Event: Camberwell Rotary Club, weekly meeting
Date: 18 May 2016
Location: Camberwell Rotary Club

Speech notes
Vice-Chancellor Professor Linda Kristjanson
Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today.

Rotary and Swinburne have each been founded on a shared desire to make a difference to the world through education and empowerment.

Our partnership is creating a powerful, and meaningful force within our communities.

As we look to ways to deepen and strengthen our bond, it is timely to look to our shared connections of the past, and what we can offer together in the future.

Shared history

Swinburne and Rotary both emerged early in the 20th Century, born of a desire to make a difference.

Swinburne was established in Hawthorn in 1908, only a few short years after Rotary was founded in Chicago.

Swinburne's founder - Victorian Government Minister, business leader and philanthropist, George Swinburne - saw the need for an education facility that empowered, educated and inspired a new generation.

He was passionate about the importance of education in providing equal opportunity, believing that:

“All young people should be assisted and not merely the fortunate few.”

The historical record reminds us that Swinburne and Rotary have had a long-standing personal connection.

George Swinburne was a member of Australia’s first Rotary Club, founded in Melbourne in 1921.

George and his wife Ethel were dedicated servants of their community.
They worked tirelessly to drive innovation in business and education and to contribute to the public good through their many philanthropic activities… including Ethel’s work gaining support for the establishment of a women’s technical college in 1916.

At George Swinburne's death in 1928, Melbourne's *Argus* newspaper reported the following condolences by Melbourne Rotary Club president, Mr Thomas Baker:

"Mr. Swinburne was a Rotarian in every way. He was a good citizen, and a great man from the political point of view."

Club members stood in silence that day, as a mark of respect for George Swinburne.

Shared values

These early Swinburne and Rotary connections have continued over the past century.

Our organisations share a passion for serving others, advancing world understanding and encouraging goodwill.

We at Swinburne have not forgotten our roots and remain deeply committed to providing access to education for all.

For example, the Young Mums Program, delivered on our Croydon campus, enables teenage mothers to complete their secondary studies in an environment where they can also care for their babies:

Babies attend classes with their mum

Classrooms are set up to allow them to feed, change and play with their babies while participating in the class

Our program changes these mothers’ lives and, by extension, their babies’ lives in positive ways

Some of these young women are survivors of domestic violence, drug abuse and social isolation.
The program makes a real difference not only to our young mums, but also to their children. It sets these young families up for a better future.

Swinburne is also proud to be the first education institution to join the Financial Inclusion Action Plan program established by Good Shepherd Microfinance.

The Financial Inclusion Action Plan pilot program exists to create a national network of organisations across sectors, peak bodies and governments that is actively committed to financial inclusion in Australia.

The program is the first of its kind. It will support ten participating organisations to develop their own Action Plans in order to promote financial inclusion in Australia and ultimately help to build a stronger, financially resilient, equal and just society.

Swinburne is the only university selected to participate in the pilot. Other participants are:
Suncorp
ANZ
Commonwealth Bank
Energy Australia
Anglicare
Brotherhood of St Lawrence
Bapt Care
IAG

The Financial Inclusion Action Plan pilot program is supported by the Australian Government, the UNSW Centre for Social Impact and Ernst & Young.

Each participating organisation will develop and launch a Financial Inclusion Action Plan by October 2016.

At Swinburne, we are particularly interested in how we improve support for students exposed to financial hardship.
This project is important to Swinburne as part of our work to create a more financially and socially inclusive community. We wish to set an example, leading our community and our sector.

Swinburne recognises that education as a way out of poverty. It is our responsibility to educate and support financially resilient members of Australian society.

Like Rotary, for us a there is a vocational element to our work.

Swinburne students are encouraged to take the opportunity to fully engage in the world around them.

Our program, the **Swinburne Advantage**, guarantees every undergraduate student an opportunity to participate in:

- Professional degrees, placements and internships
- Industry-linked projects
- Study tours
- Other activities including volunteering in vocational and community settings

As employers, I want to extend to you the invitation to make full use of the benefits of our work-integrated learning programs.

Many employers who have chosen to be part of the Swinburne’s work-integrated learning programs have found the talent and enthusiasm of our students so valuable they have offered them permanent positions after graduation.

By employing a Swinburne student, you can:

- Gain insight into a youthful perspective and the latest ideas
- Discover new talent before your competitors
- Develop leadership and mentorship capabilities in your staff
- Connect yourself with Swinburne’s educational and business networks
- Take advantage of a cost-effective way of gaining innovative solutions
International community and industry engagement are also important components of our Research activities.

At Swinburne, we are dedicated to research that has positive economic and social impact in local and international communities.

Neuroscience researchers from Swinburne are partnering with one of India’s largest private hospitals to improve the diagnosis of epilepsy in villages and remote communities across India.

The project will develop products and technologies that can be used to help local health works diagnose epilepsy in the early stages and refer patients for treatment in urban centres.

The partnership builds on research conducted in partnership with St Vincent’s Hospital in Melbourne, where Magnetoencephalography – or MEG – scans help diagnose epilepsy. More than 50 patients have undergone MEG scans in Melbourne.

Accurate diagnosis leads to more effective treatment. This is life-changing for people with epilepsy.

We are proud to have research such as this recognised globally.

The Academic Ranking of World Universities places Swinburne in the top three per cent of universities in the world.

And last year, for the first time, Swinburne entered the Times Higher Education Top 100 universities under 50 years old.

Our connection with international and multicultural communities has also been recognised – this year Times Higher Education ranked Swinburne as one of the top 100 most international universities in the world.

Our commitment to diversity and multiculturalism has led us to appoint a Director of Multicultural Engagement.

Chin Tan comes to us with experience leading multicultural communities in Victoria.
He is leading us to cultivate, foster and harness cultural diversity at Swinburne and to promote a culture that is inclusive for all.

Swinburne recognises that we have an opportunity to harness our strengths as a culturally diverse community.

The range of life experiences and achievements found at Swinburne enhances our capacity to remain innovative and productive in the work we do.

Considering our shared history and values, it is not surprising that there already are many examples of collaboration between Swinburne and its local Rotary Clubs.

The launch of Boroondara Cares, an initiative of nine Boroondara Rotary Clubs, was held at Swinburne’s AMDC building in 2015.

[As you have already heard,] A Swinburne team helped to develop the Boroondara Cares logo, marketing collateral and website.

We are looking forward to working with Boroondara Cares on the next phase of the marketing plan later this year.

Swinburne encourages students to consider the Global Rotary Scholarship, awarded by District 9800, worth between 30,000 and 60,000 U-S Dollars for overseas postgraduate studies.

And the Camberwell Rotary Club has awarded a $2000 community service award to Swinburne staff for the past three years – [waiting on list of winners]

In recent years, we have been pleased to welcome Rotary to the Swinburne campus.

In two weeks, we will host the training of some 60 newly elected Rotary presidents from District 9800 for the second year.

And soon after that, I am very much looking forward to the Camberwell Art Show in the ATC building on our Hawthorn campus,
the third year that we have had the pleasure of hosting this wonderful exhibition.

These events are important to Swinburne.

We are a university for our community.

We encourage you to continue to share our wonderful facilities for important events in the Rotary calendar.

The future: deepening our partnership

We have so much to build on. We have a history, a shared story, a shared experience of serving our community.

At Swinburne, we understand the importance of partnerships such as ours.

The Swinburne team includes staff members who carry responsibility for making sure we are a great partner to Rotary Clubs, and that we continue to grow our relationship with you.

Working together, I believe Rotary and Swinburne are even stronger and more effective in our shared aim to effect positive and meaningful change in our community.

As we explore our common interests and challenges I expect we will find even more opportunities for collaboration.

I look forward to the next stage in our ongoing dialogue.

I look forward to seeing how we can make a difference to our community, together.