

# BACKGROUND TO MUNA IN AUSTRALIA

Rotary Model United Nations Assembly or MUNA is all about building bridges of goodwill for world peace and understanding in the minds of our youth. As we move into the third millennium is it too much to hope that by dialogue between young peoples the future of those who inhabit the planet earth will be assured? Regrettably, many leaders have exploited differences of race, religion and nationalism among their followers simply to consolidate their own power. The lessons from two great world wars and numerous lesser conflicts should be absorbed by our youth so that they can avoid repeating the mistakes of history. MUNA challenges our youth to respect and tolerate differences of race, religion and nationalism whilst retaining their own individualism and best of their national traditions.

MUNA as a concept arose in North America from the desire of young people to simulate the great debates of the United Nations Assembly. MUNA was first conducted in Rotary by Rotary in Winnipeg in Canada and introduced to Australia by the Rotary Club of Lake Cargelligo in 1980. In 1988 the Rotary Club of Forbes realised the potential for Rotary to spread MUNA more widely and undertook MUNA 88 – a Rotary Bicentennial Project for Youth. The challenge issued by Forbes has been taken by many Rotary Districts so that now MUNA has spread throughout Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and world wide. The first National MUNA was held in the Australian Parliament in August, 1997.

The United Nations has given enthusiastic support for the ongoing growth of this very worthwhile project for youth. In 1989, President Royce Abbey of Melbourne placed MUNA on the world Youth Activities Committee Agenda for Rotary International and it was fitting that MUNA was included as part of the Rotary International Conference conducted in Melbourne in 1993. In June 1995, a MUNA delegation of five students representing Australia attended the Rotary/United Nations Presidential MUNA celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the U.N Charter in San Francisco.

Rotary MUNA is now conducted in all five continents of the world and aims to operate in each of the existing 518 Rotary Districts world wide. Rotary with over 28,000 Clubs spread across over 154 countries and having over 1.3 million membership committed to service, has a unique potential to bring the message of world peace and understanding to youth through MUNA which encourages them to communicate their knowledge and idealism by the shared exhilaration of debating significant and political issues.

Delegations of two students, usually drawn from year 11, are nominated/selected from participating schools and are sponsored by a Rotary Club. It has been the practice that clubs fully sponsor their delegation however there is no set rule and each club may determine the extent of their sponsorship in conjunction with the school and the participating students.

Counsellor system: To bring mature advice and knowledge to MUNA the Sponsoring Club and the participating school nominate appropriate people to work with and guide each student delegation as they prepare to represent their assigned country at MUNA. This reflects the role of the permanent staff of the Mission that each member nation maintains at the UN.

Given the relatively short time that delegations have to prepare for MUNA, the counsellors should possess some knowledge of or interest in international affairs and problems and be able to devote sufficient time to the task.

In addition to preparing the student delegates for their participation in MUNA, the counsellor may be the person who provides the means of transport to MUNA and might stay for the weekend to play an advisory role to participants generally.

The Rotary Club of Cranbourne cannot assume any financial responsibility for Counsellors' travelling expenses or accommodations.