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NEWSLETTER

April 2015

Sister Cities Australia Inc. (SCA) is a member's organisation which supports sister city affiliations. SCA aims to provide a forum for cultural, economic and educational interchange between communities and to encourage friendship, co-operation and understanding to improve peaceful co-existence worldwide.

MESSAGE FROM BILL

May I firstly apologise to you, our members, for the delay in presenting a newsletter to you. Unfortunately we have had a few issues which have taken some time to resolve but all is now in order and I can assure you we are back to business as usual.

As you will see there is plenty happening in Sister Cities and I urge you all to forward your articles and photos for use either in our newsletter or on our Facebook page.

Conference this year is promising to be a great event and once registrations open I would suggest you register early. The location is really good with superb accommodation and it will be at a truly affordable price. Youth delegates are also being well catered for and who wouldn't like to be spending a few days around Wet "n" Wild.

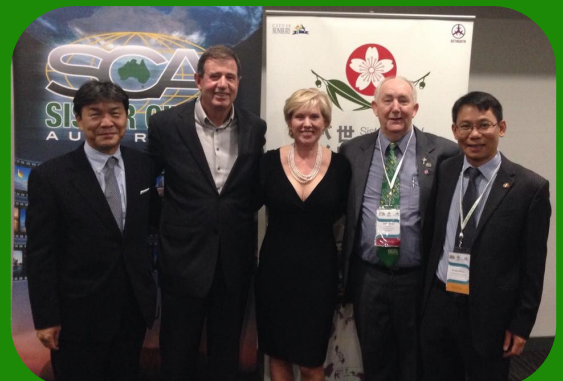
Speaking of conference I should advise that we are now open for expressions of interest for hosting in 2016 so why not consider the benefits to your community in holding the next SCA event.

This year is also election time for all positions on the Executive so if you have an interest look out for the notices.

Looking forward to sharing with you all in Blacktown in November.

Yours in Sister Cities

Bill





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BLACKTOWN CITY

For all enquiries regarding the Conference please contact Gordon Allen, Sister Cities Project Officer at Blacktown City Council.

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Sister Cities Australia 2015 National Awards



Sister Cities Australia Conference

8 – 11 November 2015

The SCA Executive recently visited Blacktown City Council, this year's Conference Host. We're very excited to bring this year's Conference to Sydney as the last time it was hosted in this area was in 1992 at Penrith. Amongst the site visits for the Conference there was the exciting confirmation that Wet 'n' Wild will be the parallel Youth Conference venue. As Sydney's newest tourist attraction this is sure to bring a vibrant new element to the youth stream of the Conference.

This year's theme is Diversity, Culture, Friendship so start thinking about who in your Organisation would benefit most from attending and don't forget to bring some young people to the parallel Youth Conference at Wet 'n' Wild.

Each year a popular feature of the SCA Conference is the National Awards Program. Notices of intention to enter the 2015 program close on 30 April 2015 with the following categories:

- Community Involvement
- Youth Project
- Assistance to a Sister City
- New Affiliation
- Trade & Tourism Project
- Single Project
- Overall Program

For further details and for an EOI form please visit the [SCA website](http://www.sistercitiesaustralia.com). All enquiries should be directed to the Awards Chair, Jan Teasdale jan.teasdale@sistercitiesaustralia.com

SCA would like to give our sincere thanks to this year's Awards Team; senior judge Mike Jakins from Rockingham, WA; Colleen Kime from the Blue Mountains, N.S.W. and Cr Michael from Greenwood, Parkes, N.S.W. who will all be hard at work to determine this year's winners.

Sister City Milestones

SCA is a member's organisation and would like to acknowledge the following member cities who have reached significant milestones in the development of their international and domestic sister city relations, namely 10, 25 and 50 year anniversaries.

Recognising **50 years** of sister city relations

- Launceston, Tas. and Ikeda, Japan

Recognising **25 years** of sister city relations

- Darwin, N.T. and Haikou, China
- Gold Coast, Qld. and Kanagawa, Japan
- Marrickville, N.S.W. and Kos, Greece
- Orange, N.S.W. and Ushiku, Japan
- Port Macquarie, N.S.W. and Handa, Japan

Recognising **10 years** of sister city relations

- Cockburn, W.A. and Mobile, USA
- Marrickville, N.S.W. and Larnaca, Cyprus
- Marrickville, N.S.W. and Safita, Syria
- Randwick, N.S.W. and Temora, N.S.W.
- Southern Downs, Qld. and Shiwa, Japan

We encourage each Council to celebrate these coming of age milestones. If you are planning something special around these dates let us know so that we can share your plans in our next newsletter. If you're an SCA member and we've missed out on your milestone year on our list please let our secretary know matthew.jessop@sistercitiesaustralia.com



An Interview with Steve Walker

SCA had the pleasure of catching up with retired awards judge Steve Walker who volunteered in this role from 2002 – 2009. With the notice of intention to enter the National Awards period still open, now is a great time to check out her anecdotes and tips on how to put together a great submission.

How did you originally get involved in sister cities?

My first experience was taking 50 kids from our Frankston school band over to Susuno, Japan in 1982. I knew two lines of Japanese, 'Hello' and 'Good-bye', which I taught to all the participants and off we went. We must have been crazy to take so many kids but it was the first exchange activity after officially signing the sister city contract so it was the right fit for the time.



How did you get involved as an awards judge?

I'd been writing Frankston's award submissions for so long that when they needed a new judge I was head hunted by ASCA (Australia Sister Cities Association). I was really happy to take on the role as it was a great opportunity to see the awards from the other side and get a good look at other people's programs. I stayed in that position for 7 years from 2002 to 2009.



What did you enjoy most about the role?

Besides seeing all the programs that people ran, as a judge I would always try to persuade my Council to send me to the National Conferences. I loved talking to all the delegates, especially people just starting out in sister city roles. It was great to pass on some advice or show people that things could still be fresh and exciting even after years working on the same program.

What makes for a winning submission?

To be honest, Judges do lean towards their own preferences. I'd always give a higher rating to something with a challenge to it. For example, all things being even, I'd rate a project with a non English speaking country more highly than one with the U.K. or America because of the language barrier. I also remember being particularly impressed by one city's assistance to a regional area during a period of drought. Apart from striking a personal chord with a judge, the best advice I can give is stick to the criteria. Even if you edit a Council report, make sure it conforms to the award criteria heading by heading.

Did you notice any trends and changes with programs over the years?

Towards the end of my period as a judge (2009), I started to see new ideas emerging around Council officer exchanges and instead of kids physically travelling overseas things were happening with Skype. Also, affiliations started to diversify from the traditional partners of England, Japan and America to Korea, China and beyond. Time lines also changed a lot. Frankston and Susuno used to run a 1 year student exchange. This folded after 30 years probably owing to competition from shorter programs and some draconian changes to Australian and Victorian government rules. It's hard to talk a kid into a one year commitment when a 30 day exchange is on the table. I remember one of my students who was terribly worried about spending one year away. I just had to tell him 'Suck it up son, exchange life is a rollercoaster!'



What were the challenges to the role?

I'm from a teaching background so marking to criteria was pretty comfortable for me. The only real challenge was finding the time. There were 10 award categories and on average 30 submissions to go through. After ranking the submissions, I'd then spend a lot of time talking to the other judges. We'd negotiate with each other to get accord on how the final ranking would go.

Are you still involved in sister cities?

I live in a retirement village now and 5 years ago I said that it was going to be my last exchange to Susuno, but you know what, I've been back four times since then. Looking back, when I think of those 1 year home stays, we were literally sending away children and they came back adults. To be honest, I don't know how the Japanese students we hosted ever fitted back into society; they had been so completely deconstructed and integrated into Australia culture. Personally, I'd love to see sister cities go back to their origins; it was Eisenhower's initiative to pursue world peace through getting to know your neighbours. These days we could really benefit from developing sister city partners in the Middle East.

The SCA Strategic Plan

At the most recent SCA Executive meeting your committee work worked on the 2015 – 18 strategic plan. This document will be available for membership for review prior to the 2015 Conference and is based on your feedback over the last few years making this a truly membership driven and focused document. Thank you to all those who have contributed their ideas. We are looking forward to the final stage of consultation prior to adopting the plan at this year's AGM in Blacktown.



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In essence the goal of every sister city program is to understand and appreciate other cultures and ways of life.

[Join us on Facebook](#) and embark on this journey together.

SCA invites you to contribute stories, photos, successes and even failures to our Facebook so that we can all learn from one another.

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