

Report of the Division Director of the Northern Division

The 2021-2022 year has been an interesting one and it has certainly been one which I have enjoyed.

COVID-19 has had an impact on clubs in the all areas of the division with some clubs going into hibernation because connectivity issues prevented members from attending meetings. The pandemic also impacted on membership through the economic impact created when local businesses which were either owned by or as the employers of members, faced financial ruin. Membership (the attraction and retention) is the major issue facing our clubs in this division.

In September, Lynne and I spent an enjoyable week in Area 9 (Cairns region) visiting all clubs in the area – Cairns Communicators, Innisfail, Kick Start, Marlin Coast and Reef City. Unfortunately, the Area 9 Director Sharne Roby resigned from her leadership role because of family and health issues. I thank Sharne for the hard work she put into her role as Area Director and her support of her clubs.

I was fortunate in being able to attend every Area Conference and Speech Contest in the Northern Division this year – two in Townsville, one in Mackay and one in Innisfail. I thank and congratulate all clubs who organised their respective Area Conferences. Sharne's resignation left Area 9 without an Area Director and I assisted Innisfail with organising their conference. What impressed me was that every Area within the Northern Division stepped in to assist and had at least one member from their area attend the Area 9 Conference to assist. I promote the concept of intentional collaboration and this is clearly evident in this Division.

This year's Northern Division Conference was scheduled to have been coordinated by Area 9 but as that area will be hosting the District Convention and with the pressures created by the lack of an area director. The clubs in Area 13, headed by Area Director, Julie Beer and her committee of Margaret Clancey, Helen Clarke, Lorna Fazldeen, Malcolm Gillham, Bevin Irvin, Graeme McCourt and Betty Sheret, coordinated a fantastic conference. It was wonderful to once again meet in person and to catch up. Intentional Collaboration was once again evident and I was touched that two of my division colleagues – Dawn Smith (Central Division Director) and Jim Fazl (Western Division Director) attended the Northern Division Conference to provide support. I am also grateful that District Director, Robert Green and Club Growth Director, Denise Buckby, attended and provided support as judges (Robert was chief judge) and presented educational sessions on marketing and membership (Denise) and emotional intelligence (Robert).

It was wonderful as Division Director to be able to welcome the division's newest club to their first Northern Division Conference – Mackay Regional Council Toastmasters. Robert visited Mackay (Area 14) last October to officially charter them and to present their Charter Certificate.

The dinner meeting for Talk of the North Toastmasters provided the opportunity for the division to celebrate the District 69's 50th Anniversary. An anniversary cake was cut at the dinner. Anniversary cakes had also been cut at the conferences for Areas 9 and 14.

My name is Brian and I always look on the bright side of life. The pandemic has provided some positive opportunities, particularly in the promotion of the opportunity for online meetings and learning. A number of clubs in the Northern Division have embraced the opportunity to have hybrid clubs, either alternating meetings (one face to face and the next online) or having members zoom into the face to face meeting. Country Communicators (in formation) is a completely online club and we will charter this club before the end of this Toastmasters year. The drive to formation is the result of the hard work of Denis Murphy, Ann Nelson, Olaf Schubert and Jason Rosenberg and we have members in Perth, Sydney, Mackay, Townsville and from remote locations such as Richmond (Queensland) and Katherine. The members from these small remote locations would otherwise not be able to participate in Toastmasters without the assistance of technology.

Last year, I conducted a Youth Leadership program for the students of Richmond P-10 State School via Microsoft Teams (Zoom is blocked on Education Department sites) as part of their after-school homework program. Tanya Sinden, the Head of Department (Curriculum) at Richmond, has joined Country Communicators as a result. District Administration Manager, Liz Hudson and I will be presenting via Microsoft Teams or Zoom to the students at Longreach State High School, as part of their Leadership program. I believe that they will be conducting it off campus so Zoom will work. These online communication platforms are enabling students in remote rural communities to have the same opportunities as students in large urban centres.

I would like to sincerely thank my area directors – Lesley Thorne (Area 2), Julie Beer (Area 13) and Lynne O'Neill (Area 14) for their support of me, their clubs and of each other. I appreciate what you have done throughout this year. I would also like to thank the District Team, especially Robert, Denise, Kevin and Liz for their incredible support.

Brian

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Northern Division Director