

William (Bill) Baker Hotson – Honoured as a Paul Harris Fellow by Rutherglen Rotary Club

At the Rutherglen Rotary Club change-over dinner on Friday 25th June, Bill Hotson was honoured by his fellow Rotarians with a Paul Harris Fellow. Paul Harris was the founder of Rotary International in 1905 and in his honor, Rotary clubs choose a Paul Harris Fellow who meets the high professional and personal standards set by the founder. Bill's impressive history of community service certainly meets that criteria. Rutherglen born and brought up on a Chiltern Valley farm, Bill has led a very active life of community service and involvement. At 17 he joined the Victorian Young Farmers, where he learnt leadership and debating skills, and also served in positions as District chairman and North East Area chairman. He came to realise that contributing to the broader community brought great rewards.

Bill went on to serve on the Board of "The Centre" for Continuing Education at Wangaratta and later on the Albury Wodonga Board and was responsible for setting up Affiliated Centres in rural areas. He was also a member of the School Council of Rutherglen High School for 4 years (1990 to 1993). He further continued his involvement with adult education through his help with the Chiltern Rutherglen Continuing Education Group, particularly with the Classic Australian Movie nights, which have now been running for over 10 years.

He has had extensive involvement with the Country Fire Authority, enlisting at 16 and serving as Captain of the Chiltern Rural Fire Brigade for 10 years (1981 – 1991) and Group Officer for the Pilot Group of Brigades for 7 years (1993 – 1999). He led several strike teams to various parts of Victoria and New South Wales, and also led a CFA Recovery Team to Gippsland after their 1998 disastrous floods. Bill is the current Chairman of Region 24 CFA Regional Planning Committee - a position he has held for the past 15 years.

Meantime, he continued his active involvement with the Victorian Farmers Federation both at a local & district level, was founder and inaugural chairperson of the Chiltern Landcare Group in 1994, which led to many worthwhile projects for landholders in the area. He was a member of the North East Catchment Management Authority, serving on the Ovens and Black Dog Creek Implementation Committee and was a member of the Chiltern Valley Recreation Reserve, Committee of Management.

He was also very active with the Chiltern Tourism Association, serving several years as President, and in the last couple of years, as a tour guide of "Chiltern Valley Gold" at their Ironbark Festival.

On a sports and recreational front, Bill played football for the Chiltern Football Club in both the Firsts & Seconds teams. He also plays tennis with the Chiltern Valley Tennis Club and, after playing on the winning teams of various grand final, was honoured with a Life Membership in 2008. Meanwhile, he has had a lifelong interest as an artist, capturing much of the moods of the landscape in oils and watercolour, winning some regional awards and tutoring at various locations across the North East.

It is because of his involvement in such a broad range of community activities that when the opportunity came up to be a councillor with the Indigo Shire, he took it up. He was elected in 1996 and, after 12 years of service, retired in 2008, having been honoured to serve two terms as Mayor of the Shire in 2004 and 2005. His retirement from Council has since allowed him more time to farm a commercial herd of Angus breeding cattle as well as a commercial cherry orchard on a 600-hectare property outside Chiltern.

Bill has been a member of the Rotary Club of Rutherglen since 1989, serving as Rotary President in 1992/93 and has contributed in various roles over the years including Treasurer, Club Service, Art Show committee chairman, and more recently Program Director.

His impressive service to the community truly lives the Rotary goal of "Service Above Self".