

**Speech by Adrian Nelson, President of the Rotary Club of Melbourne, Wednesday 24th May, 3pm
on the occasion of the official launch of the Peace Bells at Rotary Melbourne Peace Park**

Lord Mayor Sally Capp, Consul General Junji Shimada, Nobel Peace Laureate Tilman Ruff, current and Past Rotary District Governors and Rotary leaders, Rotarians, and guests,

On behalf of the Rotary Club of Melbourne, welcome to the Rotary Melbourne Peace Park.

The Rotary Club of Melbourne is Australia's first and largest Rotary Club, established in 1921. We have always been a club of Big Ideas. We helped establish Lifeline, International House, and launch the Scouting Movement in Australia. In more recent years, we have led the fight to end trachoma in remote indigenous communities, provided relief to bushfire and flood survivors, and give every child a future by partnering with UNICEF to vaccinate 100,000 children across nine South Pacific Island nations.

In 1935, at the request of the Rotary Club of Melbourne, the City of Melbourne made available this area in the King's Domain for a Rotary "Grove of Friendship" where trees could be planted or dedicated to honour distinguished Rotarians or mark significant Rotary occasions. The park later became known as the Rotary Park of Remembrance. We are delighted that this enduring and supportive relationship with the City of Melbourne continues today to allow Melburnians and visitors to enjoy and respect this living piece of Rotary history.

The park was inaugurated in March 1935 when Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary, planted a Brush Box tree, in his only visit to Australia. We have now honoured over 30 Presidents of Rotary International here, with their plaques scattered around this Park, including Australia's first Rotary International President Sir Angus Mitchell, a past president of the Rotary Club of Melbourne. Governors of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks and John Landy planted trees to celebrate the golden jubilee and centenary of Rotary respectively. To mark the strong friendship of Angus Mitchell and Paul Harris, the red granite bench seat you see behind you was placed here in 1953, designed by club Past President Percy Oakley.

Today is a momentous day in the history of Rotary in Australia. Today, as we officially launch these beautiful Peace Bells, we officially rename the park the Rotary Melbourne Peace Park.

Peace and Conflict Resolution is one of Rotary International's 7 Areas of Focus. Rotary holds the highest status offered to a nongovernmental organization at the United Nations, and annually holds a Rotary Day there to highlight our shared vision for Peace.

Rotary Melbourne has a history of involvement in Peace Initiatives. Following World War II Sir Angus Mitchell led the negotiation and re-admission of Rotary Clubs in Germany and Japan to Rotary International. In 1989, Rotary Melbourne hosted and organised the sixth ever Rotary Peace Forum, and the first in Australasia.

In recent years, Rotary Melbourne is unmatched in the world, sponsoring a record number of Peace Scholars, with Bob Fels recognised internationally by the Rotary Foundation for his development of Rotary Peace Centres. Ours is a club of promoting peace. With the installation of the Peace Bells, we will now hold an annual event here at the Peace Park to celebrate the International Day of Peace each September.

In addition to developing peace promotion initiatives, Rotary Melbourne also has a long-standing commitment to building strong connection with the local Naarm and Bunurong community. Reconciliation, acknowledgement of and engagement with our indigenous community is important as we continue to strive to develop respectful relationships with our first nation friends.

I would like to thank the many Rotary partners and supporters who have helped make this project happen. We have received financial support from Rotarians near and far. From individual Rotarians at the Rotary Club of Melbourne to international friends from the Rotary Club of Calgary, Canada and the Rotary Club of Victor Island, Nigeria. Rotary International is a major financial supporter, and I personally thank Rotary International President Jennifer Jones in recognising this as the Legacy Project of the Rotary International Convention here in Melbourne this week.

Thank you to Rotary Districts, and Rotary and Rotaract Clubs across Victoria who have contributed, including Rotary Districts 9790, 9800, 9810 & 9820. In particular I would like to thank District Governor Amanda Wendt of our own District 9800 for her leadership in fundraising and bringing the Victorian Districts together to make this happen. I acknowledge the presence today of the many supporters of this project and I thank you all.

We have reached today's historic launch of the Peace Bells due to the ongoing efforts of many teams of Rotarians. Thank you to our club's Environment and Sustainability Committee, and to the past and present committee chairs and members of our Rotary Park Committee who are here today. The Park Committee and the Rotary Melbourne Archives Team have also researched all the Rotarians with commemorations here at the Park, and their living stories are all now live on a dedicated new website for the Rotary Melbourne Peace Park. We will continue to work with the City of Melbourne when we plan to place QR Codes on each plaque to enable visitors to learn more about Rotary, its projects and its people.

And finally today, thank you to our club's Project Leader, Rob McGuirk. Without Rob's leadership and vision, and tireless determination, we would not have these Bells. It is my special honour to announce that the Board of the Rotary Club of Melbourne has voted to confer upon Rob a special Paul Harris Fellow recognition for his ongoing efforts to promote Rotary and Peace with the creation of these Peace Bells. Rob, we hope to make this presentation within the next month. Thank you for all your work.

It is now my pleasure to handover to our Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sally Capp, followed by the ringing of the bells, and a special message from Nobel Laureate Tilman Ruff.