

## Rotary Bulletin – 23 February 2026

### Brew Union Friday Drinks

Brew Union Friday 27 February 2026 at 5.00 pm.

### Red Tulip Walk in the Manawatu

Saturday 11 April, The Square. Walk to support World Parkinson's Day.



### Monday lunchtime 2 March 2026

**Guest Speaker:** John Brunsdon

*“Myanmar – a personal perspective”*

Intro/Thanks	President Dave
Sergeant	John Freebairn
Corporal	Brian Donnelly
Parting Thought	President Norelle
Bulletin Editor	Dave Gaynor
Attendance	Lesley Boulton

### Festival of Cultures

Rotary had a stand at Festival of Cultures on Saturday 21 February. Thanks to everyone who helped. Huge crowds and a good opportunity to profile Rotary. Lachlan Sparham and his mother Katherine and supported Selena joined us to help Lachlan raise funds to attend the NZ Youth Ambassadors Rugby Team in the Czech Republic.



## Mayor's State of the City Address

23 February 2026

Mayor Grant Smith delivered a comprehensive **State of the City** address outlining Palmerston North's current strengths, future opportunities, and immediate challenges. Speaking to a combined Rotary and Manawatu Business Chamber audience, he emphasised the city's **economic resilience, community collaboration, and long-term development plans.**



### Key Themes

#### 1. Strong Business & Community Partnerships

Smith praised Rotary and the Business Chamber for their commitment to community initiatives, youth development, and health programmes, including support for:

- Mental health initiatives such as **Lifting the Lid**
- Hospital projects, including the **robotic surgery suite**
- Environmental programmes like **Kahuterawa ecological park**

He affirmed that collaboration between community groups, business networks, and council is essential to the city's success.



#### 2. Economic Strength & Sector Performance

Palmerston North continues to benefit from a **diverse, multi-sector economy**, with major contributions from:

- **Education, defence, and government services**
- **Healthcare**, the city's largest employment sector

- **Food science**, research, and agri-tech (including the Bioeconomy Science Institute and Fonterra R&D)

He noted strong signals of economic recovery and a **\$10 billion investment pipeline**, with new jobs expected in the coming decade.

### 3. Infrastructure Priorities

Two major infrastructure needs were highlighted:

- **Wastewater treatment plant upgrade** (Nature Calls)
- **Regional Freight Ring Road**, which currently has no central government funding

Smith urged business leaders to advocate to MPs to secure funding, calling these projects “must-dos” for the region.



### 4. Growth, Housing, and Affordability

The city remains one of New Zealand’s most **affordable urban centres**, with:

- Lower-than-average house prices
- Strong rental affordability
- Increasing population and youthful demographics (average age 36)

He expects the population to reach **100,000 within 6–7 years**, noting the need for continued investment in housing and urban planning.

### 5. Events & City Vibrancy

Events remain a core part of Palmerston North’s identity and economic activity, including:

- Festival of Cultures (15,000 attendees)
- Field Days
- Rural Games
- National sports events at the **Central Energy Trust Arena**

He announced that Palmerston North has secured the **New Zealand Squash Open for 2027**.

### 6. International Connections

Smith reinforced the city’s **global outlook**, referencing:

- Sister city relationships (Missoula, Guiyang, Mihara, etc.)
- Growing diplomatic engagement
- Strong participation in international education

The Festival of Cultures exemplifies Palmerston North’s multicultural character, with over **130 nationalities** represented.

### 7. Challenges Ahead

The Mayor highlighted several national-level challenges affecting local government:

- Central government reforms (RMA, regional council changes)
- A proposed national **rates cap** (2–4%)
- Funding gaps for essential regional infrastructure

He stressed that advocacy and collaboration will be necessary to secure a fair share of investment.

### Conclusion

Smith concluded with optimism, arguing that the city’s blend of:

- A diverse, stable economy
- Growing population
- Strong civic institutions
- Global connections
- Major upcoming investments

...positions Palmerston North for a **bright, sustainable future**.

He encouraged businesses and community organisations to continue working together to “**make things happen**”.

### Parting Thought

President Dave: **The Rotary Four Way Test**

*Is it the truth.*

*Is it fair to all concerned.*

*Will it build goodwill.*

*Will it be beneficial to all concerned.*

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FOR  
GOOD**