

CATEGORY 6 – SPECIAL PROGRAM

Frankston, VIC and Susono, Japan

In response to the COVID pandemic and subsequent lockdowns experienced in Victoria, the Frankston Susono Friendship Association (FSFA) sought alternative ways to engage with our sister city Susono and its citizens, as well as maintaining contact with our FSFA membership and the citizens of Frankston. The key was to think outside the box, plan innovative ways of engaging with these groups, and the use of technology to overcome the isolation encountered during these periods of extended lockdown.

A range of ideas and programs were implemented which included:

- 1) Conducting our FSFA monthly meetings via Zoom;
- 2) Introducing quarterly Zoom meetings with the Susono Overseas Friendship Association (SOFA) our equivalent committee in Susono also made up of volunteer citizens;
- 3) Daily Facebook posts featured on the FSFA page during Lockdown 2.0;
- 4) Promoting Facebook LIVE events via the FSFA page;
- 5) Promoting and providing the translation for Frankston Mayor Cr. Kris Bolam's message of congratulations to Susono City for their 50th anniversary celebrations;
- 6) FSFA contributing the following items for SOFA's 40th anniversary celebrations of our sister city relationship:
 - i. Frankston Showcase Video,
 - ii. "Messages From Frankston",
 - iii. Frankston Map Project,
 - iv. Frankston Visitors Guide & "I LOVE FRANKSTON" stickers;
- 7) Student Exchange Activities in lieu of cancelled cultural visits and exchanges (scheduled for August and October 2021);
- 8) Participation in Susono's Sister City 40th Anniversary Ceremony (12 February 2022); and
- 9) Frankston's Sister City 40th Anniversary Ceremony (22 February 2022).

Ultimately the aim of the above initiatives was to maintain contact with our sister city Susono and continue to engage the citizens of both cities throughout this very difficult period.

We believe we have achieved very positive outcomes as a result of these ideas and programs bringing the members of each respective association together on a regular basis and engaging the citizens of both cities. Despite the cancellation of delegation and schools visits, it's ironic that our quarterly online meetings have led to more frequent contact with our sister city!

The student exchange activities have heightened an awareness of each others city and the excitement and anticipation students feel regarding our upcoming visits – Susono Schools visit to Frankston in August 2023, and Frankston Delegation and Derinya Primary School visit to Susono in October 2023. These interactions have also motivated students in both cities to work hard and further their language studies in order to improve the quality of these interactions.

FSFA has also been acknowledged by Frankston City Council with the presentation of a Certificate of Appreciation and a nomination in the Australia Day Awards – Community Group of the Year. The opportunity to present to the Sister Cities Australia Executive Committee in May 2022, plus participation in the SCA podcast series would indicate our efforts have also been recognised by SCA and worthy of promotion to the wider community. FSFA was also featured in a 'Traveller' article published in The Age and Sydney Morning Herald.