

VISITOR'S GUIDE TO SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ROSTRUM

Dear Visitor,

Welcome to South Australian Rostrum. We are delighted you chose to visit our website and hope that you will decide to visit one or more of our clubs.

Rostrum - What's it all about?

Rostrum was founded in England in 1923 but really began to blossom when it became established in Australia in 1930. There are now almost 200 clubs in Australia. Meetings are generally between one and two hours, depending on the club. Clubs may meet weekly, fortnightly or monthly. There are breakfast, lunchtime and evening clubs, some include a meal.

Modern Rostrum Clubs cater, not only for business people, but now have a broader focus. You will find people from all walks of life in most Rostrum clubs, students, migrants, professionals, home-makers, tradesmen and many others. Rostrum is not a service club so there are few additional demands on your time outside preparing for and attending club meetings.

Are all Rostrum Clubs the same?

Each Rostrum club is different. Whilst they all share the same goals they each have a character of their own. If you are not sure if a particular club will meet your needs why not visit a few others. The common aims of most Rostrum clubs are to teach members:

- ◆ to communicate effectively as individuals, and with small and large groups of people;
- ◆ to build self confidence;
- ◆ to overcome nervousness when speaking in public;
- ◆ to develop their speaking and presentation skills to the best of their ability;
- ◆ to chair meetings effectively; and
- ◆ to hold office on a committee.

Why Rostrum and not some other speaking group?

Two things make Rostrum stand out from other organisations teaching oral communication skills:

1. **Flexibility** - You can learn as quickly or as slowly as you like. Clubs have an officer responsible for programming who will take a personal interest in you. You can fit in with the club's own program or, if you want to develop quickly, you may elect to follow the Rostrum New Members Development Program. This consists of a series of structured speaking exercises. The program is supported by an excellent booklet that explains how to go about each exercise.
2. **Personal attention** - You will be given constructive friendly advice by the club's Coach/Critic, an experienced member who has been trained to assist all members no matter how experienced or inexperienced they may be in the art of effective communication.

Rostrum can assist you in sharpening your communication skills, and in developing your self confidence. Rostrum members know exactly how you feel, they have already been through the experience and will be extremely supportive. You can develop life long friendships within the

Rostrum movement. In today's competitive world the ability to communicate is essential.....can you afford not to develop these skills? If your answer is no, give serious consideration to joining Rostrum.

The typical Rostrum meeting

Whilst all clubs have their own character and operate independently most follow a similar format. Except for "special meetings" most clubs will follow a similar agenda.

Usually the meeting will be in three main parts,

- ◆ The Exercise section,
- ◆ The Evaluation by the Club Coach/Critic.
- ◆ The Business section,

The Business section of the meeting is usually the shortest. Each meeting is chaired by a different club member. This way all members are given the opportunity to develop their leadership and organisational skills, and to practise running a meeting.

The person chairing the meeting is given an agenda to follow, and is responsible for progressing the meeting, staying on schedule, being a friendly host and seeing the will of the meeting is met. These skills are invaluable when chairing meetings in the broader community.

The member chairing the meeting is supported by the club's President, Secretary and other office bearers.

The Exercise section is where members have the chance to practise their communication skills. Programs vary from club to club but may include:

- ◆ Prepared speeches of between 3 and 15 minutes in duration (5 minutes most common)
- ◆ Readings of all types, eg. poetry, novel, magazine, own writings.
- ◆ Short notice or impromptu speeches, usually of 2 to 3 minutes.
- ◆ Tutorials by a senior club member.
- ◆ Table topics where all members have the opportunity to speak on a common topic for 1 or 2 minutes.
- ◆ Special exercises such as "Just a minute"
- ◆ Role playing
- ◆ Presentations using speaking aids such as data projectors or white boards.

Programs are varied, interesting, entertaining and designed to involve all members.

The Evaluation by the Club Coach/Critic is an extremely important part of all Rostrum club meetings. Rostrum Coaches/Critics are sensitive to the needs of the individual. They are there to provide encouragement and constructive criticism of your efforts. They will offer helpful advice and suggestions as to how you can improve your skills for future exercises, and for when you have the opportunity to practise those skills in the wider community.

Why are Rostrum Critics different to other Critics?

In some organisations that teach communication skills you may be criticised by your peers, sometimes these people will have had far less experience than you. They may also lack the sensitivity and empathy required to be a good evaluator.

In Rostrum critics are encouraged to become accredited by undertaking special training courses and serving a number of terms as a Club Critic. They are then assessed by their peers before being considered for accreditation. Rostrum critics are extremely approachable.

Special Rostrum Meetings

During the year most clubs hold special meetings. These meetings present new opportunities for members to practise their communication and presentation skills and to develop new ones. Some such meetings are:

- ◆ Joint meetings with another club;
- ◆ Club dinners;
- ◆ Debates;
- ◆ Training meetings; and
- ◆ Outdoor meetings.

Rostrum programs are usually imaginative, there is always something to be learnt from other club members as well as from the club's critic. The more you participate in meetings the more you will learn. Rostrum is a self-help organisation. Undoubtedly the more you put in to it the more you will get out of it!

Other Rostrum Functions

The strength of Rostrum is it's club based approach to teaching communication skills. As a club member you become a member of the wider Rostrum family. Interaction between members and other clubs is encouraged. Members are welcome to visit other clubs, local and interstate.

To assist in promoting fellowship and friendship various events are organised to which all members, and often their family and friends are invited. These events may vary from State to State but may include an Incoming Officers Dinner, Speaker of the Year Competition, Anniversary Lunch, Impromptu Speaking Competition, Convention and Training Sessions.

The Voice of Youth

Rostrum is basically a self-help organisation, not a service club. The one exception to the rule is the "Voice of Youth" contest. This contest is conducted in most States, on an annual basis, utilising the expertise of Rostrum members. It allows members the opportunity to use the skills they have developed at club level.

The competition is for High School students and is divided into two sections for students under 15 years and under 18 years of age. The "Voice of Youth" competition is Australia's premier Youth Speaking Competition.

A few formalities

Friendship and a relaxed atmosphere are an important part of any Rostrum club, however there are still a few formalities most clubs adhere to. Members are usually addressed by their formal titles. You are likely to encounter titles such as Speaker, Freeman and Coach/Critic, a short explanation of those titles follows

- ◆ ***Speaker***

Once you become a member of Rostrum you are given the title of "Speaker".

- ◆ ***Freeman***

A "Freeman" of Rostrum is a member who has been elevated to that position by a Council of Freemen. Conferring of the title must be approved by the National President of Rostrum. Amongst other criteria, to become a Freeman a member must have given long and conspicuous service at club level, in Rostrum generally and in the wider community. It is not a title that is conferred lightly.

◆ **Coach/Critic**

The club Coach/Critic's job is to evaluate the meeting and the performance of those participating. The criticism is constructive and designed to assist the personal development of the member being criticised.

During the course of the meeting you may hear phrases you may not be familiar with. If you wish to clarify any matter simply ask your host, the club President or any other member, they will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

How can I join?

The procedure to join Rostrum may vary from State to State and from club to club. Ask the Club President or Membership Manager what you need to do if you are interested in joining. They will be happy to assist you.

A prospective member must be nominated by a member of Rostrum. The nomination will be voted on by club members in accordance with the clubs By-Laws and the Rostrum Constitution.

Once the formalities have been completed you will be inducted into the club by the President in a simple ceremony.

Most clubs supply new members with a New Members Kit containing helpful publications to assist you in your development as a Speaker.

How much will membership cost?

The cost of belonging to a Rostrum club varies depending on a number of factors including the cost of hiring a meeting venue and whether a meal is served. In comparison to joining most other types of clubs joining Rostrum is inexpensive.

Fees are paid on a session by session basis. There are two sessions a year.

There is bound to be a Rostrum Club to suit your needs.

Require more information

Contact: Peter Martindale on 0418 820 702