



District Director

Pre-July report

D72 District Director 2020-2021

Rob Woolley
28 June 2020

We are going to approach this year with a clean slate. If it was done before, it is no guarantee it will be done again. It's exciting and challenging and takes a lot of work but we will all be better because of it.

New Zealand split into two Districts two years ago and has struggled to find its feet since. Covid-19 had a sizeable impact but even before that, a record marketing budget could not halt falling numbers. Why? Well, that's the \$50,000 question. To help understand the problem, we have gone to you - the members - via a questionnaire and reviewed last year's club visit reports. Thank you for your overwhelming response. The analysis is complete and a strategic plan is being created. Stay tuned!

However, we have not been standing idly by. We have decided to focus on our product – better speakers and better leaders – and go toward making things simple and focused. This has seen the 0800 Number, Club Finder and District Supplies cease. Thanks go to Neville Isherwood, Mike Diggins and Alison McKone for providing those services. We have created a District Procedures Review Committee, currently comprising International Director, David Templeman (Chair), and Past Distinguished District Director, Carol Mitchell, to report back next year. It is likely further rationalisation will occur in the coming weeks and months.

Ownership is an important concept. We have lost five clubs and have a further 13 under the eight-member threshold required to be in good standing. Much of this is due to Covid-19 but we don't want to make any excuses. Ourselves and our clubs are what we make them with the help of others. Same with training.

This year, we were allowed to, and decided it was best to, conduct Club Officer Training Round 1 online and District-wide. We feel this could lead to greater knowledge-sharing and a stronger and more consistent product. Early indications look promising. I invite you to get involved, learn, grow and let your clubs benefit.

District Officer Training has changed too! The North Island District Officers congregate in Wellington while the South Island District Officers will do so in Christchurch for a hybrid training weekend connected by Zoom. Kath Cherrie and Helen Cartmell are our District Trainers and, along with our incoming Programme Quality Director, David O'Brien, we are in good hands for training.

Changes to Division Conferences had unintended flow-on effects to contest schedules the past two years. This year, three Divisions (E, G and H) will have two Conferences with two contests each – November and April – while three Divisions (C, D and J) will have one Conference with four contests in March. I feel it would be beneficial to standardise these so, come May, there will be an opportunity to do this at the District Council Meeting. Contests are the core value of excellence in action. If you cannot compete or choose not to, please help facilitate these events by being functionaries, judges or event organisers. The latter, I have found, is one of the best skills I have gained in Toastmasters.

Pathways! From July 1, there is only Pathways! Our adoption rates are 'ok' but, realistically, we all should be working through these projects. Some excellent suggestions have come forward for how to improve members' engagement and enjoyment of Pathways and we will be trying to implement those in the coming months, plus Toastmasters international continues to make incremental enhancements. Many of the resources will appear on the Toastmasters New Zealand website. This site will be upgraded in the coming weeks. If you were one of several who made suggestions, we listened, and we will be implementing these where possible.

And that brings me to our role as “District.” If you have feedback or suggestions, email us or call us and let us know. We can’t guarantee we will do what you want but we can guarantee we will listen and remember and, if the opportunity occurs and we think it’s in the best interests of all concerned, it will be done. We are also seeking people who are keen to get involved in some way so drop us an email with your name, skills or interests and we will try to get you involved.

We also want to celebrate you, the member. You are our greatest resource and the best evidence we have that Toastmasters works and is worth being a part of. In the coming weeks and months say yes to opportunities, to trying new things, and encouraging others to do likewise.

This is your District, let’s make it the best District it can be.