

Probiants forced to consider 'what's in a name?'

Probus Clubs are facing an upheaval after being threatened with legal action if they continue to use the name 'Probus'.

Probus is a name that has been used in NZ for clubs that were originally an offshoot of Rotary for more than 40 years. There are seven Probus clubs on the Hibiscus Coast, with a total of close to 1000 members.

The threat came after Probus South Pacific (the governing body, based in Australia) acquired the NZ trademark rights to the name 'Probus'. Last year A J Park, patent attorneys acting for Probus South Pacific, wrote to the NZ clubs, saying that they could only retain the name 'Probus' if they were affiliated to Probus South Pacific.

Graeme McIntosh, public relations officer for Rebus Club of Hibiscus Coast (formerly Probus Club of Hibiscus Coast) says his club is the first of the seven Probus clubs in the area to adopt a different name because of the Australian edict.

He says the desire for independence from Australia stemmed from an issue a few years ago when the Australians asked for access to members' private information.

Graeme, who is also Rebus NZ chair, said the alternative name 'Rebus' was arrived at after a brain storming session and was duly incorporated a year ago.

He says renaming themselves Rebiants found favour with a huge majority of his club's 115 members, although it was not a decision made lightly. "People feel sad about the loss of the name," he says. "Some of our members agonized over parting with it, as our



club has been called that for 35 years."

He says the other local Probus clubs are currently in various stages of considering their options, which include affiliation with Australia, affiliating with Rebus NZ or affiliating with another organization, Fellowship NZ.

Graeme says it is unfortunate that the issue has fragmented the organization. He says the Probus movement in NZ made a mistake not trade marking the name within NZ and it is now too late.

"The fact is that the rights to the name are gone and if we retain that name we are using stolen property and leave ourselves wide open to legal action," he says. "However, the choice remains with the membership of each club."

Probing the name

The Probus name came from the UK and was an amalgam of 'professional' and 'business'. Rebus came from a blend of 'retired' and 'business' however from the beginning not all Probiants, or Rebiants, are retired business people.