

Lions Clubs International

MEMBER
RETENTION

a case of

Routine Maintenance

NOT

Rocket Science

**An account of how one Lions Club has stopped the drops
and increased their membership by 80%**

written by

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“ We Serve ”

Retention : Routine Maintenance, Not Rocket Science

Introduction :

I have been persuaded and encouraged to write this “booklet” by many Lions friends with whom I have shared concerns over Lions membership during many of my thirty-one years as a Lion, which includes various roles on District Cabinet, and a year as District Governor.

At District level, I have been most fortunate to have held Leadership Development and Membership and Extension portfolios on a number of occasions, which allowed me to witness the very best and very poor efforts at Club level in relation to retaining or attracting members.

My own Club, Camperdown, in District 201-V2, is now often held up as an example of how a Lions Club can serve their community well, actively participate in special Lions projects, Zone meetings, Conventions, and still have time for fun and fellowship which has seen the Club membership consolidate over the past decade. “Please share the secrets of this success with us,” has been the prompt by many, so here is my version of how this has come about.

Remember, it is an account of how **one** Club has been able to almost double the membership since 1995 without even one resignation due to the usual scourges of non-attendance, non-payment of dues, or resigned in “good standing.” which seems to cover a wide range of symptoms and ailments. There will be many more clubs in District 201-V2, and scattered throughout Multiple District 201 who have similar or more impressive success stories. These too should be shared. Therefore, I sincerely hope these stories will be unearthed, so that their formulas for success can also be available for other clubs to tryout whenever they are placed in a refocussing or rebuilding position.

Home Club truths !!

My home Club, Camperdown, has not always enjoyed such worthy status for stability and club harmony. We have certainly had our share of crisis situations from time to time since our formation and charter in 1979. We do not hide from these, and I have not tried to back away from them in compiling these notes, nor have I flinched from recording unforgettable examples of signs of pending membership doom in some clubs I have visited

We often hear the term, “Family of Lions.” The Lions Club of Camperdown in 2005 is truly a “family.” We have come to the firm understanding that whatever our individual differences, our politics, our creed, occupations, social cultural or sporting interests, we can always create an environment at our club meetings and activities that enhances the Objects of Lions, and will uphold Lions good name in the community.

I hope those who peruse the Camperdown story will gain a confidence that they too belong to a proud and successful club, and if this is not the case, will find some suggestions or ideas that may be worthy of trial in revitalising their club.

Much of our recent success as a club depended on our **attitude, especially to change.**

“It is usually our attitude at the beginning of a difficult undertaking, which, more than anything else, will determine it’s successful outcome.”

Best wishes to all Lions. Be proud to wear the badge. Be proud to serve,

Bill Duncanson PDG.

Camperdown, Vic. Aust. 3260.

27th September 2005

Membership regrowth :

It would have been 1994 when we believed our Club was ready to grown again. We were still down to 20 members, and were keen to get back to at least our Charter membership of 25. Resignations were almost a thing of the past. The Lions Club of Camperdown was ready to exert the impact on the community a good club should.

We believed growth would come about if residents could recognise the value of Lions to the community. That we were dedicated to helping good causes, and we tried to gain deserved publicity along the way. The vocational interests that provided us with a fair portion of our membership in early days had dried up. The abattoirs, employer of 250 people, the dairy factory, employer of over 200, Clothing and Shoe Factories who employed approximately 60 people, ALL GONE. Banks now reduced from seven to three. At one stage in the 1980's we had six Bank Managers out of the seven in town as Club members.

This meant we had to find more interested people from among our static residents. The influx and turnovers among the "nomadic" occupations was lost forever in a town like Camperdown. Since we have been in the rebuild mode, Project Refresh and Club Care Programs have been introduced into Multiple District. These are magnificent programs and have and still will be most useful tools in building up Lions membership in Australia. Many of the good ideas suggested we had already put into practice, but large scale mail-outs we believe are only useful in the very big towns and cities. In a town of 3000 plus, we have always believed in a personal approach for best results, and the story which follows will bear out that belief.

Personnel, deeds, and goals of the Lions Club of Camperdown was not well known, we were not being seen often enough, and our efforts were not being reported. This had to be remedied.

THE BATTLE WAS TO BEGIN

We made a concerted effort to be seen more in the community, and to make sure that our newsworthy efforts were reported in the local paper and accompanied by photographs. We made a decision to appoint our Immediate Past President to the position of Membership Chairman each year. After all the Installation Officer at Changeover each year asks of the outgoing President ... "Will you use your experience of the past year to exert your best efforts to assist your Successor to keep this club strong ...etc.!!". Or words to that effect. This has been very successful. The membership chairman is now always a Lion that has had a recent high profile in the community, and best able to work with sponsors or potential members to ensuring new members will be not only welcome, but become comfortably entrenched into club culture. I guess we follow a long tried and proven method of recruitment. For the record :

- ◆ Prospective members attend at least one business and one dinner meeting.
- ◆ They are visited in their home, and where there is a partner, she/he is involved.
- ◆ Inductions are carried out on a partners night where all the club joins in the welcome.
- ◆ The partner of the new Lion is involved in the actual ceremony.
- ◆ They receive their dinner badges, new member kit, including framed and completed membership certificate, and orientation notes.
- ◆ The sponsor is asked to also make a pledge of support during the ceremony.
- ◆ The ceremony is conducted immediately prior to a recess so that all Lions and Lions partners can come forward and personally welcome the new member and partner.
- ◆ Membership Chairman and sponsor continue to monitor the new member's progress and field questions as they may arise.

Membership Regrowthcontinued from page 5

The importance of the visit to the prospective Lion's home : This a vital part of the activity. Partners need to know what a Lions Club member's commitment will be. This is the appropriate place to discuss costs, expectations, other club members, dress standards etc.

The New Member's Kit – check it out. Does it contain all the bits ??

Certificate of Membership :

The framed, completed certificate is a must. I have lost count of the number of times I have been asked to conduct a new member induction at other clubs and found the certificate is handed over blank (usually still in the member's kit). Are we really sincere when we then say "welcome" to our club and to Lions Clubs International ?? Good retention surely starts with good induction. Inductions, well conducted, provide an opportunity for all Lions present to reflect on their own membership as they listen to the words, and witness the commitment of a fellow Lion.

We endeavour to always use a membership certificate that bears the name of the current International President. These are obtainable upon request at the Newcastle Office. I have experienced occasions where the certificate given to a new Lion bears the signature of a Past International President from several years before. Not so bad if it is the I.P.P.

It pays to remember that the new Lion will get copy of the Australian Lion which will have a message from the International President, or at least an update on his travels. Increase their pride in being a member, present them with a current certificate.

Benefits of our recent regrowth :

These are many. Quite a number of our newer Lions kept telling us how they were quite unaware of who the Lions members really were prior to being invited to join.

Yes, we had been hiding that BEST KEPT SECRET like most other Lions

Working on our identity :

All Club members have been keen to take this on board. Our traditional club polo shirts have been joined by windcheaters (for the colder days) and fine knit pullovers and cardigans, complete with emblem and the member's first name. Peaked caps and sunhats have followed so that we are now very visible in the community. It is very rare now to hear those words; "Who else is in your club??"

Keeping abreast of our Community's needs :

We always try and have representatives at any meetings of community bodies with whom we may share an interest, to those which we are specifically invited, and the ones where there is just a general "everyone is welcome." From these meetings we do pick up many ideas for further community involvement – whether it be visitations, manpower, fundraising, or straight donations to a good cause. Very rarely now do we receive "please help us" letters from the community, for we have managed to turn this around to a point where it is the Lions who are able to say, "I think we may be able to help." or, "How could we assist you?" or, "I am sure our club will be keen to learn about this next meeting." **Sure keeps us busy and involved, and the members all with a sense of purpose.**

Commandments – for a Good Retention Program

1. MEETINGS – Punctuality and Control

This has proven to be a most powerful tool in keeping interest in meetings, and high percentage attendances. In today's Lions Clubs so many people are retirees who find it good therapy to go on extended holidays, and can be absent from a number of consecutive meetings. Therefore, low attendance from the members at home could cause meetings to lapse due to lack of a quorum.

(a) Business meetings :

We start meetings ON TIME. Sometimes a member will arrive late, they just sneak in quietly, sit, and when appropriate offer their apology to the chair and members.

We FINISH on time. The “rules” of the club are business meetings will conclude no later than 9.30 pm., unless, an extension is approved by at least two-thirds majority of those present. Extensions are limited to maximum of ten minutes, and an additional request would require a separate motion.

Options, rather than extend the meeting are to move for an unfinished item to “lay on the table until next meeting” or, “a committee or person be appointed to investigate, report, act etc.” as may be appropriate.

Proper RESPECT is shown to the Chair, and all comments are addressed to/through the chair (President, or deputising VP in his/her absence). Members, and committee chairmen stand facing chair and members to deliver reports.

Business meetings conclude with a light supper. Members are encouraged to stay and enjoy fellowship. Those who must leave are free to do so.

(b) Dinner Meetings :

Again start ON TIME. The late-comers will find a seat and catch up. We have found this provides confidence to the caterers as to what time the meal should be ready and that it will not spoil waiting to be served. It will avoid overtime payment to staff who may be on hand longer than necessary if the meal is delayed due to a late start. This will keep relations between Lions and Caterers harmonious. It will help keep meal prices in check. In the case of Camperdown Lions, we have not had a price increase for 4 years. This pleases members who are not being asked to find more money to maintain their Lions involvement.

Adhere to a Prepared Agenda : - this will keep the meeting running smoothly, and coupled with punctual start will relieve pressure on any Guest Speakers to deliver the program you have expected from them, and allow adequate time for questions, and appropriate vote of thanks without running way overtime.

Well run meetings are a key point in encouraging prospective members to return, in impressing guest speakers who may be prospective sponsors, or future members. It allows time for after meeting fellowship for those who may have arrived too late to participate prior to meeting, and it allows club officers with specific “after” duties such as pack-up of equipment, regalia etc., to do so at a reasonable hour.

Remember : some of your members may have to rise very early the next day – allow them the best opportunity for a good night's sleep.

Commandment No.1 - Meeting Controlcontinued from page 8

Don't embarrass members : be especially careful to understand people's limitations – poor reading skills, and the lack of confidence or ability to make speeches. **Protect these members from embarrassment.**

Want to share the duties ?? That is fine, BUT, do not use the poorer reader to read out the Code of Ethics. Do not spring it on a member to move a vote of thanks if they are nervous “on their feet.” Allocate smaller tasks to build their confidence. Some examples of how we handle these Lions without excluding them from duties :

Code of Ethics – split it up into sections. Allocate the “poorer” reader just a small Portion, and have them practice it well beforehand. For very nervous readers the Ethics is a No No.

Vote of Thanks - we take the opportunity to have the “nervous” type move a vote of thanks only to someone they know very well, and who will be speaking on a topic of interest to that Lion. They would be told at the prior meeting, so that they can work on the sort of things they might say, told to keep it brief, and we rely on the sincerity of the applause, the handshake, and the token gift to do the rest.

Placement of Cross Fines : this is a method by which we also encourage the quiet Lions to get up and speak, and it certainly does build confidence.

I remember how we had a very shy Lion who lacked confidence in my original Club, Timboon. This went on for several years until we made him tail-twister which he accepted after much persuasion. Started quietly, but by the end of the year ...WOW! He became President shortly after and never looked back. Still a good member, and a cheeky one, and has served as President a second time with excellence.

**Remember, take it slowly with shy and quiet members –
We want them out of their shell, eventually – not out of the Club**

Impressing Prospective Members :

Make sure to warmly welcome all visitors, and before closing the meeting thank them for attending. If these people are prospective members make very sure the President and the Membership Chairman get to “chat” with them before the meeting, have them properly introduced, and then after the meeting “a word” before they leave.

They will not be impressed by disorganised or late meetings. They may not come out and say it, however, these are some of the thoughts that may be in their mind !! ?

“Thanks for the invite, but....I'll look elsewhere to offer my services.”
And so, they will drive off into the night never to be seen again.

You may only get one chance to impress. DON'T BLOW IT.

Commandment No.2 - Give Lions Tasks they will enjoy.

One of the features of a Lions Club is the opportunity for us to make use of a very wide range of talents, skills, and life experiences that Lions members bring into our organisation. We are wise to make good use of them.

The Lions Club of Camperdown has been able to do this to good effect. Farming, engineering, finance, insurance, building, teaching, counselling, nursing, medical technology, local government, food preparation, hospitality, travel, law, are some of the many skills and interests that have been well utilised in the conduct of club community projects. The important point is **these people were asked were they happy to fill a particular role or duty !!**

We came to understand that it cannot be assumed someone will be happy with a task just because they know how to it. Prime example : do not just expect that your Bank Manager or Accountant will happily fill the role of Club Treasurer especially from day one of their life as a Lion. Their motivation to join Lions may be to do something for their community **other than deal with money matters**. Their expertise is finance and bankingthey will always be there to offer advice and expert opinion if needed.

Another danger we found was for a newly elected President to allocate a “job” just for the sake of being able to say that every Lion has a portfolio, even though that “portfolio” was a project that the Club had never been involved with and was unlikely to tackle. This does not lift the enthusiasm of a member, does not allow them to contribute very much.

We find it better to allocate Lions without a specific Chairmanship or responsibility to a sub-committee situation where they can grow in knowledge, feel they are wanted and are contributing to the club’s overall goals. Public relations, Catering, Social events, Environmental, Youth or Aged Care projects are some of the areas where we are able to slot people into worthwhile activity within a small group rather than be a “Clayton’s Chairman.”

I can recall situations where Club Presidents have allocated a “chairmanship” to brand new Lions, in a portfolio which their club had never embraced, and for which no information was made available to at least let the Lion know why such a program even existed.

Value of Committee Structures :

Our Club uses the tried, proven, and highly recommended Committee structures under the guidance of the three Vice Presidents. This allows for very orderly planning, implementing, and reporting of projects, and ensures the overall program workload is fairly evenly distributed. Each of the 3 Vice Presidents are allocated ONE of our three major projects to oversee. Here is an example of how our membership may be split up into committee structure.

Committee One - takes care of the Club Administration and Membership Services. This will include One major community or fund-raising project, plus Finance, Membership, Club History, Dinner Programs and Guest Speakers, Property Officer, Press & Publicity, Tail Twister, Bulletin and News releases & Education.

Committee Two – One major project, plus community programs such as Gate keeping, Race Day and Show Day – stalls and general assistance, Lions Assist, Meals-on-wheels, Merry-go-round, Adopt-a-highway, Catering, Annual Inter-club games night.

Committee Three – One major project, plus Lions Cake and Mints programs, Youth of the Year and Youth Exchange, Lions Health Programs – Hearing Dogs, LEHP, Mobility and Cancer Foundations, Social Functions, Visitations, Conventions,

Club Committees continued from page 11

Why it works !! All major and/or regular functions and events are planned pre-year, (always for mention at least at the Club Retreat) and are listed in the annual club membership information & year planner issued (three copies) to each member.

All committee chairmen are encouraged to make written reports in each edition of the monthly Club bulletin. This reduces the need for lengthy verbal reports, and provides hard copy to each member of what may be required of them...and WHEN.

WE NOW KNOW THAT TEAMWORK DOES WORK
AND THAT A COMMITTEE STYLE OF OPERATION PROMOTES
MEMBER OWNERSHIP OF CLUB PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES



Commandment No.3 - SHOW MEMBERS YOU CARE

There is no better way to lose a member than to give up trying to keep him or her in the circle. Follow-ups on absenteeism are vital. Too many Lions in the past have resigned because of a resolve that their club didn't miss them, so they didn't need them. **And they were right !!**

We have made good use of the "privileged member" category where a Lion became too ill to continue to attend meetings or projects, and his many prior years of service so valued. The Lion was proud of his membership, and the continuing interest we took in him. Medical bills, with strictly limited income and benefits meant that sometimes dues were outstanding, but not to worry it was put right just another little dose of Member Care well before the program was adopted by MD 201.

We always try and remind our absent members they were indeed missed

We demonstrate to absent members they were missed and thought about at the last meeting by making sure their copy of the monthly bulletin which is distributed at the dinner meeting (first Thursday in the month) is delivered by the following Sunday. Club minutes are also delivered personally if the Lion is not on the current email list.

Most of our members are extremely good at tendering an apology and reason for anticipated absences from meetings. Therefore, a lack of an apology tends to ring alarm bells that something may be wrong. With aging membership illnesses and mishaps among family or self can strike with little warning, so keeping in touch keeps us aware. Illness update reports are printed in each bulletin so that ALL members and partners are continually aware of member's health, and are alert to where possible assistance or visit may be needed.....true CLUB CARE. Naturally, we have a special "Club Member Care" officer to co-ordinate this work as required.

Commandment No.3 – Caring for Members Continued from page 12

I have some very vivid memories from my visits to clubs as District Governor. Let me recall some good examples of Club Care, and highlight a couple of perfect examples of barriers to good Member Retention.

THE GOOD I have arrived at a club, met the President and I then begin to mingle with the other members. Enters a Lion, walking with some difficulty, on the arm of his Lions Lady. All chat in the room ceases, and Lions make their way to greet this Member. This is his first meeting for more than six months due to recovery from a very severe farm accident, and long hospitalisation. **Great response!**

At another club an ill Lion wanted desperately to attend the DG visit. He was in a wheelchair, the meeting upstairs, and no lift available. Four Lions carried him and the chair up the stairs making sure to keep his oxygen supply intact. I will never forget the tumultuous greeting for their member. **Here was the real V.I.P. of the occasion, and rightly so.** How good I felt driving back home that night having witnessed true Lions fellowship and member care at its very best.

Two top clubs then, and still so today.

THE POOR I am at a club where the President calls for apologies. Two Lions are named. After a brief moment a voice pipes up, “I suppose we should mention Peter?” “Yes. we sort of take that for granted now,” replies the President. He then turns to me to mention that Peter can no longer drive at night because of sight problems.

Great example of member care that! **LIONS**, an organisation that promotes Eye Care Projects and help for the vision impaired, and here we had a club whose fit and able members could not call and collect Peter for meetings.

Another club visit ! “Does anyone know about Charlie ??” No comment was made by anyone. A few shoulder shrugs, and the President moves on. I wondered how Charlie was feeling, or if he was already penning his resignation ? I had no doubt it would have been accepted without discussion.

I did have occasion to PREVENT a resignation on two of my visits, by taking the time to explain(in pre-dinner conversation) how every member has something to offer after aging has robbed them of physical capacity to “work” anymore. Years of Lions knowledge and experience need not be lost, we owe these long serving Lions who have made their contribution to community and our organisation.

We still need their company, more importantly they need our company - there are NO WINNERS when these members are discarded so easily.

Commandment No.4 - KEEP IN TOUCH WITH MEMBERS

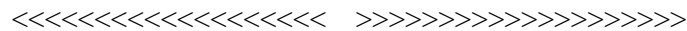
This is really just an extension of the CLUB CARE, and “we missed you” philosophy. Firstly, there are many members who take regular trips, sometimes overseas, but mainly to other parts of Australia. We keep in touch by email to those who can source this facility whilst away, others simply by mail to pre-arranged addresses, or phone.

It has been great for our members to achieve a club attachment so strong that they truly do miss their Lions friends, and the activities to a degree that they must be kept informed of what is happening.

This is the same with the absenteeism covered in No.3 above, members do feel they are missing something if they don't get to a meeting. The question is being asked, “What did I miss?” This is another secret of our growing membership and strong retention.

Transport for the disabled, assistance to the unwell, comfort and counsel to the bereaved, and those bearing any sort of tragedy are all part of our Club Care program. The hospitalised receive regular visitations, the bereaved are supported. A phone link system is activated by the Vice Presidents when occasions for rapid communications in illness or grief arise.

In the case of bereavements, Lions Club members have conducted the special Lions Tribute at Graveside, delivered eulogies during services of Thanksgiving (with family approvals of course) and generally supported families. A special Lions Club message of sympathy and tribute is placed in the local newspaper under the Lions emblem, and the District Welfare officer is notified in each case of death or serious member illness, a part of the Care program instigated at District level.



Commandment No.5 - DON'T ALLOW AN OVERKILL in FINES and JOKES

No one wants to be a spoil-sport or kill-joy, but control of the fines sessions and stories is a vital aspect of member Retention, and possible recruitment. This is a really important commandment. At Camperdown we can speak from experience.

I would venture to say that over the years we have enjoyed the skills of many fantastic tail-twisters. Sadly, one or two have managed to get off the rails with drastic consequences. Each time we took steps to censure the offending culprits, but all too late to save the club from embarrassment and loss of members.

One occasion was a “partner's” night. This was back in the late 1980's Our President at the time was not in the chair this particular night due to illness and the first Vice President deputised for him. The tail-twister (a very close friend of the acting President) decided to take some extra leeway and popped in a “light blue” joke. This managed to get quite a chuckle from the chair, but from very few others. That was a signal to the fines man that he had an open licence. Two more jokes followed very quickly that were in extremely bad taste.

A few members managed to get the eye of the chairman who brought the session to a close. The T.T. was duly censured by most of the members during a recess later that evening. However, three of the Lion partners never attended a meeting again, two of the husband Lions resigned at the end of that half year, and the third left us one year later. The three partners were all excellent workers for the club and there can be no doubt that fateful session of joke telling cost us six workers and three members.

Commandment No.5 - Control of Fines and Stories

Fines and Jokes overkill ...continued.

The second occasion was a special night when we were presenting cheques to three community organisations and had invited the President and partner of each organisation to attend our dinner. Again we had a tail-twister who was a bit short on material and decided to throw in a couple of distasteful stories. No members were lost on this occasion, but we were keen to use the special presentation night as an opportunity to “impress” the visitors and we certainly had two of the guests marked down as “potential” Lions. No prizes for guessing we missed out.

The very sad part about this was the Presidents of those organisations most likely told their fellow committee members, or at least their close friends about their Lions experience. I often wonder just how many members those two blunders have cost us ??

We are now very careful in who we appoint as Tail Twister each year, and I guess it would be about 15 or so years since we suffered those problems. We emphasise to members every year that it is their responsibility to pass on misdemeanours and good deeds about fellow members as soon as they happen. This allows our Tail-Twister to work on the materials and the way he/she presents it on the night. They are not plagued with people passing on last minute stories, and have time to check out all the facts and add whatever embellishments seem to be necessary to make for a good story and create fun as well as funds.

Other benefits ! The fines session flows and does not get bogged down. The spread of fines is better and usually covers all members over a three month period, and very few people are actually fined more than once per night.

RESULT !! We enjoy our fines sessions using current and relevant stories even if twisted or stretched. The spontaneous merriment created says it all.

Just ask anyone who has visited Camperdown : “Do we have fun ?”

and we welcome visitors

If you should have the opportunity to check us out !!!

***Our Dinner meetings are on first Thursday in the month
6.30 pm fellowship, for 7.00 pm call to order.***

***Business meetings are held at 7.30 pm on third Thursday
in each month, followed by light supper.***

***We meet at the Leura Hotel, Manifold Street (Princes Highway) Camperdown.
The corner across from the Clock Tower.***

Commandment No.6 - INVOLVE ALL YOUR MEMBERS

I cannot overstress the value of this commandment. People become LIONS because they want to do something for their community...they want to help others...especially people who are disadvantaged, disabled, or underprivileged.

There are many ways in which members can be involved –
They may have a special administrative skill, or a hands-on trade skill.
They may be good counsellors, or be good with young people or aged people's needs.
They may be good fund-raisers, or simply good motivators.

Whatever, their background or vocation they have something to offer to the overall success of the club. We must let them do it. No Lion will continue to attend meetings to just LISTEN night after night, or be there to “make up the numbers” at dinners. It is far easier to be a knife and fork person at home – you get to choose the menu, and it is far cheaper too.

Too many Lions are LOST to the organisation because this commandment is never heeded. Fortunately, at Camperdown this has rarely been a problem. If any of our members should not feel involved and useful that is their choice – they do not suffer from a lack of opportunities. ***YES! We do have quiet members too, but not because they are gagged.***

As our Club membership has grown we have been able to look for increased ways to keep our members involved and “busy.” As we induct more members with new skills then we try to involve the club in tasks that can use these skills. We always take seriously the views and suggestions of our newer members too, ***they know they are wanted, and they know we appreciate their input. We seek their input and put them to work as soon as their membership application is accepted*** They are joining “To Serve,” LET THEM.

I have no idea how many times I have visited other clubs and heard these words :

“ Nah! We tried that before. Won't work!”

“That's MY project and I have it all under control. It has to be done THIS way!”

“I say we do this, or do that, or you can count me out!”

“Yeah I've got it all in hand (no explanations of what “it all” is!!) I'll sing out if I need nay help!” ***This particular statement is often followed up after the event,***

With : “The project was a bit of a flop. Couldn't do it all by myself. If a few more of you guys had got off your backsides it might have been all right.”

The aftermath of many such examples is often the “dummy spit” by either the one man band, or someone who would have and could have helped but wasn't allowed to. Also, next time when this same Lion DOES genuinely need help every one else decides to sit on their hands, and this will create a bigger conflict nobody needs.

Final tips : Do run a club where everyone can get a chance to have a say.
Do not knock back assistance from willing and able people.
Do get large majority support for all club projects – there is nothing better than “members ownership” of projects.

That cry “ **WE DID IT TOGETHER** ” Will work wonders for club morale.

Commandment No.7 - BOND THE CLUB TOGETHER THROUGH GOOD SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

This is the key to our success. It creates opportunities to get to really know people. The better we understand them, the less chance of conflict. It creates harmony and goodwill.

Please don't get the idea from this statement that Lions at Camperdown is all fun and games, beer and skittles. Far from it. We average 50 hours community service work per member per year, but no major project passes by without a club get-together to relax and wind down especially on the hot summer days such as our work day at the local Turf Club January meeting (40 deg.C plus at two consecutive meetings) and many of our members on their feet with constant duties for up to 6 hours without relief, and just an occasional refreshment.

We conduct a BBQ luncheon, or tea, after **every** full club work day. This would be about six times per year. In addition, we have a BBQ and get-together at the new President's home the day after our annual changeover function. This is now tradition.

For approximately 25 years we have had an annual Progressive Dinner, held on a Saturday night, utilizing three member's homes, one for each course of soup, mains, sweets. Competitions involving a little madness are held at each stop. Members are always encouraged to bring along guests who may be prospective Lions. This had proved to be a useful recruiting ground, as the guests really get to know the current members and what makes them tick by the time the evening is ended. This means that when they are invited along to a "serious" Lions meeting, they can feel comfortable in saying YES, because they already know who the members are and if they would be comfortable in their company.

The progressive dinner always has a theme to add to the fun of the night, and prizes awarded to the best in each category. The local "op shops" do a roaring trade during the lead up. Themes have included Favourite TV program / Black & White / Red & Black / Comic Book Characters / Bad Taste / "L" for Lions theme – where everyone had to come representing a character or occupation starting with the letter "L." The progressive dinner is usually scheduled for either August or September.

Mystery Bus Trip (otherwise known as the December Dinner Meeting)

The December dinner is always held at the end of a short (up to one hour) bus trip. It is always referred to as "mystery" as the destination is known only to members of the Social Committee who have the responsibility for arranging the night.

This is a great occasion, Lions and Partners enter the Christmas spirit by wearing appropriate Christmas "clobber." During the bus ride, we have competitions, games, singing, and upon arrival at the hotel or restaurant form a "street choir" to sing a couple of carols (sometimes slightly abridged versions) for the locals. All attendees bring a small gift (nominated value) which is identified as male/female/or adaptable and they are placed in the "Santa" bag for the whiskered gentleman to distribute during the function.

We have only ever had one District Governor arrange a December visit to Camperdown, and when told of the Bus Trip tradition readily agreed that we should continue the tradition. So the DG's official visit was held at the "Noorat Pub" and we all had a ball as usual.

We find this a good occasion to invite prospective members. We also use the Christmas Dinner and Changeover Dinner as occasions to invite guests who have helped us during the year with items like free equipment hire, discounted materials, use of fork lift etc.. If we can't make them into Lions, then the next best thing is to show our appreciation so that they will continue to be good friends of Lions. Every Club needs friends like these special people.

Commandment No.7 – Bond the Club through Social Activitiescontinued

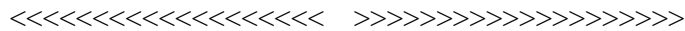
Annual Retreat : an annual retreat is now one of the requisites for Lions Clubs for their President to become eligible for the President’s Excellence Award from Oakbrook. This has been invoked now for 3 or 4 years. Camperdown Lions Club has been conducting a retreat every year since 1995. Held during April, it provides excellent balance to our social events calendar for the whole year. Progressive Dinner in 1st quarter, Convention and Christmas Party in 2nd quarter, Race Day wind-downs occur in 3rd Quarter, and Retreat in 4th quarter.

The retreat is held from Friday evening through to after lunch on Sunday. A full program is arranged which includes a review of the year to date, member evaluation of each club activity and administration, and a preview of the next year’s program. Sight-seeing and visits to places of interest in the locality where we are stationed are planned, a fun time on the Saturday evening (music, drama, celebrity heads, pyjama party, remember when?) are some of the pranks and programs used to stimulate fun and fellowship. Attending race meetings, visiting wineries, historic displays, gardens, historic tram rides, exploring a maze, mini-golf, mountain climbing, and beach walks are some of the activities we have carried out.

The retreats have seen us visit many different places within 3 hour travel of home. Queenscliff, Avoca, Port Fairy, Grampians, Creswick, Portland are some of the destinations. We plan our accommodation around 1,2,3 Bedroom cabins, or Dormitory style twin rooms. On most occasions we self cater, and the whole weekends work out to be a reasonable cost.

Does your club hold a retreat ? Does your club retreat have these sort of add-ons ??

If not ? Why not ?? This is RETENTION at its BEST !!



***Commandment No. 8 - BE INTERESTED IN PEOPLE –
ACKNOWLEDGE ACHIEVEMENTS***

This all starts with good Leadership, observant Bulletin Editor, and observant Tail Twister, all with a lot of help from the whole club membership. The grape-vine has to work for this to have greatest effect and to make sure **no-one is missed**.

Wedding anniversaries, birthdays of members and partners, birth of grandchildren, academic or sporting achievements of Lions or members of their families. These are all worthy of note.

Be sure to acknowledge appointments of your Club Lions to District or Multiple District offices, and awards they may have received. This includes civic awards as well as those from Lions, or other Community bodies to which they belong. Many Lions wear many hats, and it is good to recognise the outstanding service Lions are able to give to others as well as a commitment to their Lions Club.

Regular gatherings, socially, usually manage to loosen tongues and the information about anniversaries and good deeds seem to spill out. The important thing is to make a note, or pass it on quickly to the relevant Lion who has the responsibility for appropriate announcement.

We have a spread-sheet clearly setting out the birthdays and where applicable, wedding anniversaries of our Lions and their partners. The Bulletin Editor has the task of extracting this information from the new member and announcing when appropriate



Commandment No. 9. - GIVE THANKS & PRAISE WHEN DUE

“Thank You,” just two little words that mean so much. Our Lions Club is not big on personal awards and rewards of a material nature, but very big on extending due thanks to any of our members who have brought credit to the club through leadership or exceptional efforts in the conduct of projects. Presidents and Vice Presidents in their verbal and written reports are careful to pay well earned accolades.

Lions projects and fund-raising efforts and the organisation of our social functions rate equally when it comes to thanking those who have contributed to their success.

It is only human nature to expect some recognition of our efforts.

Whether we are willing to admit it or not, we have some level of “ego” to satisfy.

“Careful with our criticism, liberal with our praise ” (familiar words ???)

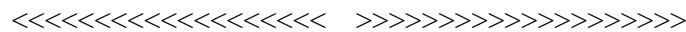
PREPARED TO SAY THEM !!! THEN LET US LIVE THEM

Special note about attendance awards :

We believe one of the best decisions made by our club has been to discontinue the practice of issuing 100% attendance tabs each year. It has removed any possible dissention, whilst the Club’s attendance and make-up records still shows those who maintain perfect attendance.

In recent years the pressure on members to attend all meetings or seek make-ups had increased to the point where we agreed that the most important thing was for Lions to RETAIN their Club membership, next was their willingness to PARTICIPATE in the life of the club as best they were able. Attendance at all meetings did not necessarily indicate a prime contribution.

Members usually miss meetings for very good reason. After all, we do have interesting and exciting meetingswho would want to deliberately miss out ?? We have also outlined our very busy community service and social programs, every member has ample opportunities to contribute a fair share to these successes to make up for meeting absences.



Commandment No.10 - DEAL PROMPTLY WITH CONFLICTS

A club that has been in existence for some 26 years would not be telling the truth if they were to tell the world they had never had any dis-agreements within their membership. We had a few that I can recall mostly back in the 1980’s, and then again in our discussing, and accepting Ladies into membership.

Lack of Communication can be a major cause of conflict. This can happen when individual Lions make rash promises or pledge commitment to certain cause or events **without** consultation with the full membership. Beware of this danger, nothing will sour the members quicker than being “forced” into a course of action to save face with others because one or more members chose to work outside the correct procedures.

Sometimes the enthusiasm of a new member may see them break the rules if they are uncertain what the rules really are. Therefore make sure your club’s new member orientation covers this. Encourage sponsors to live up to their responsibilities toward the new Lion, and to set a good example.

Commandment No.10 – Deal Promptly with Conflicts continued....

Our communication practices :

Our Club practice of delivering minutes and bulletins to absent members is a sound way of keeping everyone in the loop. This will prevent absent members from developing “aggro” later on from a lack of knowledge of club decisions.

As mentioned earlier, our program of social events and annual retreat has drawn our members close together, we do understand what makes the other person “tick.” This has probably saved us from conflicts and disagreements in the last decade or so. There are however, two “conflicts” that have been dealt with that are worthy of mention

The first occurred three years ago when our merry-go-round, the only children’s entertainment equipment of it’s kind in Western Victoria, became very tired and in need of major repair to meet Industry Standards and registration for amusement purposes, provide safe rides for kids, and be completely insurable for road transportation and public liability. The estimated costs initially, were set at \$2000, and most of the work could be done by skilled and qualified Lions members. The Club after much debate decided by a narrow majority to carry out the renovations with the budget set at the \$2000.

The unit was stripped down, and to make a long story short – it was found the job was much more complicated than expected and the cost would be at least double. Do we now proceed ? or do we take the equipment to the tip or nearest scrap metal dealer ? Wow ! Sure was some debate that followed! Eventually a vote was taken, and the motion to proceed passed with the narrowest of majorities. No-one spat the dummy, some still had reservations, but all set about planning how we could find the funds. Two grants (\$2500 in total) and donations of paint and some other materials, accompanied by much hard work by some Lions members and we had a magnificent unit which is once again the pride of our club, and a wonderful fund-raiser. Supporters and doubters are equally pleased with the outcome. I know this sort of crisis would have split many other clubs.

A little over one year ago we did have another “crisis” which I’m sure would also have torn the club apart, say 15 years ago. There were three strong points of view of what action should, or could be taken. This is how the crisis unfolded and was overcome.

The problem was discussed at regular business meeting. Details sent out to absent members. Next meeting brought about 100% attendance, all possible solutions were openly discussed openly and in orderly fashion. A final decision would be reached at a third meeting. Nominated members of each of the three factions were to meet meanwhile and work towards framing possible solutions which could form the basis of a motion or motions to be voted on. The three possible solutions were drawn up, communicated to all members. Members not able to attend on decision night were asked to lodge their preferred options with the secretary prior to the meeting. All members in good standing would make the decision.

Proposal No.1 - after discussion was found to be well out of favour and eliminated. Proposals No.2 and No.3, with minor amendments were voted on by secret ballot. Proposal No.3 was carried by a little over 60% of members. Not a convincing result, but good enough for the Lions Club of Camperdown 2004 style. We just knew all members would stand by it.

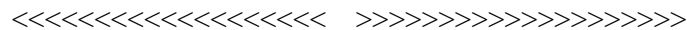
That evening at the closure of the meeting everyone mingled, enjoyed supper, and the positive vibes were equal to anything I have witnessed in the past 26 years. There was no dissention. Sure, two or three members indicated their disappointed but would grow to fully accept the club’s decision, and they did. Conflict !!! **What conflict ????**

Commandment No.10 - Dealing with Conflicts continued.....

Maybe this was the “conflict” we had to have! Just to prove the solidarity of our membership, and that the factors which draw us together as a group to serve the community will always be far stronger than any incident that could tear us apart.

“TO BUILD UP, AND NOT DESTROY” Seems I’ve heard those words before !!!

If you have conflicts or disagreements – DEAL WITH THEM PROMPTLY – get help from outside the Club if you need it. Remember this :: the problem will not just go away, but the grieved member or members WILL.



A little bit more about what makes out Club “tick.”

Membership at September 2005 = 36 - Males 24 Females 12

Chartered on 2nd July 1979 (our 27th year of service) just three Lions have served 2 terms as President in the club’s history. In recent years we are maintaining the system of incoming Presidents gaining leadership experience as 3rd/2nd/ 1st Vice Presidents prior to taking office. It provides strong leadership, and a broad knowledge of the committee system and various Club portfolios to which they appoint chairmen or co-ordinators.

Fund Raising : In a town with 3,400 population, with high level unemployment, and many retirees on fixed, limited incomes it is difficult to raise funds, especially with competition from Rotary, Apex, and Rotaract Clubs, as well as some seventy plus sporting, social, and cultural groups, two Primary and Secondary colleges, and many Church groups. We rely on the following activities for funds :

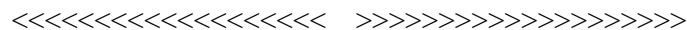
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|--------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Merry-Go-Round | Christmas Cakes & Mint Sales | Community Fun Run / Walk |
| Gate keeping | Catering for Equestrian events | Catering for Fishing comps. |
| Course marshalling | Milkshake & sweets stall (races & showday) | |

We support (by active club involvement, or financially) all Lions Projects and activities for which there is a District Chairman with the exception of Club Twinning, and Leos.

Hands-on programs : allow members to contribute in many simple ways, and include :

- Friendship Program - visitation to shut-ins and lonely who need company (visit in pairs)
- Lions Assist - phone in service by the aged and disabled for “odd jobs” that do not require professional tradespeople. Eg. Change light globes, replace batteries, clean gutters, prune branches. We supply fridge magnets with phone number.
- Adopt a Highway - keeping a section of roadway free of rubbish & tree care.
- Cemetery - care of graves in the old sections, and maintenance of Lions garden beds.
- Meals-on-wheels transport - (also information source for Friendship and Lions Assists)

The brochure we use to introduce people to our Club activities follows page 22



Epilogue :

It would be very naïve of me to suggest that the Lions Club of Camperdown will continue to go from strength to strength, increasing in membership without further hiccups. Indeed, our first resignation for a decade, free of transfer or death, may be just around the corner ... who knows ?? What I am certain of is this. Any one of our current members who might consider resigning for other than unavoidable reasons, will not do so lightly, because the loss of the fun, fellowship, and service work we now share together would be more greatly missed by the individual than the group.

This should be the aim of all Lions Clubs – to have goals and programs that will keep all members so involved, and so happy that the individual, not the club, will be the real loser.

In times of aging membership we have the ever present threat of losing people to Probus. Probus Clubs are thriving and many have a waiting list for prospective members. Whilst we acknowledge Probus to be a social outlet only (no commitment to community service) if we in Lions Clubs do not continually review our activities and programs, be willing to accept change where change will be for the better, and maintain an attraction for service-minded people, then should we blame those who leave us for the easier way of fellowship that Probus offers. A few of our Lions and Partners are members of Probus and see it only as an enjoyable addition to their social life. Their Lions commitments do not waiver.

We believe the present structure, ideals, and goals is one all members are keen to embark upon into the foreseeable future. We are still keen to build our numbers further, for as more and more of our members reach retirement that will want to travel more, and as we age work a little less strenuously, but smarter. This will require more Lions members to maintain the same level of commitment to our community and Lions Clubs International.

Now that we are well and truly embarked on a successful pathway, we will make bigger effort to try and entice some of the former members who were good members back into the fold. The re-instatement rate of ex-members back into the same club generally has a poor success rate, and over the years we have only had two, but we intend to work on it. After all these people have been attracted to the ideals of Lions before, they know how the organisation is structured, it is up to us, the current members to try and prove to them Lions still offers the best opportunity for community service. The **big challenge** is to get them to come and sample the environment in which we now meet and serve.

The dramatic increase in membership has also worked wonders with our Administration account. It is much easier to cover fixed costs without regular or steep hikes in member dues. Our adjustments are only made to cover increases in dues demands from International, Multiple District and District.

The TEN commandments are working well in the Lions Club of Camperdown. Retention is now working as never before. As a group we are becoming more “Lion Wise.” Most of our members are able to slot into any task. We are not totally reliant on the old guard, we trust the input of ideas of new members.

As a Past Governor, I am happy to say I have been a member of the Club Board of Directors just once since holding that office in 1998/99 and that was tail-twister the following year. I am an available source of information, no more, no less.

Most of all we are now held in very high regard in community circles – our work is duly acclaimed, we have total community support and encouragement.

We are proud to be Lions