



District 112 Director's Report

District	112	District Director	Sharon Kerr-Phillips	Report date	March 2021
----------	------------	-------------------	-----------------------------	-------------	-------------------

District Vision for the Year, District Success Plans and Goals

This year we have an **incredible District Team** and overall, have had the ideal situation where most of our District Team were **undertaking their role for the first time**. We are also in the fortunate position of having many experienced Toastmasters who help and encourage our District Team. As your District Director I would like to **thank both our District Team and our experienced members** for the support they have given the District this year.

I believe we have easily **met or exceeded our goals of being there for our members** in a very practical way, **being transparent and accountable** and providing many members with **growth and stretch opportunities**. In a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous environment our District leaders have stayed the course. **Watching our team grow has been a most rewarding experience**. I believe the **Area and Division Director peer meetings** have been **most valuable** and thank our PQD, **Stephen Budai** and CGD, **Wendy Wickliffe**, for their hard work in this area.

Writing the District Director report for our Virtual District Council meeting being held in six weeks' time, is an interesting exercise. We **do not yet know what the March renewals** will look like. I am anticipating that we will lose about twenty clubs, a few of which were already not in good standing at the start of this Toastmasters Year. We have quite a few clubs in formation in the wings and we are hoping those clubs will charter before the end of the year. Realistically, I think we need to adjust our goal from ending the year as a Select Distinguished District, to ending the year, at best, as a **Distinguished District**. Even that is a challenging goal, but we do not believe in giving up, particularly when we know how much Toastmasters can change people's lives in an extremely positive way. It is encouraging knowing that the full District Team is striving to attain our goal.

As a result of the **uncertain change in the number of clubs** (both clubs closing and clubs chartering), we consider it prudent to **delay the alignment report** until the March renewals are reflected on the Toastmasters International website. Any changes will be discussed in detail with clubs beforehand.

The Impact of COVID and Membership Renewals

It was around about this time last year that New Zealand went into lockdown for the first time. As a District, our District Team stepped up, we conducted Table Topic sessions twice daily and held the Division and District Conferences online at very short notice. At that time, we showed “Number 8 Wire” mentality and ended up with Amy Davidson representing Region 12 in the Semi Finals of the World Championship of Public Speaking. We were presented with a challenge and turned this into an opportunity, with many clubs offering both in person and online meetings. A big thank you to Lauren Parsons for her work in this area.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2znbrwG7qOBwc8rzPqHFa8D8TUslqYOO>

This year has been even more challenging. Following our Level 4 lockdown, our members and clubs worked hard to bounce back, striving to find their feet. **Our resilience has been stretched to the nth degree.** Many members have been placed under financial strain, faced redundancy, had the stress of overseas family members testing positive for COVID, lost family members or friends to COVID, weddings and milestone celebrations have been postponed and relationships have ended. In this environment our members have displayed a high level of care for each other, and it has been **heart-warming to see us become a stronger Toastmasters family.**

Many have **gained significant new skills through Pathways** and through **learning to excel in an online environment.** Many have commented on how their online skills gained through Toastmasters has put them **ahead of the game** at work or in their extracurricular environment. On the flip side of that, some members have experienced online fatigue, with organisations holding multiple online meetings to compensate for not meeting in person. This has resulted in some clubs losing members and some corporate clubs choosing to not proceed with Toastmasters. Our challenge in the next few months is to see how we may continue to address online fatigue and entice as many of our members back as possible.

On the other side of the coin, many corporates are acutely aware of how operating in a COVID environment has put a dampener on their staff's confidence levels. They have researched the market and seen that **Toastmasters is the most cost-effective way to restore confidence** and **enhance** their staff's both, **in person and online, presentation skills.** These corporates are the source of our new clubs.

Where any of our members are **considering not renewing their membership,** have a chat with that member, find out why they joined Toastmasters and whether they attained their goals. Find out what new goals they set and how close they are to meeting those goals. **Remind them that the best way to retain and grow their skills is through the practice Toastmasters affords.** Remind them that practising in a **fun, safe environment maintains and increases confidence.**

Positive Attitude

I commend the majority of our District Team for turning this year's challenging environment into opportunities. It is interesting to note that **the more Divisions look for the positive and accept accountability** for their own results, **the more successful the Division ends up being.** I am so proud of our District Team.

Overall, the passion, commitment and team spirit displayed has been exceptional. Thank you.

Public Relations

One of the **smartest moves** I made as District Director this year, was the **appointment of Elizabeth Viljoen** as our *exceptional* **Public Relations Manager**. Seeing the potential in Elizabeth and encouraging her to take up the role has stood our District in such good stead. **Elizabeth has gone above and beyond what her role entails**. Elizabeth takes every opportunity to **promote Toastmasters through our District social media channels and never stops finding new ways to maximise our exposure**. The support Elizabeth has given our clubs and VPs Public Relations has been outstanding. Elizabeth may be relatively new to Toastmasters, but she has learned so much so quickly this year, she is way ahead of the game. **Elizabeth has been a constant source of support to the Trio** and as a District, we thank Elizabeth for that.

Charter Functions

Welcome to TWG Toastmasters! A big thank you to our CGD, **Wendy Wickliffe**, PQD, **Stephen Budai** and PRM, **Elizabeth Viljoen** for their hard work and commitment in **chartering this club**.

By the time, our District Executive meeting is held, we would have had the pleasure of attending the **Karaka Toastmasters Club and TWG Toastmasters charter functions**.

Club Anniversaries

Congratulations to **Long Bay Toastmasters** who celebrated their **fifth-year anniversary**. I would encourage all clubs to celebrate their milestone years.

Recognition and District Awards

Recognition and District Awards is the one area where I believe we **could have done better this year**. As we no longer have a November Conference, we needed to create a different event. Our ability to publicly recognise member's achievements was made even harder when our Area, Division and District Conferences needed to be held online. Being awarded a DTM online, is a far cry from walking up on that stage and receiving it in person (even if the online presentation was made by a past Toastmasters International President!) Then on top of that, our **District Awards Dinner from the 2019 – 2020** Year needed to be postponed twice due to COVID. As a result, our previous Toastmasters Awards Dinner, arranged by our IPDD, **Neil Stichbury** is only taking place on the **15th of May 2021**. This means we have gone a whole year without recognising people publicly and presenting them with their awards and incentives. (Apart from the incentives couriered by our CGD). **In hindsight**, when our September Awards Dinner was cancelled, we should have **held an online event and couriered the awards and incentives** to our members immediately. (A similar situation arose when we split as a District, with many of our District Award winners not being recognised in person). We should have learned better from that. **Our members could still have been recognised in person at the first opportunity that arose. As IPDD next year, this will be a primary focus area for me.**

The other area where there was **room for improvement**, was replacing the banners that were either lost or not ordered last year. Too much time was spent trying to find out what had happened to them, rather than reordering them. We appreciate this must have been incredibly frustrating for clubs.

District Awards Dinner

I know our IPDD, **Neil Stichbury**, will provide more details in his report, but I would like to thank Neil for the **hard work he has put into arranging our 2019 – 2020 Awards Dinner being held on the 15th of May**. I commend Neil for **remaining positive and patient** through COVID and for **persevering** until we found a gap in the District Calendar to hold our Awards Dinner.

Area, Division and District Contests

Many thanks to our PQD, **Stephen Budai**, for holding **multiple Contest Training sessions** and to our **Area Directors for their hard work and commitment in organising the Area Contests**. As normally happens, there has been a **few lessons learned** during the Area Contests which have **prepared everyone well for our Division Contests**. Overall, the preparation for the Division Contest appears to be going well and we can look forward to hearing excellent speakers. A big thank you to our Division Directors for the hard work they are putting into preparing for our Division Contests. **I would strongly recommend that all contestants and contest officials read the excellent manual Toastmasters has put together on Online Speech Contest Best Practices**. [479 Online Speech Contest Best Practices \(azureedge.net\)](https://www.azureedge.net/479-Online-Speech-Contest-Best-Practices)

District Leadership Committee (DLC) Nominations

A big thank you to our DLC Chair, Stephen Lindsay and his team for having completed their deliberations in such a timely and efficient manner. In the past, members could stand for Senior District Officer roles from the floor. This has changed and **where a candidate has been nominated by the DLC, this Senior District role may not then be contested from the floor**. However, if a Senior District Officer role does not have a candidate nominated by the DLC, then candidates may stand from the floor and participate in the **Candidates' Showcase**, provided they have been **vetted by the DLC Chair and have provided the DLC Chair with the necessary paperwork seven days prior to the District Council Meeting on the 1st of May 2021**. **The DLC report will be posted on the District website on the 2nd of April 2021**. I have however, been advised that **all Senior District Officer roles** either have a candidate nominated by the DLC, or a vetted candidate that will be standing from the floor.

Future Area Directors

As a Trio, we feel very strongly that the **best way to start a new Toastmasters Year is with a full team**. We encourage members to **identify future leaders** and to take up the challenge to stretch themselves further. The **benefits of becoming an Area Director** have been outlined during training and at events. Our PQD, **Stephen Budai**, will be hosting a workshop on **What Makes an Area Director on the 26th March from 7:00 pm – 8:30pm** to enable **prospective Area Directors to find out more about the role**. Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/96443468903>. We have been scouting for members with leadership potential throughout the year. **Please do not hesitate to contact me, as District Director, should you be aware of anyone who may be interested in the role of Area Director**.

District Mid-Year Audit

Our District Audit Chair, **Sarah Bate**, has had **much experience auditing Toastmasters District accounts**. Sarah advised our **District Finance Manager, Madelaine Luke**, is the **most organised and well-prepared Finance Manager she has ever encountered**. I would like to **congratulate our Finance Manager, Madelaine Luke, for having done such an outstanding job** and for making the audit so easy and such a pleasure for our audit team to complete swiftly. A **big thank you** to the other members of our District audit team, **Gael Black** and **Dawn Edwards** for your time and effort given. **A special thank you to Sarah for coming to Auckland to complete the audit in such a timely and efficient manner.**

District Website

While we started working on the District website towards the end of the Toastmasters Year, progress slowed down substantially due to my spending so much time at the hospital with Kingsley Moody. I apologise for this delay. We have been progressing forward since the end of November. Our goal was to have the new website in place a lot sooner, but we are now **close to releasing the updated website.**

Online District Conference 30th April – 2nd May

I am sure our PQD, **Stephen Budai**, will provide you with further details in his report. We are looking forward to seeing as many of you online as possible, I am sure this will be a most enjoyable and inspiring event. **The District Executive Meeting will be held at 6:00 pm on the 30th of April. The Virtual District Council meeting will be held on the 1st of April 2021.**

All the best for the last three and a bit, months and we look forward to seeing you online.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Mob:021 059 989 7

Email: districtdirector@d112tm.org.nz