

The Future, By Us

“Australian Society - Where to Now?”: Where Australia now and in 15 years”. Professional and Society Trends and Opportunities: Where is Rotary in the equation?

Structure

- **Local**
 - **A high tech Australia**
 - **An strong Australian Community**
- **Global**
 - **Leading global citizen.**
 - **Australia that helps end extreme poverty**
- **Conclusion**

Introduction-

Good morning my name is Hugh Evans and it a tremendous privilege to have been invited to share with you this morning at the **Rotary International Presidential Membership Conference**.

I'd like to thank Len Goodman for hosting us this morning. It is a privilege and an honour to be here. I have been invited to share on the theme of **Australian Society - Where to Now?**

So, this morning, together with the next generation of Australians, I want to invite you to join with me in considering a vision of the future. **The Future by us.**

- A future with a compelling vision
- A future of courage, faith and compassion
- A future of innovation and accomplishment

I want to tell you about a girl who embodies this vision for the future...someone who I met last year in South Africa.

STORY- Last year I was over in South Africa- **Inanda Girl- Morgue.**

This young girl had such vision for her community, and the courage to overcome enormous challenges with different ideas.

She wasn't willing to sit back and wait for the world to change around her. She had a plan of what is possible.

So this morning, it's just us in a room together, so I want to invite you to join with me as we dream a bit together.

How can we be leaders who don't simply embody the comfy country syndrome

But instead how can we be leaders who are-

- Visionary;
- who take healthy risks;
- Who embrace innovation
- We need leadership that is not necessarily liked, but that are respected
- However: We also need leaders who doesn't alienate Australians, but rather walk with us on a journey.

So what could this Journey look like???

Today I'm going to share with you four overarching concepts I have been developing with a number of young Australian Leaders. Together we are writing a book at the moment which expresses some of these ideas. Ideas which I believe we will see in increasing measure over the next 15 years, and which will continue to have transformation effect for the future of our country.

Whilst, these ideas are still in their development, and in many ways today as I share them with you I hope you will both embrace them, and contribute to their development.

I also hope to touch on the link between these trends and the potential role for Rotary in the equation.

So here we go...

Firstly, I have a vision for a high-tech Australian economy.

No...this is not just about Facebook and MySpace...and a chance for me to get more friends online (though if you use facebook and you'd like to add me that would be cool).

We've spoken for years about the need to consider Australia after the resource boom. We all know that primary resources cannot last forever...but have we ever really articulated what the next step will look like?

Politicians have proposed an "education revolution" as part of the solution. This is a step in the right direction as it looks to grow our nations intellectual capacity...**but to what end?**

Every revolutionary is fighting for something...What is the 'education revolution' really fighting for?

I suggest that the end point is a high tech Australia. An Australia that is the engine room of innovation, venture capital and entrepreneurialism for the region. An Australia that re-creates Silicon Valley¹ in LaTrobe Valley.

Israel Story-

Two years ago I was fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to Israel. On the NAB Yahad Scholarship.

- Israel has invested heavily into establishing a successful local high-tech industry.
- In partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel has created a hub of innovation in very difficult geopolitical circumstances.
- So much so that Bill Gates praised these achievements during his visit in 2005.

So how could we recreate Silicon Valley in LaTrobe Valley or any other valley for that matter?

I don't mean to sound crass...

- The key is getting the right people in the same place: the right people are really- nerds and rich people.
- If you combine young nerds with rich, experienced and wise investors, the capacity for innovation is enormous.
- Apple, eBay, Cisco Systems, Google, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, (my favourite...) Nintendo, Yahoo!, Netscape (acquired by AOL),
- The worlds leading technological companies have been born in the Silicon Valley.
- The easiest way to attract lots of young nerds to one place is through great universities.
 - Great universities act as a magnet for intellectual talent, drawing in the brightest and best from around.
 - In Silicon Valley- Many universities have been instrumental as sources of research and new graduates: Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley.
 - Imagine an Australian World Class university that acted as a magnet for the smartest young people from across the Asia-Pacific
- The point to keep in mind is that this is relatively easy to create:
 - To achieve this we would need to lure 200 of the best young researchers to an Australian university in the right setting.

¹ **Silicon Valley (from Wikipedia)** is the [southern part](#) of the [San Francisco Bay Area](#) in [Northern California](#) in the [United States](#). The term originally referred to the region's large number of [silicon chip](#) innovators and manufacturers, but eventually came to refer to all the [high-tech](#) businesses in the area;

- This raises broader considerations of the need to foster strong post-university collegiality and investment back into Universities by Alumni...this is currently not reflected in the Australian University Funding model, but rather more of the US model at present.
- This also raises the possibility that Intellectual Property Markets being established further into the future. These markets would recognise the increasing value of intellectual property and its trade.
- But the broader lesson (irrespective of whether we create an actual Silicon Valley) is one of fostering entrepreneurialism in our young people
- Our Mind can be our greatest export. The only sustainable export beyond the primary resource boom.
- For Rotary, the opportunities are simple-
 - There is a huge opportunity to foster innovation at a club and national level, drawing the nations best ideas and thinkers together, documenting those ideas and developing them further.

Secondly, I have a vision for strong Australian community

I have a vision to see a stronger sense of community in Australia because I believe that good community building works together with individual empowerment.

A few months ago I turned on news radio and they were talking about suicide. The lady on the air waves was saying that suicide is actually not just a youth issue but actually the second most prevalent age demographic likely to take their lives are over the age of 75.

At the age of seventeen my stepbrother and best-friend committed suicide, and one month later another friend's father met the same fate.

Coming to terms with the fact that a friend or family member decided to take their life is one of the most challenging things we may ever face in life.

It is impossible to understand why a young person who has their life ahead of them would choose death. What feelings of depression, helplessness, disillusionment or pain could lead someone to such a decision? And what events in someone's life could lead to these intensely sad feelings?

I am not qualified to comment on the fundamental causes of youth depression, nor am I suggesting that the answer to depression is community involvement, but one thought I have is that the values which foster a strong sense of community can really break this sense of helplessness for individuals.

Community is a place where people are connected, people become empowered, and people are protected.

If we actively engage in our community and feel loved and cared for, we no longer feel helpless. The opportunities which provide people with the opportunity to be active contributors in the social life of their community, their country, and the world can really break this sense of helplessness.

I believe that the values which grow a community are the same values that nurture individuals: forgiveness, self-sacrifice, patience, compassion and a desire to see justice in our society.

- Young people are increasingly turning to online communities because they have no real or easy options to connect with other young people in the real world
 - Over 35 million young people use Facebook, millions more use MySpace. Young people spend hours every day “poking”, “friending” and “writing on the wall” of other young people’s profiles
 - “Second Life”, the virtual online world where over 4.6 million users play the “game of life” online by creating a virtual clone of themselves, attracts some young people to spend more time online than in the real world

Communities these days also look different...

- Old style communities are based more on geography, new communities are based on affiliation. The strongest communities are where these two elements are combined.
- Local → Issue based communities.

- The challenge for good social policy is then: **how do we create hubs of community for people to connect outside the digital world?**
 - Because I think we all realize that the digital world just isn’t enough: that the “pokes” on Facebook aren’t real pokes.

But what could this look like?

- The opportunity for Rotary Clubs to foster issues based connection is enormous. You already have the infrastructure in place and could very readily foster purpose/issue driven community.

On a broader level...

- I believe every effort needs to be made to show the value that is placed on schools and uni’s by doing what is necessary to make them the ‘hub’ of community which they deserve to be.
 - If this is the place where the young people who are the future of our city are growing into life, then we need to bring the life of our city to them; whether it is the community hall, the internet café or the swimming pool.

- in a more informal way, in Brisbane and in Durban South Africa, I've seen some great examples of investment by government to create "youth hubs"
 - o These are Government-funded "Social Incubators", office buildings that provide youth initiatives with office space, internet and phone access via an application process
 - o Young people come up with the ideas to build social capital, and where they are viable gov't resources these initiative.

These ideas together all have the potential to build stronger community in Australia

As working together with your community towards a common goal and vision can breed greater unity, greater sensitivity and common identity.

Globally, I have a vision for an Australia that is a leading global citizen.

When I was 15 yrs old, I came face to face with the amazing diversity that is Asia.

STORY- Philippines → India.

Whilst that year, I was confronted by the reality of poverty, another thing that impacted me deeply was the diversity of cultures on our own doorstep. I shared my bedroom at the Woodstock school with an Indian who spoke more English than Hindi, an American who'd spent his life in India, a Bhutanese fellow ... That year, I started to understand how complex and exciting "Asian engagement" really could be.

In our region, we've been talking about 'Asian engagement' for years, and with initiatives like the AFP's regional cooperation to prevent child trafficking we've started to see some very exciting idea and information sharing partnerships.

That said; I believe that as Australian's we've never fully grappled with what it means to find our security in Asia, rather than from it.

- What does it mean to live in a region where our **climate security** is dependent on the growth China and India?
- What does it mean to live in a region where our **national security** is dependent on the relative peace and stability of Indonesia and the Pacific?
- What does it mean to live in a region where our **border security** is dependent on the capacity of Asian justice and policing systems?

At a fundamental level, it means the pursuit of an over-arching **open dialogue policy** to all regional players.

An open dialogue policy where we prioritise good communication and engagement with our regional neighbours as a backbone of our foreign policy.

But how do we create this open dialogue?

First, Australia has the opportunity to invest in a **remodelled Colombo Plan**, that brings the best and brightest students from Asia and the Pacific to Australian universities, building regional capacity and deepening the connections between individuals that create future trade and business opportunities through a love of Australian people and culture.

Second, Australia could commit to a policy of “**attendance not arrogance**” with respect of regional dialogue. If we are invited to attend regional fora, this means doing everything in our power to participate and demonstrate that we prioritise being a positive leader in our region. In recent years Australia has snubbed many Pacific fora. We are not invited to participate in many regional fora including ASEAN + 3, The Asia Europe Dialogue and others.

→ One thing is clear, and that is that diplomats have a great capacity to talk and communicate... if we adopt an **open dialogue policy** and are known for this, I believe so too the doors for participation will open to us.

Beyond this, Australia has the opportunity to **engage India and China in the discussion around Climate Change and Economic Growth**. Currently, there are a number of prevailing ideas 1. the assumption that economic growth must entail similar growth in greenhouse emissions due to the traditional modes of industrialisation 2. that the developing world acts as the lungs for the West, hence it is arrogant for us to even ask the developing world to consider alternative development models. So to engage in this dialogue at all, Australia must invest heavily in developing the technology required to transplant the role of coal in industrialisation. This is only likely to occur if Australia has the technological advantage, and fulfils the vision for a high-tech Australia.

And finally, on a **purely practical level**, commerce and trade is of such great ease with the Asia pacific region owing to the mere fact we live around the same time zones.

All of these ingredients could combine to create ‘**An open dialogue policy**’ where we prioritise good communication and engagement with our regional neighbours as a backbone of our foreign policy.

For Rotary, the international development assistance work that your clubs already do so well, could be further scaled up, and partnerships could be forged with Ausaid, such that Rotary could use its extensive networks to foster best-practice regional development models, providing an example for other NGO's.

Finally this evening, I have a vision for an issue very close to my heart, a vision for an Australia that helps to end extreme poverty.

It is no mistake that some of the greatest minds of our time have invested their vast resources into the fight to end extreme poverty in our world.

With a contribution from Bill and Melinda Gates of approximately US\$33 billion, and a further commitment by Warren Buffett worth US\$30.7 billion, they have set their goal of combating HIV/AIDS and alleviating poverty.

But when we talk about poverty...I am not talking about all poverty...as the notion itself is relative, and there will always be poor people by relative standards.

I talk about Extreme poverty...those living on less than \$1 a day...the kind of needless poverty where a child dies for a lack of 30cent immunisation.

Because it is extreme poverty that could come to an end in our lifetime.

I don't believe that extreme poverty will come to end by only increasing foreign aid levels.

That said; Governments of all types have failed to act out of the goodness of their hearts in increasing aid and development assistance to an acceptable level.

So perhaps its time they acted to do this in Australia's own interests.

By that I mean, investing in increased aid and development will enhance our national security, boost our economy and help achieve our foreign policy objectives. And it might help house, feed and educate millions of people along the way.

If our region fails socially, economically and politically then it creates resentment towards the developed world and Australia in particular. The East Timorese antipathy towards Australia as a result of the Timor Gap issue is a case in point. Aside for providing a breeding ground for future terrorists, an unstable and poverty stricken region is certain to produce a refugee crisis in future years. By investing in aid and development today we help prevent the conditions that lead to insecurity for Australia tomorrow.

Poverty and instability generate civil war and sectarian strife. Australia is bound to respond through costly interventions much as it has in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon's. If these countries can develop more vibrant and inclusive

economies with improved health and education standards these tensions will subside. Australia along with the rest of the developed world has a role to play.

The aid and development dollar is (to my mind) about equipping the developing world with the resources they need to develop a **strong trading economy**. Aid and trade in tandem have produced significant results in countries such as Thailand and Vietnam. In Vietnam the number of people living in extreme poverty plummeted from 14.2% to 2.2% in just nine years.

But if greater security for Australia, fewer wars, fewer refugees, increased economic prosperity aren't enough consider the humanitarian implications of doing nothing.

Half of the worlds poor live in our region. That means that there are millions of children deprived of food, safe drinking water, health and shelter. Half a million children in South East Asia and the Pacific will die from poverty related causes this year. In light of the horrific reality of extreme poverty on our doorstep it is not good enough that Australia commits just 0.3% of GDP to overseas Aid and development.

As Tim Costello says "if Australia doesn't respond to the moral call to help these poor countries there is a strong argument out of an enlightened self interest."

Along with other developed nations the Australian government committed to a target of 0.7% of GDP for overseas development assistance. This is not a random number. This is the amount of money needed to lift the worlds poorest of poor out of extreme poverty.

That is why my organization will join with many others to maintain pressure on Australia's politicians to meet the targets they have set. We are only asking them to live up to their word.

The Make Poverty History Concert along with the Make Poverty History Zero Seven Road Trip had an enormous impact.

It should be said however...that...

I don't for one second believe that a concert along will Make Poverty History.

No rock concert can stop 800 million people going to bed hungry every night.

But just because a problem is hard doesn't mean we shouldn't try to solve it.

A BUS boycott didn't end racial segregation in the United States.

The fall of the Berlin Wall didn't end the Cold War.

A torn and charred draft ticket didn't bring the Diggers home from Vietnam.

And a concert alone won't make poverty history.

The Make Poverty History campaign knows concerts are simply a tool for promoting the issue of extreme poverty.

If it takes a few concerts to remind Australians that more than a billion people live on less than \$US1 a day, then we have achieved our objective.

Above all else we recognise....that...

For the first time in history we have a plan to end extreme poverty- called the Millennium Development Goals, and we have the resources to make it happen.

The question then is: Do we have the will?

To this question...my answer is increasingly yes!

Oaktree's story of change.

10,000 thousand young Australian's work hand-in-hand to provide over 35,000 young people in six countries in the developing world with access to educational opportunities.

STORY- In closing tonight....story from Robben Island.

Our challenge now and in the coming years is that we would look beyond ourselves, towards the future. The future by Us.