

# An Overview of ESRAG Oceania

**This Overview provides supporting references for the interview conducted by Stephen Lamont with Pat Armstrong at the Zone 8 Institute Conference, 11 September 2021.**

Pat is the Communications Director and Chair Elect of ESRAG.

**Objective of the session:** To promote benefits for clubs to incorporate environmental activities in their overall program.

## *List of Topics*

The following are a list of topics raised in this interview, with some pertinent notes and references to supporting materials.

1. What is ESRAG?
2. What is ESRAG Oceania?
3. What is the 7th Area of Focus of Rotary International?
4. What are the 6 key theme areas developed by ESRAG ?
5. How can clubs start a new environmental project?
6. How do you set-up a Club ES Committee?
7. Why should you set-up a District Environmental Committee?
8. How could Districts be involved in environmental projects?
9. Guidelines in setting-up projects
10. Guidelines in applying for District and Global Grants
11. ESRAG Environmental Ambassador Program

### *1. What is ESRAG?*

ESRAG is the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group. It was formed to empower members of the Rotary Family worldwide to take actions to sustain our environment, in particular to stabilize our climate.

ESRAG provides an organizing point and informational resources to share information with clubs and communities about sustainable practices and the global humanitarian crisis of climate change.

ESRAG's action model is to Identify environmental leaders within the Rotary world, assist them in initiating environmental service projects that are meaningful to THEM, help where we can, and acknowledge and publicize their awesome work.

One of the membership benefits of joining ESRAG is being able to engage with a network of Rotarians and Rotaractors with environmental interest within your Regional Chapter. You can join ESRAG on the ESRAG Oceania website [here](#).

## ***2. What is ESRAG Oceania?***

ESRAG Oceania is a Chapter of ESRAG, encompassing Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

All members of ESRAG in our region are included in our chapter.

ESRAG Oceania is building a network of People of Action who work with Rotary Districts and Clubs to:

- Grow a network of interested and involved Rotarians and other changemakers
- Raise awareness of and provide education about Environmental Sustainability issues.
- Support projects in our region.
- Help build collaborative relationships between Rotarians, Rotary clubs/districts and groups outside Rotary

If you'd like to make a difference and help leave a Better World for future generations, please get involved join ESRAG and TAKE ACTION join ESRAG [here](#)

ESRAG Oceania [here](#)

## ***3. What is the 7th Area of Focus of Rotary International?***

Protecting the environment is now Rotary's seventh area of focus, which are categories of service activities supported by global grants. It joins Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention; Disease Prevention and Treatment; Water, Sanitation, And Hygiene; Maternal And Child Health; Basic Education and Literacy; and Community Economic Development.

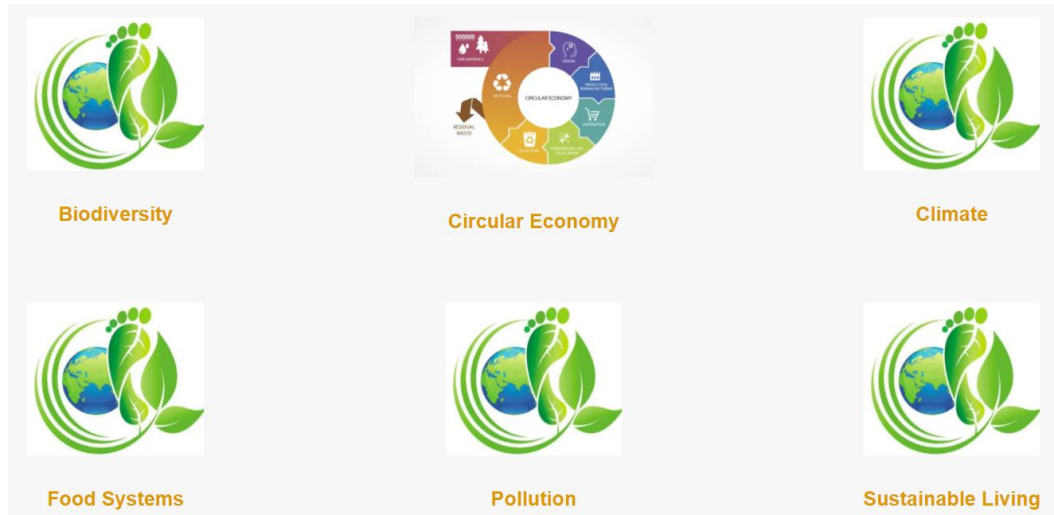
Rotary supports activities that strengthen the conservation and protection of natural resources, advance environmental sustainability, and foster harmony between people and the environment. [Supporting the environment becomes a new area of focus | Rotary International](#)

An overview of the introduction of the 7<sup>th</sup> AOF is shown on a video on the Home Page of the ESRAG Oceania website [here](#).

The webinar on the *Environment Area Focus Launch* on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021 is available [here](#).

#### 4. What are the six key environmental theme areas developed by ESRAG?

ESRAG has developed six broad themes to help browse projects, articles and other content on our websites.



We are working with ESRAG to help pilot a series of 'LOCAL SOLUTIONS TASK FORCES' to catalyse Education, Solutions and Collaborative Relationships to support projects, individual actions and club projects and activities to solve environmental challenges. If you have a particular interest or expertise, become an ESRAG member and help set-up a theme team in our region [here](#)

#### 5. How can clubs start a new environmental project?

A number of suggestions follow:

- look at what your club is already doing. Recognise those that have an environmental purpose and build on these.
- if your club would like to start a new project, start small so that the project is achievable
- involve your club members and their families in the selection and implementation of the project. Maybe you could incorporate a coffee break or a friendship stop and involve your community.
- embed environment projects into your club's planning, identify an environmental champion, set up an environment committee, involve as many members as you can in the new projects, set up a regular environment column in your club bulletin and promote your environmental activities on your club's website and social media pages.
- consider the potential to apply for a District or Global Grant.

There are many projects being carried out by other clubs featured on the projects page of the ESRAG Oceania website [here](#). These include plastic pickups, school

garden projects, volunteering for DIK, installing solar panels, tree planting etc. There are also many Rotary club videos on the I Fix the Planet site: [here](#).

## ***6. How do you set-up a club ES (Environmental Sustainability) committee?***

Templates you can use to help form a District or Club Committee for **Protecting the environment** are located: [here](#)

## ***7. Why should you set-up a District / Club Environmental Committee?***

The environment surrounds us in our world. It affects everything we do and the projects we undertake. The environment is changing and there is much that we can do to reduce our impact and to improve our world, in our backyard and across the world. With 'The Environment' becoming an area of focus for Rotary, we should get together and see what we can do.

As citizens throughout the world rally to protect the environment and preserve the planet and all of its species, Rotary needs to have a focus on the Environment, as well as its other six Areas of Focus to remain relevant. Focussing on the environment is an opportunity to connect to and engage a younger membership who are concerned about the environment and help them address significant issues. [here](#)

The ESRAG ANZPI Chapter provides 15 great reasons to join ESRAG and for clubs to take up ES Projects. [here](#)

To formally set up a District Environment Committee:

- research how a District Committee can contribute to the growth and health of the District
- develop a scope and purpose of the group
- set a job description for the Chair (samples on the ESRAG website (where ?))
- identify a Chair (or co-chairs) and committee members
- introduce the Environment Committee to club presidents at club training and District Assembly
- involve the committee in the organisation of District events, including District conference
- work with the committee to develop some base level projects and then help to champion these projects throughout your District
- implement an EnviroClub Awards system across the District as in D9810 and D9800 to provide incentives for clubs to create more significant projects within their own clubs, with other clubs and with community groups: [here](#)

## ***8. How could Districts be involved in environmental projects?***

Districts can play a very important role in encouraging and facilitating clubs to take up environment projects, in the first instance as base-level projects, and later as larger projects involving a number of clubs or clusters. Take-up is normally greater with the DG leading the way. Ideally, a District should actively promote and support environmental projects, put a strong emphasis on supporting the new area of Focus and highlighting the relevance of environment projects to younger generations.

The ESRAG Oceania website showcases a large range of environmental projects being carried out across the region. These can be joined or replicated [here](#)

Some examples of Base Level Projects:

- Clean up Australia Day: [here](#)
- Pick up plastic in a specific area in the District: e.g. D9675 [here](#)
- Planting colourful plants on nature strips and in backyard gardens, inspiring people and supporting pollinators such as bees and birds: e.g. D9800 [here](#)
- Supporting and volunteering at the DIK store in your District: [here](#)
- Tree planting: [here](#)

Some examples of larger Global Projects:

- In the US, clubs are collecting refrigerant gas across the country for safe disposal: [here](#)
- In Sweden, a water purification device, called Solvaten, uses solar heat to purify water for developing countries: [here](#)
- In Canada, England and India cookstoves are being developed to minimise the use of open fires for cooking in undeveloped countries to reduce tree felling and smoke generation: [here](#); and [here](#)
- A solar powered refrigeration system is being designed to store foods at markets in small undeveloped areas: [here](#)
- Electric Vehicle charging stations are being set-up: [here](#)
- There is a project to plant 5 million trees in Uganda and Tanzania: [here](#)
- Project to reduce meat eating to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; [here](#) or see “Lunch out of Land Fills” webinar on the ESRAG Oceania website [here](#)

Some examples of Larger Oceania Projects:

- New Zealand Rotary Clubs have a target to plant 1 million trees: [here](#)
- ESRAG Oceania is setting up a Carbon Exchange Bank: to facilitate a place where Rotary Clubs, Rotarians, Rotaractors or members of the public can offset their carbon emissions by supporting tree planting or other carbon sink activities by Rotary Clubs across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. ESRAG has developed a club meeting carbon calculator and is aiming

to initiate a tree planting challenge to offset carbon emissions by clubs and Rotarians: [here](#)

- DIK is reaching out to more hospitals, schools and other areas of the community for donations of used equipment to prevent the goods being sent to landfill. DIK need volunteers to help collect and sort donations and identify requirements in international locations. There is the need to pack containers and to fund the shipping costs of containers (One idea is to have a number of clubs in a District contribute to the shipping costs of a container). [here](#)
- Join ESRAG Oceania theme teams to develop region-wide projects. [here](#)
- Future Vehicle Expo and Seminar [here](#)

## ***9. Guidelines in setting-up a Rotary project***

- Project Planning: Significant projects need to be scoped out and planned carefully

The five step process includes:

1. Scoping
2. Planning
3. Implementing
4. Monitoring and evaluating
5. Sustaining

A webinar “Planning for Success and Environmental Sustainability” is available on the ESRAG Oceania website [here](#).

**The District 9810 committee have run a number of Planning for Success training courses** for clubs in their district and also for ESRAG global audiences. The resources include a training guide, tools, templates, worked examples and case studies. [here](#)

- Story Telling is an important part of making a case for a project and getting others on board. A webinar “The 6 step storytelling process with Bernadette Schwerdt” is available on the ESRAG Oceania website [here](#)
- Making a short video is another tool useful to spread the word on your projects. “Making Videos using PowerPoint with Rob Anderson” is available on ESRAG Oceania website. [here](#)

## ***10. Guidelines in applying for District and Global Grants***

With the introduction of Protecting the environment as the seventh area of focus, Rotary clubs can now apply for a Rotary Foundation Global Grant for an environmental project, following the normal process set out on the Rotary Foundation website.

The Foundation has recently appointed a manager of the environment global grants area and we recommend that you direct any enquiries about a specific project to either the new manager or your own District Foundation Chair.

The Foundation has released a Policy Statement for the seven areas of focus that should be read carefully before applying for a global grant in the environment area (see below).

The Rotary Foundation (through Grants) enables Rotary members to protect, preserve, and conserve the environment by:

- a. Protecting and restoring land, coastal, marine, and freshwater resources
- b. Enhancing the capacity of communities and local governments to support natural resource management and conservation
- c. Supporting agroecology and sustainable agriculture, fishing, and aquaculture practices to improve ecological health
- d. Addressing the causes of climate change and climate disruption and supporting solutions to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases
- e. Strengthening the resilience of ecosystems and communities affected by climate change and climate disruption
- f. Supporting education to promote behaviours that protect the environment
- g. Advocating for the sustainable consumption of products and the environmentally sound management of by-products to build a more resource-efficient economy
- h. Addressing environmental justice issues and environmental public health concerns

The full text of the ENVIRONMENT AREA OF FOCUS POLICY STATEMENT by the Rotary International Board - September 2020 is given [here](#)

## ***11. ESRAG Environmental Ambassador Training Course***

You can learn more about this course [here](#)