

Back to basics

Tamworth set for a floor members' conference

"HIDEEHI Hideeho - we welcome all sister city delegates to Tamworth in July 2009".

These were the introductory remarks of Tamworth sister city chairperson, John Green, when he enthusiastically encouraged delegates at the Gosford conference to be at the Tamworth conference.

Tamworth is well known for its country hospitality, its world famous annual country music festival, its new international equine centre and its friendly people. It is located in one of the most productive food growing regions in Australia, producing some of the best beef, wheat, lamb and pork.

The food in Tamworth will be something to remember with good traditional country fare served up with a 'back to basics' conference theme.

John said conference planning was well underway.

He has attended several conferences and said he wanted focus for Tamworth to be on wooing first time attendees as well as long standing members.

He said they would be coming to a conference relevant to the issues currently facing sister city relationships.

"Tamworth will not be fancy.

"Tamworth is good solid country made up of people who like to have hands on experiences and who enjoy their involvement in the sister city movement.

"The conference program will reflect this attitude with speakers who have had relevant experience at initiating and organising sister city events and relationships," he said.

He told delegates at the Gosford conference that the Tamworth organising committee understood the costs people faced in attending a conference and as such planned to make it affordable and relevant to everyone.

"Tamworth City has a large range of accommodation facilities from four and a half star luxury motels to caravan parks and camping grounds.

"All delegates will be welcomed and treated as honoured guests.

"The city has an excellent location with easy access via road, rail, bus and air services.

"Tamworth is excited about hosting the 2009 conference.

"Our sister cities of Gore in New Zealand, Sannohe in Japan, and Chaoyang District (Beijing) China, will be heavily involved and hopefully we will welcome a delegation from Boseong in South Korea.

An exciting and active youth program is in the planning. Arrangements have already been made for youth delegates to come from Gore in New Zealand with one being an up and coming country music performer. A school dance troupe from Chaoyang District, specialising in Chinese minority dance has also been organised.

These youth will be active participants in what is hoped to be a large youth conference (See page 7).

Bring your hat, bring your dancing shoes, bring your appetite and bring a thirst for being actively involved in the conference sessions - these are the words from John as he looks forward to welcoming you when you arrive in Tamworth next year.

"You cannot afford to miss this conference," said John. He is available on 02 6765 7437.



Young people at the Gosford conference became totally involved both at their conference and when involved with adult activities. During a night at the Australian Reptile Park Amanda Xiberras of Blacktown made friends with this Burmese Python (See page 7).

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President's message

ONCE again it is my pleasure to report on the activities of Sister Cities Australia over the past few months. Since my previous report we have enjoyed the hospitality of the Gosford City Council who successfully hosted the 2008 National Conference.

Our sincere thanks to Mayor Jim McFadgen, Conference Chairman John Moulard and all the staff and volunteers who made sure our visit was one to be remembered.

Coming from Tassie I was not amused that I had to buy some warm clothing whilst in Gosford but the warmth of our hosts more than compensated.

As an executive we were delighted to welcome delegates from all over Australia and International guests from Japan, South Korea, China, New Zealand and of course an old friend for her third visit, in Nancy Huppert from the USA.

Of course everyone enjoyed the great entertainment and food provided but I am also very pleased to report the wonderful enthusiasm with which the delegates embraced the work side of the program.

There were some great discussions and ideas enabling us to move our strategic planning on to the next phase.

During the last few months we have been represented at various functions throughout the country and one worthy of note was the reception held by the Argentinian Ambassador aboard the Navy frigate 'Libertad' on the evening of Tuesday 16 September. Executive member Peter Filmer was the fortunate soul to undertake this arduous mission.

This month Vice President Jan Teasedale will visit Japan to represent Sister Cities Australia in the CLAIR Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar.

As with all overseas visits, undertaken by Sister Cities Australia executive members, Jan will be meeting her own travel costs, but will be hosted by CLAIR whilst in Japan.

Feed back in regards to the changes over the past year have, in the most part, been extremely positive.

The new image has been welcomed by virtually all I have spoken with.

This is not the finish of our task though as we are continuing to work on our new strategy with the next phase of the strategic plan to be addressed at our next executive meeting.

The website will become more vibrant and be continually updated with information and news and this is one area where I ask for your assistance.

Any news stories will always be welcome for use on either the website or as articles in the Sister Cities News.

Editor Jim Mynard is always looking for new stories and always keep in mind this is your paper.

One of our executive, Robert Bell, did not nominate for the recent New South Wales local government election.

Robert has been involved with Gosford for approximately 30 years and was one of the main drivers who ensured that city today enjoys a wonderful green bush fringe.

Congratulations on your time in LG Rob and good luck in the future.

It should be noted that he is still a member of the executive.

Speaking of the executive.

Next year we will be heading to Tamworth for the National Conference.

2009 is an election year and should you have a desire to be involved on the executive side of Sister Cities Australia may I suggest you commence your inquiries and planning. All positions will be declared vacant and the terms are for two years.

Positions are voluntary and require a reasonable commitment of time to execute your duties.

Any of the current executive would be happy to speak with you however my best advice would be to contact secretary Margaret Evans in the first instance.

Speaking of annual conferences I am delighted to announce the successful bidder for host city 2010 is Rockhampton.

Dates are not finalised at this time but will be announced as soon as practical.

I am delighted to congratulate founder and chairman John Bartlett and all the members of the Port Stephens Sister City Committee on their 20th Anniversary.

To reach this milestone is certainly commendable. Well done to all those committed members who have put in so much time and effort over the years.

May I wish you good reading with this issue of Sister Cities News.
Kind regards
Bill

Secretary's message

I WOULD like to share my excitement and enthusiasm with the recent changes to our organisation, now Sister Cities Australia.

Although I have been on the executive for some years now I believe the recent name change, new logo, new website and some improved new looks to documentation is moving our organisation ahead.

The implementation of the new strategic plan will be a major step in improving not only our image but addressing the needs of the organisation.

I guess it is easy to say that the executive is made up of volunteers, however at the end of the day we still need to provide our members with value for money, and based on the number of inquiries and requests I receive I believe it is easy to see just what the members want.

Although we have not met as an executive since the sessions on the Strategic Plan were held, we have already recognised some of the important aspects of the plan that require addressing and by our next annual conference we hope to provide to our members some of the benefits this plan has to offer.

You may also be aware that as part of the changes mentioned above our new website is up and running with a new look and feel.

This will be updated on a regular basis, and again, members will be given the opportunity to feedback any suggestions on ways to improve and offer information they feel would benefit the researcher.

One document that has been removed from the website is the register of affiliations.

Although this is an important document and one that I receive requests for quite regularly it requires updating as it is only as good as the information I receive and unfortunately I am not always advised of the changes.

The executive is very mindful of its importance the register holds and is working at ways of updating and once more keeping it current.

Please note that our next annual conference will be held at Tamworth, New South Wales in July 2009 so please diary note and look for more information in our next edition of Sister Cities News.

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Secretary

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Hobsons Bay and Anjo celebrate two decades of youth exchange

HOBSONS Bay International Friendship Association last month celebrated the 20th anniversary of its sister city agreement with Anjo, Japan.

This relationship has been enriched by a highly successful ongoing student exchange program and support from the Toyota company at Altona.

Friendship Association president Ralph Halnon said during the celebration dinner that the Hobsons Bay council strongly supported the association with the student exchanges.

"Each year four young people from the community of Hobsons Bay travel to Anjo.

"This program continues to be an outstanding success and through it many friendships have developed.

"Students have returned to Japan to see their former host family in Anjo and to continue their interest in Japan and Japanese culture.

"Especially pleasing also for the association is that some students have willingly offered to host an adult delegate from Anjo this year," he said.

Anjo mayor Kamiya said that over the 20 years, many active exchanges such as the art exchange and the student exchange program, have been made among the citizens of our two cities.

"That brought closer ties and I believe our relationship has played a small but very significant role to improve the goodwill between our two great nations.

"I believe that home-stay is a good way to learn the culture, customs and language in a foreign country.

"It is important that we continue to learn more and understand each other, so that the friendship between our cities continues to grow.

"I would like to thank all the host families for hosting us," he said.

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La Famiglia art in global bonding

CANADA Bay west of Sydney and the City of San Fele in the Basilicata region of Italy formed a special bond when a bronze sculpture 'La Famiglia', was unveiled in the City of Canada Bay on Friday 15 August.

This was the date of the traditional Ferragosto holiday in Italy.

The sculpture, a gift to Canada Bay from the City of San Fele, was part of a community initiative between the cities and was designed and made by international contemporary artist, Antonio Masini, of San Fele.

The project began in 2005 when contact was first made with the artist through a community representative during a sister city visit to Italy.

Mr Masini was invited to Canada Bay in 2006 to research and begin design concepts for a bronze sculpture that would immortalise Canada Bay's multicultural community through the creation of a public monument.

The result was a bronze sculpture that stands in Five Dock, seven metres high, three metres wide and comprises three figures, mother, father and a small child.

The figures represent a family embracing Italian heritage, the past, present, and future.

'La Famiglia' symbolises the strength, determination and courage of thousands of Italians and other migrants who left their homeland and crossed the ocean to start a new life in Australia.

Canada Bay mayor Angelo Tsirekas said the project was an important community initiative that captured the spirit, character and flavour of Canada Bay's multicultural community while acknowledging the strong historical, social and cultural links

between Australia and Italy.

President of the Lucania Association in Australia, and Canada Bay resident, Joe Di Giacomo, who played a large part in the project coming to fruition said it was a privilege to be part of the great venture.

"As one of the partners involved it was wonderful to see it become a reality.

"La Famiglia will be a monument for the whole of Canada Bay and its community.

"It represents goodwill, prosperity and the importance of family," he said.

Canada Bay celebrated Ferragosto with the council's annual festival, on Sunday 17 August.

This was a great success with more than 50,000 people attending the festival on Great North Road in Five Dock.

They enjoyed a wonderful line up of traditional Italian music and dancing as well as Canada Bay entertainment, cooking demonstrations, a Fiat classic cars display, market stalls, children's activities, rides, and the ambience of an Italian inspired piazza.

The celebrations continued with a unique exhibition of Antonio Masini's paintings.

Masini is an accomplished painter, sculpture and graphic artist, whose work is shown all over the world.

Canada Bay community enjoyed a special exhibition of paintings on display at the Concord Library following the Ferragosto festival. Many people visited the library especially to view the work of this great artist.

As San Fele's gift to the City of Canada Bay stands proudly in Stevensons Reserve, Five Dock, it embodies strength, determination and courage and is a reminder of the bond between the two sister cities.



Unveiling the statue at Canada Bay. From left: Belinda Frew, general manager Gary Sawyer, Lisa Miscamble, John Earls behind, Vincent Conroy, Peter Sheehan, Canada Bay mayor Angelo Tsirekas, Joe Di Giacomo, Tim Clancy, deputy mayor Neil Kenzler, Cr Tony Fasanella, John Osland, and Peter Higgs.

Sharing stories across the world

BELLINGHAM in America has led a school based project for its sister cities by promoting literacy learning and an international connection via the sharing of stories for many years.

Bellingham Sister Committee member Sandy Zell, a librarian with the Bellingham Public Library was a driving force behind the project, which began as a book week promotion and expanded to include Bellingham's sister cities.

Sandy Zell travelled to Port Stephens to read 'Mabela the Clever' an African folktale retold by Margaret Read MacDonald for the first international program in 2003. Bellingham donated copies of the book for all participating schools.

This visit raised awareness of sister city activities in the broader community.

During 2005 Port Stephens library staff were invited to choose an Australian story to share with Bellingham.

"Big Rain Coming", the Dreaming tale of the Rainbow Serpent was chosen.

Again Sandy Zell visited Port Stephens to read the story in schools and to coordinate the construction of a large rainbow serpent mural in these schools, which would be sent back to America

for display in the Bellingham Public Library.

The final exchange in this wonderful program was the sharing of the Liberian folktale 'Head, Body, Legs'.

The story was told to Won-Ldy Paye, now living in USA, by his Liberian grandmother. The story was then retold by Won-Ldy and his co writer Meg Lippert.

Meg visited Port Stephens schools in 2007. Participating schools were delighted to welcome an author for inspirational writing workshops for students and staff. After the visit, students decorated puppet pieces of the book's central character which were sent back to Bellingham.

Early this year they were sorted and completed figures returned to Port Stephens, with pieces coming from many different participating countries across the globe.

Port Stephens libraries and participating schools received a copy of the shared book and the workshop, courtesy of Bellingham. In return Port Stephens hosted presenters and in 2007 reciprocated with the purchase of Australian Dreaming stories and sent these and related student art work to the Bellingham and Pierce County libraries.

Casey takes award trophy to Springfield

THE James B Connolly Games, held in Casey's Sister City Springfield Ohio USA was an amazing success with lifelong friendships made during the trip of a lifetime.

The 18 day sporting and cultural ex-change in July 2008 saw a contingent of 34 Casey athletes and support personnel travel to Springfield Ohio to compete in girl's soccer and boy's basketball.

Members were home hosted with Springfield families and this was a highlight for many with US culture and customs being shared with the Australians.

The people of Springfield were very generous and hospitable in opening their homes to the people of Casey and there were many sad goodbyes to new found friends.

One athlete said his host family was "funny, friendly, exciting, helpful, too many words to describe... they were everything I hoped for and then some." Another says "... my host

sister was the sweetest girl ever, and her sisters and friends made my trip so much worthwhile".

In the sporting arena, the Casey athletes came up against strong competition in both girls soccer and boys basketball and were fortunate to test their skills at this high level. All athletes enjoyed the opportunity to represent Casey and gained feedback from the US coaches, learnt more about their sport and developed valuable personal and team skills.

One basketball player said the best thing about the Connolly Games was "playing a sport I love against schools and boys just like me and the others only they are halfway around the globe".

Social and cultural events in Springfield complemented the sports program and visitors enjoyed excursions such as a Dayton Dragons baseball game, walking tour of downtown Springfield, Splash zone aquatic centre and mini golf.

The group members were

fortunate to take part in American Independence Day celebrations on the 4th July national holiday and many were treated to cook-outs, neighbourhood gatherings, street parades, bonfires and fireworks.

The visit coincided with Sister Cities Day on 5 July and was celebrated American style with a traditional American pig roast and potluck dinner.

The group then enjoyed a game of Australian Rules football, which was a big hit with the Americans.

Casey mayor Janet Halsall said Sister Cities Day was an opportunity to acknowledge the benefits of sister cities relationships, recognise the achievements of the previous year and look towards future sister city initiatives.

Casey formally presented to Springfield a trophy from the Sister Cities Australia National Awards which was jointly won by both cities for the successful staging of the 2006 Edwin Flack Games sister city exchange in 2006.

Hobsons Bay - Anjo Staff Exchange

HOBSONS Bay Victoria has introduced a staff exchange program with

its sister city Anjo in Japan. Anjo community relations officer Tomo-

yoshi Takahashi came to the seaside municipality on Monday 8 September and will leave on Sunday 30 November.

Hobsons Bay contracts coordinator Dallas Giles will visit and work in Anjo next year.

The two councils developed the program to provide employees with wider experience by working in a large organisation in a country with a different culture.

Tomo, as he likes to be called, has been busy

attending council events and meetings and is working in the Environment, Governance, Multicultural and Communications units while at Hobsons Bay.

Staff were also invited to host Tomo for weekend activities and help him experience the wonders of Victoria.

He said he was overwhelmed with the response and kindness of staff members and would take many fond memories back to his homeland.



Tomoyoshi Takahashi at his desk

Rockingham hosts Ako dancers

THE City of Rockingham hosted a delegation from its sister city, Ako, Japan.

We have been sister cities for 11 years now and have hosted each other on many occasions. In March this year a delegation from the City of Ako consisting of two local government officers and a 17 member dance group the 'Deshon Dancers', visited the City of Rockingham, Western Australia. The Deshon Dancers are a group of mostly elderly residents

who perform traditional Japanese dance and Rockingham was fortunate to have the group perform for us on four occasions during the visit. During late 2007 the City of Rockingham Children's Choir visited Ako and performed on many occasions.

This favour was returned when the Deshon Dancers performed at Waikiki Primary School along with Rockingham Children's Choir.

Students also hosted them to dinner.

The evening was very successful with the students enjoying the dancing and joining in. The night went so well that the delegation left an hour later than anticipated. Timing of the delegation was also coincided with 'Harmony Week' celebrations and the Dancers were able to perform along with many other groups, adding to the multicultural festivities and helped highlight the sister city relationship to the community during this special time.

The group also performed at the Autumn Centre, the City of Rockingham's over - 55 facility.

This performance was also well received and showed many of our elderly a new dimension to 'growing old gracefully'. Students studying Japanese at Kolbe Catholic College also hosted the delegation to lunch and to a class where the students were tasked with asking each of the Ako visitors questions in Japanese and compiling this information.

Taipei Phoenix Choir captivates Perth concert audience

MEMBERS of the world-renowned all female Taipei Phoenix Choir set to mesmerize their audience of more than 400 at the Perth Town Hall.

The choir's visit and performance titled Forever Friendship, was arranged by the Taiwanese Association of Western Australia, as a celebration of Perth's strong sister city agreement with Taipei. The Taipei Phoenix Choir is known internationally and recognized for the amazing combined quality of its singers.

Demand for tickets to the concert was extraordinary and organizers said there were enough requests for tickets to fill the Perth Town

Hall twice. The choir was founded in 1992 and quickly became recognized as one of the finest female performance groups in Taiwan.

Its singers come from all walks of life and most are not professional musicians.

In its 16 year history, the choir earned considerable recognition and won many awards, in Taiwan and internationally. Perth mayor Lisa Scaffidi said she hoped the choir's visit would further strengthen Perth's sister city relationship with Taiwan because friendships built as a result of such exchanges often led to increased trading and business opportunities between the participating coun-

tries.

"Perth's current rapid growth phase has resulted in many and varied opportunities for international trade and it is vital that we further nurture and encourage these relationships," she said.

"Our Sister City agreements definitely help to facilitate this and equally as important is the fact that they also foster greater understanding and tolerance between cultures."

She said it was a great honour to be hosting the choir and that the level of interest in the performance was a good indication of the value Perth's community placed on cultural diversity.

Sister Cities wanted

Ancient city of Seongnam

SEONGNAM, in South Korea, has a population of 980,000 and would like to establish a sister city relationship with a large city in South Australia, Western Australia or Tasmania.

Seongnam goes back to ancient times when King Onjo designated the city capital of Baekje Kingdom in 18BC. It has three kingdom periods.

Today the city is green and environmentally friendly and has well developed areas of education, culture, and sport.

It already has sister city relationships with Auroa, USA; Piracicaba, Brazil; and Shenyang, in China.

Areas of interest sought are arts and culture, economic exchange, education, sport, municipal cooperation, technology, and youth.

Seongnam is particularly interested in establishing a youth exchange and study program and similar with a performing arts group.

Please contact Margaret Evans on 04 1989 8357.

Quang Ngai Vietnam

THE city of Quang Ngai in Vietnam would like a sister city relationship with an Australian city.

Quang Ngai city has a population of 130,000 with a mixture of urban rural and industrial interests in its economy.

It is 884 kilometres south of Hanoi and 835 kilometres north of Ho Chi Minh City.

Quang Ngai has convenient access to road, sea and airway.

Economically Quang Ngai has rich potentials for development.

The 130 kilometre long coast has several clean, beautiful and poetic beaches with breathtaking scenery, famous historic relics, and special cultural traditions.

This all allows easy development of Quang Ngai with the diversified tourism of sea ecology, mountain ecology, island ecology, and traditional culture.

Quang Ngai claims to be the best of five provinces in the major economic areas of Central Viet Nam because of its potential to develop industries in the Dung Quat Economic Zone and other Industrial Zones of the province.

Dung Quat, with an area of 10,300 hectares is located in the Binh Son district and about 860 kilometres from Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh cities. Dung Quat is designed to be a multi-functional, multi - sectorial, comprehensive economic zone that is intended for heavy industries of oil refining, petrochemical, and other chemicals.

It is also able to house large scale heavy industries including mechanics, mechanical manufacturing, shipbuilding and repairing, steel mill, of container manufacturing, and consumer goods production. Dung Quat also has the ability to process and export due to the availability of the Dung Quat deep sea-port, Chu Lai Airport, Van Tuong industrial service new city, and Doc Soi urban town.

The Government of Vietnam has been concentrating investment in Dung Quat with hopes that by 2010 Dung Quat, along with Chu Lai airport will be a hub of international integration and development that can expand throughout Viet Nam.

Please contact Margaret Evans on 04 1989 8357.



Sister Cities Australia delegates networking



ONE of the real benefits of a Sister Cities Australia conference is delegate networking. Because of strong contributions for this edition space is limited but our camera captured some of the action.

Top left. ASCA Immediate past president, Kevin Hill, right, chats with Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries delegates Lidan Wang, and Honggiang Wang.

Top centre. From left: Glenda Curtis, of Hobsons Bay, Victoria, Vic Walker and Sister Cities Australia Awards chief judge Steve Walker, of Frankston, Victoria.

Top right. Sister Cities Australia Awards chairman Jan Teasdale, and Adam Vaughan-Williams from the City of Rockingham chat during the first timers session.

Centre right. Warren Bowden and Ray Fabris of Baulkham Hills Shire listen with interest during the first timers session.

Bottom centre. Sister Cities International representative Nancy Huppert, and KLA FIR representative Ihn-hwan Chung, compare notes. Bottom right. Discussions were keen during the workshops. From left: Kirsty Stewart, of Rockhampton, Nicky Young, Moreton Bay, and Joe Ramia, of Toowoomba.



Above: Sister Cities Australia president Alderman Bill Wilson, right, officially hands the 2009 conference over to John Green of Tamworth. The conference will be held in the famous country music city in July 2009 and will concentrate on inviting first timers. John said Tamworth was good solid country made up of people who liked to have hands on experience and who enjoyed their involvement in the sister cities movement.



Two sister city visits bring double happiness to Hurstville

A FIRST time cultural exchange by students from the City of Changzhou to Hurstville City in southern Sydney coincided with the tenth anniversary of their sister city friendship in late July. Since its 1998 beginning the sister city relationship between Hurstville and Changzhou strengthened

through numerous reciprocal visits by citizens and council staff. Hurstville mayor Vince Badalati said the visit gave 17 students, who were billeted by community members and council staff, the opportunity to experience Australian life and culture. "These young Chin-

ese ambassadors learnt about the vibrant multicultural Hurstville local government area, and toured some of Australia's key landmarks and tourist attractions," he said. To mark the anniversary, Hurstville council held an exhibition titled 'Changzhou and Hurstville: cele-

brating 10 years of Sister City friendship'. The exhibition featured photographs taken by Hurstville City delegates on visits to Changzhou, and a generous selection on loan from the Changzhou Municipal Foreign Affairs Office. It also included a

selection of Chinese cultural items given to Hurstville City by Changzhou delegations over the past 10 years. Cr Badalati said the exhibition captured the history of the council's civic friendship with this beautiful Chinese city and showcased the fascinating culture of its people. The City of Changzhou is located in the southern part of the Jiangsu province, near Shanghai and has a population of 3.8 million. Meanwhile 10 visiting students from Hurstville's Japanese sister city Shiroishi formed friendships with exchange students from its sister city of Changzhou on their overlapping visits in early August. Cr Badalati said Hur-

stville Council took the opportunity to broaden the intercultural experience of the Japanese and Chinese students by hosting an afternoon tea where they met and shared experiences of Australia. "Observing the young people from two different countries interacting in a new cultural setting was a very unique and special experience. "Some Japanese and Chinese students even stayed with the same host families for one night and learnt more about their respective cultures," Cr Badalati said. During their visit, the Shiroishi students immersed themselves in our culture by participating in their host families' weekend activities and attending classes at

Hurstville schools. The cultural exchange followed a July visit to Shiroishi by 10 Hurstville City students and two chaperones who were billeted by Japanese families. "The Shiroishi visit was a chance for Hurstville City families to return this hospitality by hosting the 13 to 15 year olds and showing them what life in Australia was like. "Our relationship with Shiroishi has opened up new possibilities for cultural, educational and vocational experiences that have enriched the whole community," said Cr Badalati. The City of Shiroishi, near Tokyo has a population of 42,000. The Shiroishi Hurstville friendship was formed 15 years ago.



Hurstville mayor Vince Badalati welcomes exchange students from Shiroishi, Japan and Changzhou, China.

Sister Cities Australia awards provide a valuable record



Standing from left: Awards chairman Jan Teasdale, Ralph Van Den Blink, Warringah; Danny McDonald, Brendan Brentwood, Phil Medley, Latrobe City Council; Latrobe councillor Doug Caulfield; Sarah Lewis; Monica Roberts; Lesley - anne Firth, Latrobe City Council; Latrobe deputy mayor David Wilson; Alida Beattie, Devonport City Council; Gosford councillor Robert Bell; Joan Andrews, Devenport City Council; Andrew Thomas, Sutherland Shire; Justin Burke, Warringah Shire; Sister Cities Australia president Alderman Bill Wilson; Peter Wilson, Gosford; and Vic Smith, Walgett. Seated from left: Yooki Poole, Latrobe City Council; Karen Lichfield, Tamworth, Nancy Huppert Sister Cities International, Katie Alchin, Tamworth, Carol Tu, of Port Phillip.

Sister Cities Australia awards chairman Jan Teasdale has developed the Sister Cities Australia National Awards program into an event that is the highlight of sister cities activities each year. The awards also provide a commemorative record of top line activities and achievements that can be used for examples and ideas, by people working in the field at floor level, yet across the world.

CHIEF judge Steve Walker epitomised the value of the awards when in her report she said: "It is enthusiastic people who create these sister city projects - their hard work, creativity, dedication and community involvement shine through.

"Sister cities groups and their volunteers are worth millions of dollars to Australia," she said.

Ms Teasdale announced the 2008 awards during the Sister Cities Australia awards dinner at Gosford in July.

"We commend cities for submitting entries in the national

awards.

"This is a time consuming exercise, but a great way to preserve sister city memories," she said.

Ms Teasdale thanked judges Steve Walker, Robyn Stewart, and Coleen Kime for their commitment.

"Thank you also to deputy chairman of the national awards committee Caisley Graham," she said.

"The word 'commemorative' is indicative of the annual Sister Cities Australia National Awards Commemorative Record that contains summaries of each award entered.

"They encompass a wide

range of sister city activities," Ms Teasdale said.

Awards were Community involvement, Devonport, Tasmania; Youth Project, Latrobe, Victoria; Cultural Exchange, Port Phillip, Victoria; Assistance to a Sister City, and Single Project, Tamworth, New South Wales; Sports Project, and New Affiliation, Gosford, New South Wales; Best Publicity by Print Media, Warringah, New South Wales; and Overall Program, Sutherland, New South Wales.

The first Sister Cities Australia national conference was held at Newcastle, New South

Wales, during 1979 and the first awards presented at the Townsville, Queensland conference in 1983.

Awards given were for the best Youth Project, New Affiliation, Single Project, and Overall Program.

This has increased in interest to the present highlight at the awards dinner each year, when two trophies are presented to the winners, one for their home town and one for their overseas sister city if the award involves that city.

Next year the awards will have eight categories.

Entry in the awards for the 2009 conference at Tamworth,

NSW, is for activities held between Wednesday 1 April 2008 and Tuesday 31 March 2009.

The chairman should be advised of the impending entry by Monday 16 March 2009. Three copies of submissions should be made available by Monday 4 May 2009.

The commemorative record maintained over the years has a considerable number of ideas for sometimes simple, but highly effective, events that have successfully enhanced sister cities activities. This is available from Jan Teasdale at jan.teasdale@sistercitiesaustralia.com

Our youth won friends and influenced people



From left: Evelyn Jolayemi, Casey; James Hunt, Baulkham Hills; Lauren Holz, Central Coast Grammar School; Bill Jordan, Casey; Sarah Chaffey, Tamworth; and Stephanie Wheatley, of Baulkham Hills.



Centre right. Sister Cities Australia secretary Margaret Evans, right, chats with Gosford youth events officer Emma O'Connell, and keynote speaker Liam Howitt. Top left: Keynote speaker Jordan Purcell. Centre left: Keynote speaker Liam Howitt. Bottom left: Casey delegate Evelyn Jolayemi was called on to provide entertainment.



Above: Making friends at the conference. From left: Amanda Xiberras, of Blacktown, Carmen Whiteley, Devonport, and Monica Nour, Blacktown.

□ Proud record for young people □ - president

SISTER Cities Australia president Alderman Bill Wilson has commended the youth movement in sister cities. He said the movement had a proud record in helping youth in their endeavours by assisting each conference host city to conduct a concurrent youth conference. "From an idea promoted by Jennie Lee from the City of Casey in Victoria this feature of our year has now become part and parcel of the staging of the conference. "We, including the hundreds of youth delegates, are indeed indebted for the wonderful work and untold hours that Jennie put in to ensure this became a reality. "The aim of the youth involvement is to teach the participants in the areas of management, responsibility, teamwork and especially cultural awareness and acceptance. "Over the years the overwhelming majority of participants have been able to demonstrate their enlightenment when returning to their respective communities. "One of the rewards of my position is in being able to show pride in the professional presentation displayed by these youth and every year it is wonderful to see them grow and learn within the sister cities movement.

"It is even more rewarding in meeting some of the former youth delegates, now older and more mature, employed in responsible positions around the country and utilizing some of the skills they learned from our program. "I look forward with anticipation to when some of these young adults return to the fold and continue to build on the foundations they have built," he said.

BRING ya friends ... make new friends ... Coeee ... to the youth of Australia. This is what it will be all about when the youth meet at the Sister Cities Australia annual conference in Tamworth from Sunday 19 to Tuesday 21 July 2009. Tamworth is modern Australian country. It's not planning a fancy conference. It will be basic, a lot of work and

most importantly a lot of fun. Tamworth's heart is where country music and horses are prominent, where they will be leaning heavily on these themes to create a memorable experience for all those who attend. It aims to be a showcase for those who are planning to come from all places within Australia as well as visitors from overseas such as New Zealand, China, Japan and South Korea. The plans are well in hand to involve

the youth more actively in the overall conference program and have them participating in active workshops where they and the adults will learn all about how generation Y can be effectively involved in sister city programs. If councils and communities miss sending their youth to this conference, they will have missed a golden opportunity to fortify and develop their current youth leaders and future community leaders.

Coeee to the youth of Australia

Changing our world

By Steve Walker
Frankston Susono
Friendship Association.

THE main charges made against sister cities is 'they're a waste of time and money. What do they bring to a city?' Robyn Moore, talking about charity funding at the Devonport conference answered that question.

She claimed: "One enthusiastic person equals \$150,000 in funding."

Those of us who attend Sister Cities Australia conferences are those enthusiastic people because we are worth \$150,000 to our cities. But I would go a step further.

I think we change the world. Two examples are that in 1994 I spent a year teaching English to a community class in my sister city. I had a great time - I'm not sure whether my students learned much English, but I learned a lot. At the age of 49, with my husband and family back in Australia, I lived by myself for the first time in my life. I travelled around Japan and constantly chatted with my adult students. I taught English and they taught me Japan. The farewell parties started at the end of my year and at one, Keiko, a wife and mother aged about 40 asked to speak. She nervously clutched her prepared speech and started by saying: "Steve, you came here, introduced yourself as Steve and called me by my first name.

No one uses my first name and I realized that I did not know my neighbour's first name.

"We have lived side by side for 17 years.

So I went and knocked on her door and told her about you and said my name was Keiko what is yours.

"We cried and laughed a lot and now I have lost a neighbour but gained a friend.

"Thank you Steve."

Through my tears I realized I had changed her life.

Just by being there and being me I had changed this woman's world. During 2001, I escorted a group of student musicians to celebrations in our sister city, Susono. When at the art centre I greeted some ex-students including Keiko. We laughed and hugged and loudly hailed each other. I then turned around to see one of the musicians in tears. What is wrong I asked? The reply was: "I didn't know you come here to visit friends. I thought this was just a formal city thing. But these people are your friends."

Yes, and that is what sister cities is all about. Just by being us and just by being there, we can change the world.

Split visit united two cities



From left: City of Cockburn 2007 deputy youth mayor Jade Castle, City of Split mayor Ivan Kuret, Cockburn deputy mayor Kevin Allen, Cockburn director of community services Don Green, and Cockburn Croatian community delegate Melinda Simich.

THE City of Cockburn's first visit to its Sister City of Split, Croatia, since the agreement was formed in 1998, was an overwhelming success.

The delegation of five Cockburn representatives, headed by deputy mayor Kevin Allen, attended the annual Split 'Sudamja' Festival from 5 - 9 May 2008, the highlight of which was the solemn mass held in honour of the City's patron Saint Domnius, which attracted an estimated 400,000 people.

While the Cockburn delegation was in Split, it also made presentations to a youth organization centre, known as 'Info Zone', the Split Chamber of Commerce, the Australian Ambassador to Croatia and, of course, the mayor and members of the City of Split. The City was represented by deputy mayor Kevin Allen, Cr Tony Romano, City of Cockburn director of community services Don Green, Croatian community delegate Melinda Simich and 2007 deputy youth mayor Jade Castle.

Disease of negligence

THE city of Minamata, located on the island of Kyushu, Japan - and linked by sister city ties with Devonport, Tasmania - has gained world renown, tragically, through a disease which epitomises man's negligence of the environment and opened a new era in our awareness of the need to protect the delicate balance of nature. This disease, which has ravaged the people of Minamata and the surrounding area for many decades now, has become known worldwide as the 'Minamata disease'.

It was caused by the release of industrial effluent containing mercury into the sea water which, over a period contaminated the marine food chain and seriously affected the health of many people and animals, particularly cats. The heavy metal contaminant affects the brain and central nervous system and, depending on the amount of fish consumed, causes death or permanent disability.

There are more than 2000 nationally certified sufferers, and a further 11,000 affected by symptoms of the disease.

The disease was officially recognised on 1 May 1955, and since 1992 this day has been marked by an annual memorial service held at Minamata in remembrance of the victims and to pay tribute to the families affected.

Devonport's delegation visit to Minamata in May this year coincided with Japan's national recogni-

tion of this terrible ecological disaster.

The official dress code was black, and it was a very moving experience.

A senior high school choir sang two Japanese memorial hymns, and the tonal quality of this was 'oh, so moving'.

To add to the sombre feeling of the occasion, rain misted across the still, calm grey waters of the bay, and this all combined

to create a beautiful, poignant atmosphere.

Each guest was asked to place either a gold or white chrysanthemum on a long table in front of the memorial shrine where there were beautiful floral displays and streamers of folded origami paper cranes, traditional for memorial occasions, and this was all done in a very dignified Japanese manner.



This simple shrine commemorates the lives lost and affected by Minamata disease

Coffs Harbour hosts important conference

THE Australia - Japan Society of Coffs Harbour hosted the fourth conference of the National Federation of Australia-Japan Societies in July at Opal Cove Resort.

Ambassador of Japan HE Taka-ai Kojima gave the after dinner speech on the Australia - Japan relationship.

He quoted impressive statistics on the volume of trade between the two countries as well as social connection.

Coffs cattle breeders would be happy to know that Japan buys 89 per cent of its beef from Australia.

There is also a brisk interchange of residents and tourists and the ambassador outlined recent and planned meetings between the two countries on everything from nuclear non-proliferation to climate.

Two weeks later Coffs Harbour City Council hosted a delegation of 52 people from Sasebo to

celebrate the 20th anniversary of the sister city relationship between the two cities.

Sasebo mayor Norio Tomonaga and his wife Takako and the visitors attended the Coffs Gold Race Day and a trip to the Japanese Garden in the Botanic Gardens and other places of interest. Mr Tomonaga said there had been youth and cul-

tural exchanges between the cities over the years and he hoped this program would continue. Coffs Harbour mayor Keith Rhoades said he was thrilled to greet the delegation.

He said he had many happy memories of his trip to Sasebo last year. "Over the years people from both cities have developed cultural, edu-

cational, sporting and personal links that have built on the relationship," he said.

On the last night of the visit the Australia-Japan Society of Coffs Harbour hosted the delegation to a buffet meal. Society president Vladimir Stojanovic said that it was good to renew old friendships and make new ones.



From left: Ambassador HE Taka-ai Kojima, Madame Kojima, Patricia Degens, and National Federation of Australia-Japan Societies president Adrian Ahearn during the conference dinner.