



# *Rostrum Club 32 at Burnside Visitor's Guide*

## **Origin of Rostrum**

Rostrum is a public speaking organisation that was founded in England in 1923. It was established in Australia in 1930, and there are now about 200 clubs throughout Australia. The first club in South Australia began in 1936. Rostrum was established partly to enable its members to develop the skills and confidence to speak against injustice in society.

## **Purpose of Rostrum**

Rostrum is for those who want to learn how to speak to groups, chair meetings, and participate in meetings. It provides opportunities for members to learn and practice skills in a supportive environment.

Rostrum is a non-profit, non-sectarian and non-religious organisation.

## **Prominent former members of SA Rostrum**

Former South Australian Premiers Lyn Arnold and Dean Brown were members of Rostrum, as were Deputy Premier Stephen Baker, a Senator, Federal and State Parliamentarians, a High Court Judge, senior public servants, business people and academics.

"I think the best public speaking teacher I had was the Rostrum movement..." Chester Porter, QC, in his book *The Gentle Art of Persuasion*.

## **Club 32**

A group of people interested in forming a new Rostrum club started meeting at the Burnside Community Centre from February 2009. Club 32 became a chartered club on 20 July 2009.

## **Club 32 composition**

About 20 people attend meetings. There is a rich cultural mix and wide age range among members. The attendance at meetings is about 50:50 male and female. Some long-term Rostrum members have helped establish the club, but most members are relatively new to Rostrum. We are all on our own learning curve.

## **Committee**

Each November the members elect club office-bearers – President, Secretary, Treasurer, Program Director, Membership Manager, Web Manager, Dais members, and committee members. Training is provided for incoming officer-bearers, which can benefit them during their appointment in the club, and involvement in other organisations. A club Critic is also appointed for a year.

## **Meetings**

Meetings are held on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month (not public holidays) at the Burnside Community Centre, corner of Portrush and Greenhill Roads, Burnside. Please be at the meeting room at 7:15 pm for a prompt 7:30 pm start. The meeting concludes at 9:00 pm. An early arrival will enable a club member to talk with you and obtain some information that can be used in introducing you to the meeting.

## **The meeting agenda**

The agenda is distributed in advance of the meeting, and formal meeting procedures are followed. Members are rostered to take roles such as being the Chair, taking minutes, and welcoming visitors, so they gain experience in different aspects of meeting procedure. The person chairing the meeting is addressed as Madam, or Mister, Chair. We strive to be inclusive in language and conduct.

The first part of the meeting is a business session where reports are given and club activities are discussed.

The second part of the meeting involves speaking exercises. Members are rostered to prepare a speech on a particular topic and purpose. The first speech delivered by a new member is the *About Me* speech, which is allocated 3 minutes.

## **Development Program**

All members participate in the Development Program. The Program Director plans themes and speech topics for meetings. Members proceed through a checklist of speeches designed to inform, persuade, motivate/inspire, and entertain. Practice is also given in delivering a reading, and impromptu (3 minutes) and longer speeches (10 minutes). Most speeches are of 5 minutes duration.

## **Training, references and support**

Upon joining the club, a new member is given a kit which contains reference books and handouts about speaking and meeting skills. The club Critic also makes presentations to the meetings from time to time on how to prepare and deliver particular types of speeches. At the end of each meeting, the Critic comments on each presentation, and offers advice in a kindly manner on how the participants could improve.

Members are each allocated a mentor from within the club. The mentors are experienced senior Rostrum members who provide advice and support at meetings, and between meetings, if required.

## **Visitor participation**

You are welcome to attend meetings to see if you would like to join. Visitors do not speak at meetings and may not vote. At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair will call for members to introduce visitors, and at that point you, and the person introducing you, will stand. A few words will be spoken about you as an introduction, and then you will both be seated.

## **Joining club 32**

If you would like to join club 32, and can make a commitment to attend meetings regularly, please ask the Secretary for an application form. Your application for membership will be read out at two consecutive meetings, and then a ballot will be taken on whether to admit you as a member. The ballot is taken in your brief absence from the meeting. If successful, at the next meeting you will be inducted into the club. This is a simple ceremony where you are asked to repeat the Rostrum promise, as follows:-

*“I promise to submit myself to the discipline of this Rostrum Club and to endeavour to advance its ideals and enrich its fellowship. I will defend freedom of speech in the community, and will try at all times to think truly and to speak clearly. I promise not to be silent when I ought to speak.”*

## **Fees**

The fee for joining the Burnside club is \$10, plus the session fee (6 monthly) of \$35. There is a pro rata fee if you join later in a session.

## **Benefits of joining Rostrum**

You are bound to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence in speaking to groups, charring meetings, and participating in meetings. Rostrum conducts speaking contests for its members and for secondary school students (The Voice of Youth). If you wish to progress to competitions, leadership and organisational involvement, you will gain further skills. All of these skills will stand you in good stead in your career, involvement in community organisations, and for special occasions. There may also be benefits to you in learning how to order your thoughts in a logical manner; form and defend a specific opinion; and to be confident and persuasive in your communication with other people.

While the focus is primarily on learning, Rostrum membership also brings you into contact with interesting friendly people who wish to develop themselves. Each meeting, and each exercise you undertake, will provide mental stimulation. We hear wonderful stories, and meetings are very enjoyable.

Further information is available from:-

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Di Pepper, Program Director  
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