the same of what is already being delivered by the existing Districts?

A. As above, we need to change the service delivery model to Clubs. Commitment to improvement, ideas and experience from Rotarians for the model and lessons from other Districts will guide the task force who will look at the detail.

DECISION

Q. There is not enough detail to make a decision, how will a new bigger District work?

A. The current vote is only to allow us to keep working on the proposal. The concept paper gives a high level look at how the new district could operate. A task force will develop that into working detail. Your leadership team believes that the advantages warrant a vote on whether to continue the investigation, and if Clubs agree to proceed, you will see that detail as it is developed and have the chance to have a final vote on the merger. Remember that there are at least three years to work on it and get it right.