



ACTION

TAKING

Volume 1, Issue 1

May 2011



National President's Perspective

Since taking on the role of National President I have marvelled at the diversity that the Rostrum movement throughout Australia demonstrates. From clubs that meet largely for social purposes through to clubs having important roles assisting people for whom English is a second language, improve spoken communication, this diversity is apparent.

Nevertheless, a common bond is in our promise to "...think clearly and speak truly and not to be silent when I ought to speak...". It is in the spirit of this promise that I share two of my observations from the first few months in my role.

The first is that Rostrum is anything but a united body. We are a patchwork (I use the word advisedly) of organisations held together in a loose federation both at the zone and at the national level. In many ways our organisation is run along anarchist lines, if clubs don't agree with the zone they do their own thing and if the zones don't agree with the ARC they do their own thing. There is no overall governing process that provides any level of coherence.

The second insight is that there are a few people that work incredibly hard in a voluntary capacity to promote Rostrum in every zone. It is not possible to single out individuals, as to do so will cause an injustice to others, but I particularly want to thank the webmasters who have been working diligently to establish the current website. If you haven't looked at it yet then I encourage you to do so, it's still a work in progress, but it is showing a lot of promise.

The other group who have collectively

been contributing to raising Rostrum's profile is our Rostrum Voice of Youth Coordinators. This year through the generosity of Sebel, our zones (other than NSW) have been provided with a significant sponsorship boost to help them stage the regional competition. I would like to think that every Rostrum member will contribute in some way to the RVOY competition, be it as an adjudicator, as an official or simply as a school contact.

The RVOY is not likely to be a direct contributor to membership in the short term, but it is an important vehicle for Rostrum to become known in schools, to students and their parents. It is an opportunity for us to explain the why, what and how Rostrum supports personal development. The challenge for us is to maintain the contact with the students through their period of higher education until such a time that they feel that Rostrum can contribute to their career development and join. An attempt has been made to use social networking media to keep in touch with the finalist cohort from last year. We need to do a lot more work in this space to become truly effective.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the organisers of the Rostrum National Convention that is going to run in South Australia on the 7,8 and 9 October. The program appears to be fast-paced with some major highlights like the forum on "freedom of speech" and the training session with Irish Albert on "How to make your audience laugh".

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Is there any ACTION happening in your area that can be recorded here for posterity? Please send articles or photos to me with your name and State by email. Spr Gai Cunningham, Editor gai.cunningham@gmail.com

Yours in Rostrum
Dario Tomat
National President



Sebel ACTION Sponsor of Rostrum Voice Of Youth



Sebel is proud to be the 2011 major sponsor of Rostrum Voice of Youth

We believe that the annual RVOY provides a competitive platform for schools to enhance and maximise the talents of future leaders beyond the sports field. But Rostrum is not just about the leaders.

I have seen too many schools where only the school captain is encouraged to be a confident speaker. I would urge these schools to take up the RVOY challenge and grow 'all' their students into leaders.

Confident speaking is a key business skill, indeed a life skill that gives extra confidence and prepares every student for their future. Presentation skills are valuable in nearly every job and situation you will have throughout your life. That's why Rostrum is also helping Sebel, with public speaking courses for our staff in each state.

Because Public speaking is an important adjunct to the school curriculum, my son has been a participant in Voice of Youth and as my daughter grows, she too will be encouraged to participate.

Last year, I listened to the winner of the senior group, Matt Collins from Kepnock State High and Felix Donovan from Bulli High School Bundaberg runner-up at the national finals.



Both were state high schools and so I would like to point out clearly that this is not an elitist event, it is for all schools.

Sebel is Australia's largest supplier of school furniture and we will be awarding our new Lecterns and Debating Desks as prizes to the School and Prize Student winners in each state.

We hope that through supporting Rostrum Voice of Youth today, we can help you develop our students into the confident speakers and leaders of tomorrow.

All the best

Greg Welsh
CEO Sebel

Speeches are like babies – they are easy to conceive but take a lot of work to deliver properly.

Rostrum Taking ACTION with Rotary in Tasmania

The annual Rotary Youth Leadership Activities (RYLA) week took place at Camp Clayton from Sunday 8th May through to the following Friday. The week was very full on according to the organizer Mrs Jenny Simms. 28 participants aged between 18 and 30 began the day at 7am and finished at 9pm with very little free time. While it may sound daunting, participants were supported by a team of facilitators and developed their skills through fun and hands-on activities.

The contents of the week are a closely guarded secret but we are privileged to know about 15 minutes on Tuesday morning.



The Dynamic Duo of Spr Tess McDonagh and Fmn Jill Brasch (L) squeezed '5 steps to preparing a speech' into 15 minutes, then the 28 young people from the Rotary Youth Leadership activities group tackled how they would present a speech to a predetermined audience. The allocated audience included peers, the workplace, the neighbourhood, an educational setting, someone in authority and local government. Each of 6 groups then presented back on their chosen topic and what they would say. Many of the speech topics were from Voice of Youth.

Rostrum has been asked by the incoming Rotary Governor to present a training session for incoming Rotarian office bearers in Launceston in the future.

Publicity pamphlets were distributed to staff and participants. Personal feedback indicated the talk had been pitched at about the right level.

Fmn Jill Brasch says, "I didn't really make a speech, Tess and I took it in turns to present elements of speech making. eg

Tess – Purpose of a speech

Jill – Content – research, exploring a topic, shrinking it and know your audience

Jill – Structure – tell 'em what you will tell 'em, tell 'em, tell 'em what you've told 'em (or beginning, middle and end)

Tess – sounding confident, voice and body language.

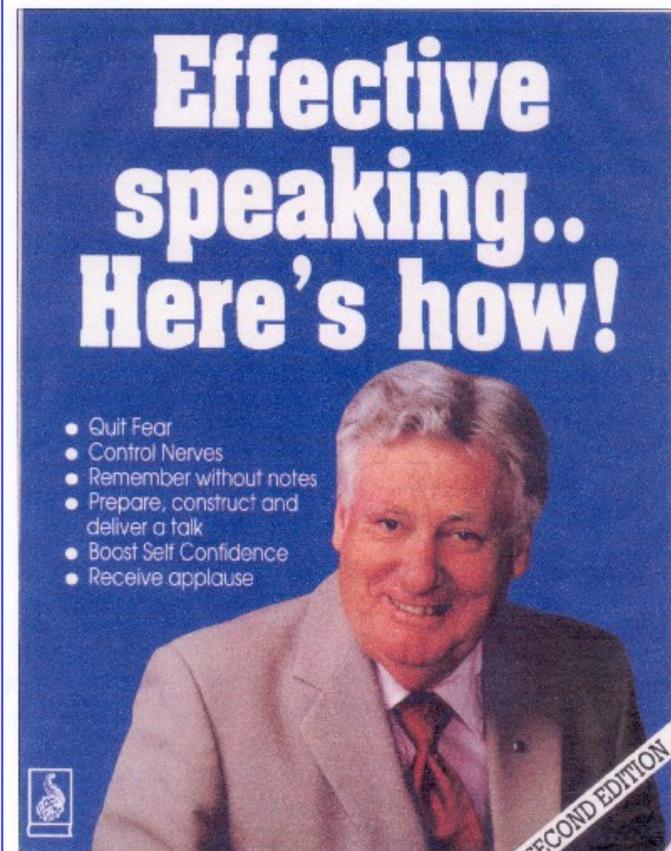
We used a combination of Victorian Rostrum's 5 Steps and Dario's 9 Steps."



Fmn Jill & Spr Tess (4th & 5th from L standing)



Rostrum Taking Action in Queensland



Effective speaking.. Here's how!

- Quit Fear
- Control Nerves
- Remember without notes
- Prepare, construct and deliver a talk
- Boost Self Confidence
- Receive applause

SECOND EDITION

WANTING TO IMPROVE YOUR PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS?

THEN

Talk to your Email Mentor..

This community service is FREE.

Simply Email—jon3326@bigpond.com.

And ask your question—it will be answered ASAP.

Please feel free to print this Email— give to someone whom it may help!

Fraternal greetings from Freeman John Dean (Left),

The poster (Left) got me a gig with fourteen (14) Librarians with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in South East Queensland.

(I joined Rostrum in 1951)

The photo is the cover of my book, I have aged a little since 1987, but the book is now a CD.

Sydney Wicks Competition Topics

- Tomorrow Brings
- Uplifting
- Diversity
- Race Against Time
- Sweeter than Wine
- Conventions

Sydney Wicks Message ACTION South Australia (Continued on page 5)

The following is a copy of the message recorded by the founder of Rostrum, Sidney F Wicks in 1952 and sent to Rostrum Australia.

"I will not keep silent, when I ought to speak. That is the concluding clause of the pledge, which members of Rostrum are required to

take. When I penned those words, I did not think I realised their tremendous implication. I have come to see, to maintain that vow, in all the circumstances and relationships of public life, it demands courage of the highest order.

For make no mistake, the big battalions are on the

side of silence. Prudence, timidity, self interest and worldly ambition paralyse our generous ardour by their nudges and whispers. Be careful now, don't give yourself away. Silence makes no enemies. Silence is neutral. Silence is safe.

But I call to witness the heroic minority in all

political nor economic progress is possible unless public speech is valiant, to speak. Neither

(Continued from page 4) **Sydney Wick's Message ACTION South Australia**

ages, the Prophets and Martyrs and Pioneers and Reformers and lovers of truth, and I am bold to say silence is the arch assassin of truth. The errors and wrongs that enchain mankind are caused not so much by the strepitant arrogance of the wicked as by the silence of the good. Yet there is virtuous silence. The tremendous dignity of the silence of Jesus Christ for his accusers was the most crushing rebuke recorded in the annals of mankind. Speech is not to be glibly used for petty and personal pride, or even when our own honour is

assailed. Speech, is the word we unsheathe and in defence of the weak and the absent. When the vile smear becomes vocal; when the blatant lie is broadcast; when dirt is thrown at shining ideals; when the councils are mighty and muddled by shallow sophistry, then the valiant one cries "Un-sword and at them".

Moreover, there can be no true democracy without free courageous public speech. The tyrannical regimentation of mind and soul gains power when people are afraid to speak. Neither

political nor economic progress is possible unless public speech is efficient and free.

You may not hear my voice again. Think of me as praying to be kept loyal to my Rostrum vow until the hour comes to pass into the eloquent silence of death.

And so I plead with my comrades beneath the Southern Cross to renew with me this great vow – I will not keep silent, when I ought to speak. May God bless you all. May God bless Australia.

Sidney Wicks

Critics Council News by Hartley Hyde ACTION South Australia

I am a Rostrum Critic. That means that I belong to a Rostrum Club and take on the regular responsibilities of membership of that club. I also attend every meeting of another club where I stand up at the end of each meeting and deliver an impromptu speech about how well members have performed and suggest how individual efforts might be improved. Thankfully most members do try to improve and it is rewarding to recognise their efforts.

Critics are human and we all have our individual personalities. Having been a secondary mathematics teacher for most of my life, it doesn't really matter what you choose to call me, be it critic, coach or mentor, I will instinctively behave as a teacher, with all the positives and negatives that might imply.

Critics are often asked to adjudicate competitions. In Rostrum, South Australia, we have the Voice of Youth, the Speaker of

the Year and the Albert Apponyi Contest. We are also asked to adjudicate a number of public speaking competitions in schools.

Four times each year we attend a meeting of fellow critics where we talk about how we might improve our critiques and hone our adjudication skills. After meeting for many years, we have become close friends; we share common problems and discuss ways to improve the effectiveness of Rostrum.

At the most recent meeting of the Critics Council Freeman Patrick Bourke spoke about how we could make our critiques more interesting and helpful. He was right, of course, but I don't want to build your expectation too much just yet — it takes time for some of us to change old habits.

Freeman Peter Martindale prepared a workshop that showed us how poor behaviour in some

hypothetical clubs might lead to a decline in membership. We considered how critics might lead clubs away from risky behaviours such as chair baiting and in-house jokes.

The Critics Council has been asked to review the rules for the Speaker of the Year Competition and I will present an update to the Dais Meeting in May.

In 2012 we will ask some of our more experienced Rostrum members to train as critics. If invited, please take the challenge seriously. If you enjoy speaking there is a good chance you would also enjoy being a critic. Criticising a meeting or adjudicating a competition raises your awareness to new levels. You learn to listen intently and that is the other half of effective communication.

National Secretarial Secretions

Dario said “it will only take a few minutes after each teleconference and meeting...”

Well, I have spent a bit more time than that, but I have phoned and emailed some great people from all parts of Australia. In fact, when I listen to Ian McNamara’s ABC radio program on Sunday mornings – “Australia All Over” – I also think of Rostrum filling a similar role – bringing people together in all regions of Australia, promoting the arts and skills needed to speak with confidence, to participate in meetings with confidence, to deliver a message that will be remembered.

Change and challenge – both sentiments are part of Rostrum and the world we live in.

When I first joined Rostrum in 1976, all Public service departments had a lunchtime from 1pm to 2pm, and most commercial offices too. TV was still a novelty to many people, and news took a day to travel from one state to another in Australia, let alone around the world.

In Rostrum in 1976, my memory was that Dais (now State Council) was far removed from club programs, and ARC was very remote and had little input into State Council or club activities. Even when elected President of my club in 1982, State Council had little input into club activities. Inter-action between clubs was limited to a few debates and the State speaking competition.

A myriad of changes have occurred in our community since those days, changes that make it more important to integrate strongly at ARC level – members are more mobile, administrative and regulatory changes require a more centralised thread in all organisations, and the fixed 1pm lunch is long gone. The media can bring “breaking news” instantly from any part of the world or indeed from space. Websites and marketing across the different arms of the media make it more important to have a strong backbone theme (or “brand”) in organisations, whilst still allowing for individual club characteristics and encouraging

development of individual members at their own pace.

Just as the media brings “breaking news” to our homes and workplaces, equally what Rostrum clubs do to celebrate dates and occasions can be shared across Australia and provide inspiration to another club, thereby strengthening Rostrum overall.

Strength in Rostrum comes from participation. We are fortunate to have many volunteers at club level. Our challenge is how to strengthen our “brand” to ensure there is a strong organisation to hand on to the next generation of members. Part of the solution is to trust each other, to trust zone committees, to trust ARC, to establish the data needed to know what Rostrum is now, to express how Rostrum can meet future needs, and then to know how to persuade people “out there” to allocate some of their precious discretionary time to join Rostrum, try the changes and challenges, and enjoy the confidence.

Spr Dave Asten
National Secretary
Australian Rostrum Council

NATIONAL CONVENTION *Dennis Walsh ACTION South Australia*

The Rostrum National Convention is being held in Adelaide, 7th to 9th October at the Adelaide Meridien Hotel, Melbourne Street, North Adelaide.

We have almost finalized the program and cost and by early next month we will be informing you about both of these important matters. I can tell you that the cost will be less than \$200 to attend all three days of the Convention which includes a cocktail party on the Friday evening, a formal dinner on Saturday evening, a cooked breakfast on Sunday morning, lunches and tea and coffee. This is an absolute bargain price for what you will be getting in terms of quality presenters and fun and fellowship with other Rostrum members, many from our other zones. We have been able to keep the costs very low due to the two fund raising events held last year that were well supported by many members in our zone.

Former Senator Amanda Vanstone and Chris Waterhouse, a finalist in the National Voice of Youth competition, are on a panel on the Friday evening public forum on Freedom of Speech. We are hoping that the Lord Mayor of Adelaide will be giving a workshop presentation on “Adelaide in the 21st Century” and we have invited the SA Governor and his wife to attend the Saturday evening formal dinner.

Irish Albert is giving a workshop “How to Make Your Audience Laugh” on the Saturday morning and this will be one of the highlights of the Convention. Irish has presented to us before at a Zone Convention a few years ago and members who attended are still talking about how fantastic he was. I hope that many of you will support us by attending the Convention which will be a ‘once in a life time’ opportunity in Adelaide.

Our 'Word of the Day', 'ROSTRUM' by Peter Wetherell ACTION South Australia

This should be our word for every day of the year. The Latin word 'rostrum' literally means a beak, as in the beak or bill of a bird, or the snout or muzzle of an animal. The term was used in Roman times for the ram of an ancient warship - a beak-like projection from the prow or bow of the ship - which would be used to ram an enemy. At the date 338 BCE, the battle of Antium was the first naval victory of the Roman republic against antagonistic locals, and six 'rostra' were captured and displayed.

Enter myth or **confusion no. 1**: 'Ramming was a highly effective means of attacking and sinking enemy ships.' No! Instead ramming was a risky and unsure system of attack that required great skill, and a fair amount of luck, to be pulled off successfully. One miscalculation could mean that you would inflict more damage on your own ship than on the ship you attempted to ram.

More ships of this period were starting to be built with reinforced waterlines, which meant that ramming attacks were becoming less effective.



To sink an enemy ship by ramming often meant having to ram the target more than once, before it would finally sink – so the surviving vessel may have been the more maneuverable one. The Rhodians partly solved this problem by having their rams mounted lower on their ship's bows, allowing them to strike an enemy ship's hull beneath the reinforced waterline, but this led to difficulties when attempting to beach the ship. The Romans decided that rapid boarding with a ready stock of heavily armed and well trained soldiers from their land armies, yielded better results.

The ancient Romans adopted the practice of adorning a platform near the Curia (the Senate) in the centre of Rome with the beaks of captured warships, to celebrate their prowess. This elevated place/structure, highly honoured within the ancient Roman Forum, was where orators in general, magistrates, politicians and advocates, spoke to the assembled people of Rome – with orations, and pleadings, and funeral harangues. The place became known as 'the rostra' (Right).

Eventually, there were many rostra within the city of Rome and its republic and its empire. All this led to myth or **confusion no. 2**: after these words 'rostra' and 'rostrum' were absorbed by English in 1542, a classical English

scholar of the 18th century pointed out in 1766 that 'rostra', a plural word, now referred to a single structure. He retro-fitted the singular form when he proposed that such a pulpit, or stage, or dais, or podium, should henceforth be called a 'rostrum'. But the unusual connections with this word do not end there – the word 'rostrum' is derived from the Latin verb *rodere*: to chew or nibble or gnaw, as in the description 'rodent' for a rat-like creature. We can easily imagine rat behaviour as furtive and watchful - they are always poised ready to scamper. We know that swarms of rats are given to suddenly scurrying away in all directions. In any case, they would be the types 'who' would desert a sinking ship! Does all this really describe how we collectively behave in our Rostrum institution?

Next time some 'crew member' at your meet is *chewing* your ear, or wading into you with *biting* sarcasm, you'll remember what I told you. If your orator is speaking truly and *incisively*, then lie back and enjoy it, and think of rostra - and **Rostrum**.



Deadline for next Issue Rostrum Taking ACTION 15th August

Share a joke with your friends



Usually there's no computer problem I can't solve. But I met my match when I turned on my machine and was greeted with the message "Keyboard not detected. Hit any key to continue."

While this is the first Issue of the National Newsletter called 'Rostrum taking ACTION', it is not the first National newsletter. It would be interesting to know how many Newsletters there have been over the years. If anyone can extend my knowledge, I would be grateful.

Thank you to the contributors of this edition. Thank you to those, whose interesting articles I shall pursue in future editions. This is a new venture for me, creating a newsletter. I usually take over one that is happening and continue it.

I enjoy the pursuit of the assembly, like a giant jigsaw puzzle without its original picture guide is the challenge of each issue. The whole point is knowing when to stop. Ed.

Australian Rostrum Council 2011

and Events 2011

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June Teleconference TBA

July 29, 30 National RVOY Perth WA
Annual National Meeting ARC
Perth WA

August 15 Deadline for 'ACTION'

September Teleconference TBA

October 7-9 National Convention in Adelaide
Meridien Hotel Melbourne St,
North Adelaide

November 15 Deadline for 'ACTION'

December Teleconference TBA