

5. SISTER CITIES NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE 2004

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The purpose of this report is to provide information on the Sister Cities New Zealand Conference held at the Christchurch Convention Centre, 24–27 March 2004. The conference was planned and organised by Sister City Committee members, staff, Councillors and the Conference Team, a leading professional conference organisation group. The organising committee comprised Councillor Lesley Keast, Bill Woods (SCNZ and Selwyn District Council), Bill Willmott, Newton Dodge, Julie Battersby, Barbara August, Sue McFarlane, and Dave Adamson. This was the first Sister Cities Conference to be held in Christchurch for twelve years.

Conference Theme and Business Programme

The conference, themed “Racing Ahead” was attended by 165 participants from New Zealand, Australia, China, Korea, United States and Japan. The conference programme and theme were based around an expectation that there would be a reasonable number of Sister City attendees from Australia. Attendance at recent Australian Sister City Conferences (ASCA) indicated that we could expect up to 25 plus Australian delegates at Christchurch. Unfortunately, at late notice New South Wales and Queensland State Governments both called local government elections for late March 2004. Timing was such that New Zealand Sister cities Association were locked into the March dates and were unable to change to accommodate.

The programme covered three distinctive daily themes - “Peace and Friendship”; “Cultural” and “Education and Economic”. Speakers from Korea, United States, Japan and Australia accepted invitations and a number of very good local speakers contributed expertise to what was described as an excellent business programme. A copy of the programme and copies of speeches are held on the Sister Cities web site www.sistercitiesconference2004.org.nz.

There were a number of firsts for Sister Cities New Zealand at the Christchurch Conference. For the first time ever, the Prime Minister opened the Sister Cities Conference. This was made more significant in that the 2004 conference was the first that the six international organisations involved in International Relations through Local Government were together at the same time – CLAIR of Japan, KLA FIR of Korea, ASCA of Australia, Sister Cities International, USA, Chinese Peoples’ Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) and NZSCA, the New Zealand Sister Cities Association.

Speakers of note included: Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba of Hiroshima; His Excellency Ambassador David Taylor, New Zealand Ambassador to Korea; Dr Allan Hawke, High Commissioner for Australia; Nancy Hubbert, Roving Envoy for Sister Cities International; Dr Kate Dewes of the Peace Foundation; David Close, retired Councillor, and Mayor Garry Moore. There were other international and local speakers including a number of local youth who spoke on the success of their youth exchange experiences through sister city programmes.

Youth Programme

The organising committee elected to include into the programme an opportunity for local youth to attend a separate workshop to discuss way in which they could become involved in the sister cities movement. This was also a first for a New Zealand Sister Cities Conference.

A very successful workshop, facilitated by Marcella Herrera, Christchurch City Council Youth Advocate, was held and a group of young Christchurch people have committed to developing a youth group for sister cities that can build on the experiences gained through international exchange and also assist the Sister City Committees develop new and existing opportunities for young people.

International Delegates

Two significant Chinese delegations attended the conference. In addition Madam Li Xiaolin, Vice President of the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship in Foreign Countries brought a 17 person delegation from across China as part of the Chinese People’s Association of Friendship with Foreign Countries. A five person delegation attended from Gansu Province, sister city to Christchurch.

The Gansu delegation met with the Gansu–Christchurch Friendly Relations Committee following the conference and discussed new opportunities, including a possible involvement by Christchurch and Canterbury in a Trade Show in Gansu in August 2004.

Air New Zealand Awards

The annual Air New Zealand Awards ceremony is a feature of the Sister Cities Conference Dinner. These awards were instigated in 1998 and have been sponsored by Air New Zealand since inception.

This year Christchurch was successful in collecting two of the possible four awards. South Hornby Primary School won first place in the “Education and Youth Award” with their project of “South Hornby School Choir visit to Adelaide”. The Christchurch-Kurashiki Sister City Committee won second place in the “Education and Youth Award” with their project “The Sounds of Two Cities”, the 30th Anniversary Youth Orchestra’s visit to Christchurch from Kurashiki.

Financial Performance

Christchurch City Council provided a \$10,000 seeding grant and \$5,000 sponsorship towards the Conference. The seeding grant will be returned to the Council and an unofficial profit of \$5,340 has been realised.

A total of \$46,233 sponsorship was achieved, including \$4,050 in-kind sponsorship. Of the 165 attendees at conference, 116 were full registrations and approximately 100 of those were from outside of Christchurch, bringing an additional economic benefit to the city through accommodation, dining, transportation and visitation of attractions.

Conclusion

The President of Sister Cities New Zealand, Jeremy Dwyer, was most enthusiastic in his tribute to Christchurch in relation to the success of the conference. He stated that “Christchurch has lifted the bar in terms of conferences for Sister Cities New Zealand”. The Christchurch Convention Centre was an excellent venue for the conference offering particularly good service, food and room allocation.

The 2004 Conference was made particularly successful by the strong business programme, incorporating three current and significant themes supported by a group of dynamic and credible international speakers.

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the information be received.