

---

**REPORT 11**  
*(1215/52/IM)*

## **2007 NEW ZEALAND SISTER CITIES CONFERENCE – REPORT BACK**

---

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To report back to the Committee on the attendance of the Deputy Mayor at the Sister Cities New Zealand Conference held in Te Anau, Fiordland from 26 to 29 April 2007.

### **2. Executive Summary**

The purpose of attendance at the conference was:

- ❖ To underline Council support for Sister Cities New Zealand and sister city relationships
- ❖ To maintain Wellington's commitment to supporting and building on long-term international relationships
- ❖ To gain information to assist with the Council International Policy and International Activity Plans
- ❖ To develop further the potential for cultural programmes and economic ties.

### **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*

### **4. Background**

The Conference is held annually in New Zealand. The Southland District Council along with Sister Cities New Zealand organised the conference in Te Anau this year.

The conference organisers invited voluntary groups, local government representatives, governmental departments, cultural, sport, educational and trade groups to the conference. The Wellington City Council, as a member of Sister Cities New Zealand, attended the three day conference.

The aims of Sister Cities New Zealand are to increase global co-operation at a local level, promote cultural understanding, stimulate economic development and foster a citizens' network of organisations and individuals devoted to creating and strengthening partnerships between New Zealand and international communities.

These aims are in line with the Council's policy in regard to sister cities. Wellington City Council is committed to on-going support for its existing sister and friendly city relationships.

## **5. Conference Details**

The theme of this conference, "Mo tatau a mo nga uri ko te heke mai" which translates to "For all of us and for the generations that follow", is about enhancing the positive aspects of society including environmental issues, cultural understanding, education outcomes and economic prosperity at local, national and international level.

There were 126 delegates at the conference including officials from 33 Councils in NZ, members from six community associations, representatives from Japan, China, South Korea, Australia, and the US Ambassador to New Zealand, William McCormick.

The President of Sister City New Zealand and Mayor of New Plymouth, Mr. Peter Tennent, opened the conference and delivered his report on the past year. The 2007 AGM was chaired by the President, at Te Anau Event Centre. Russell Gordon Duff, Chairman of the Dunedin-Otaru (Japan) Sister City Committee and the Executive Committee for the Dunedin-Shanghai (China) Sister City Association, our nominee, was elected Vice President of Sister Cities New Zealand.

Domestic and international speakers at the conference were:

- USA Ambassador William McCormick, who talked about the importance of our people-to-people links with his country;
- Madam Li Xiaolin, the Vice President of Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries - she acknowledged the strong and growing community-level relations between New Zealand and China;
- Frana Cardno, Mayor of Southland District Council - she talked about the indirect economic benefits of sister city relationships ;
- Tracy Hicks, Mayor of Gore District Council;
- Neil Boniface, Deputy Mayor of Invercargill City Council;
- Peter Chin, Mayor of Dunedin City Council, who talked about the positive results from the 14 year sister city relationship with Shanghai;
- Warren Welhan, Councillor of Wyong Shire Council;
- Penny Simmonds, CEO of the Southern Institute of Technology;
- Rex Capil, Croup Manager of Community Development and Events of Venture Southland;

- Brian Cross, Executive Director, Sister Cities New Zealand - he spoke about leveraging off World Expos;
- Peter Tennent, President of Sister Cities New Zealand;
- Hyojong Yoo, Deputy Director, Korea Local Government Centre in Sydney, Ministry of Government & Home Affairs, Korean Government
- Reg Kemper, Area Manager for Te Anau;
- Judge Wilson Isaac, Ngati Porou, Tuhoe, Ngati Kahungunu;
- Mark Solomon, Chairman of Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu;
- Joris De Bres, Race Relations Commissioner – he highlighted the growing diversity in New Zealand’s demographics and how sister cities could help eliminate racial discrimination;
- Ray Kelly, Noosa Councillor;
- Wook Jin Lee, President of International Christchurch Youth - he spoke about the need to promote sister cities amongst our youth;
- Daniel Carruthers, Sister City Researcher, Department of Tourism of University of Otago - he spoke about the potential to leverage economic development benefits from sister city relationships with China. The main priority for sister cities to the Chinese is economic development.

## **6. Discussion**

During the three days of the conference, a wide range of issues was discussed on how to maximise the value of sister city relationships. Participants shared their experience and learning. The conference was very useful in helping to shape the strategic direction for sister city relationships and themes and reflections from the conference could be summarised as:

1. If a sister cities relationship is not fulfilling the purpose for which it was founded, and the relationship’s little more than a signed piece of paper then, given the scarcity of resources to support such programmes, it may be prudent to terminate that relationship.
2. Without people to people understanding, it would be hard to sustain any long-term relationship, be it business or cultural. Relationships should continue to focus on fostering this understanding. Many successful stories told at the conference shared this focus.
3. There are real opportunities to further develop the economic dimension of sister cities relationships. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is particularly keen to work with metro councils to develop a coordinated strategy to leverage off these relationships. NZ metro councils have relationships with at least 4 of the most rapidly developing economies of China - Wellington/Beijing; Wellington/Xiamen; Auckland/Guangzhou and Dunedin/Shanghai. Wellington also has a relationship with another “self governing” city – Tianjin. MFAT officials have discussed with the Council the desirability of working together on maximising the potential economic benefit to the cities involved and to NZ as a whole. This should be a priority in our international relations during the next triennium.

4. There is scope to coordinate Council work in this field with that of other organisations with international links. Universities and CRI's are examples of institutions with which we could work more closely in respect of their international partnerships and our sister city relationships.
5. Sister city relationships need innovation. New Zealand needs to work creatively to maintain its competitiveness as a preferred partner in developing and maintaining long-term relationships and we should recognise the contribution these relationships have made to the overall relationship between NZ and China, and NZ and Japan, especially. This country struggles to maintain a place in the consciousness of the public in most countries and these relationships can and do help in that regard.
6. Sister city relationships are not always the best mechanism for developing international relationships and business links but they are particularly useful when there are significant cultural gaps to bridge and where governments, especially city governments have a strong influence on economic development and business decision making.
7. People working on sister city relationships need to constantly talk to their peers to share experience and catch up with new ideas. Such sharing and exchange is critical for developing big picture thinking, being strategic and ensuring that best practices are promoted and adopted. Opportunities such as the Sister City Conference and workshops are instrumental in this aspect. It was particularly useful to meet with delegates from the larger metro councils to discuss sister cities. Due to the unique challenges and opportunities the larger councils face, there was strong support from both Auckland and Christchurch to plan a smaller, more focused workshop on sister cities with just the metro councils.
8. Sister city relationships could potentially play a more significant role than they are currently playing – for example, maintaining our key international contacts and in return they could promote Wellington and New Zealand. We can turn good sister cities relationships into economic benefits.
9. City Councils and community organizations should work closely with each other. For most local governments, sister city relationships are managed by city councils. The most important thing is that community organizations and local councils work together and support each other in the development of healthy and productive sister city relationships.
10. Wellington City Council has promoted many good international projects and we should consider submitting applications to the Air New Zealand Awards at future conferences.

## **7. Conclusion**

The annual Sister Cities New Zealand Conference again presented a valuable opportunity to network with other organisations and individuals working in this area. The importance of these relationships to New Zealand's overall standing at an international level was reinforced, and a range of new ideas gleaned on how to generate continuous improvement.

Report prepared by *Alick Shaw, Deputy Mayor*

## **Supporting Information**

### **1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome**

*This project supports Outcome 7.2.B – More actively engaged: Wellington will operate an open and honest decision making process that generates confidence and trust in the Democratic system*

### **2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact**

*Relates to C534: Elections, Governance and Democratic Process*

### **3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations**

*There are no Treaty of Waitangi implications*

### **4) Decision-Making**

*This is not a significant decision*

### **5) Consultation**

#### **a) General Consultation**

*Not required*

#### **b) Consultation with Maori**

*Not required*

### **6) Legal Implications**

*Nil*

### **7) Consistency with existing policy**

*This report is consistent with existing Wellington City Council policy*