

7. AUSTRALIAN SISTER CITIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE REPORT

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Corporate Plan Output: Sister Cities	

The purpose of this report is to report back on my attendance at the Australian Sister City Association (ASCA) Annual National Conference held in Adelaide, 2–6 October.

BACKGROUND

The ASCA 2000 Conference was held in Adelaide, a sister city of Christchurch. Council registrations at the conference included myself (staff representative), Councillor Sue Wells (elected member) and Ms Heather McKenzie (youth delegate). Messrs Vincent Chew (Chairman, Christchurch–Adelaide Sister City Committee), Dennis Weaver (Treasurer, Christchurch–Adelaide Sister City Committee), Bill Woods and Eric Dittmer (both New Zealand Sister Cities Board members) and Derek McCullough (All Stars Events, Christchurch) also attended. Porirua City Council sent two delegates, one senior staff member and an elected member.

The programme for the conference is attached.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONFERENCE

I found the practitioners' meeting prior to the conference very useful. During that meeting, as again later in the conference, a consultant employed by ASCA outlined the ASCA Strategy for Sister Cities. The structure presented by Mark Douglas is little different to that of New Zealand Sister Cities Association Strategy and also the strategy of Christchurch City Council. The key difference to the Christchurch strategy is that structurally ASCA have placed all relationships, including friendship agreements, joint economic development agreements, international exchanges and the various memoranda of understanding, under the banner of Sister Cities. To this end, their plan assumes that the term 'Sister City' includes a 'rich diversity of relationships that may continually evolve or may stay much the same for long periods of time'.

Of significance within the conference was the part that youth are playing in the Sister Cities movement within Australia. Conference delegates continually referred to youth as the future of Sister Cities, however, in my opinion they are very much the here and now of Sister Cities. ASCA has developed a 'Young Ambassador' programme' and runs a Young Australian Sister City Association (YASCA) Conference in conjunction with the annual ASCA conference. Our youth delegate, Heather McKenzie, represented Christchurch and New Zealand exceptionally well. Heather delivered an excellent speech on behalf of youth representatives at the conference. Heather is a member of the Christchurch–Kurashiki Sister City Committee.

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Among the very good line-up of speakers within the programme there were two who offered something a little different. Firstly, Dr Peter Ellyard, a consultant to the United Nations 'Greening' Group, who spoke on Sister Cities Towards 2010. His key points were about the change agents of Globalisation, Tribalisation and Technology. He referred to the main global issues of 21st century as being bio-diversity, international public opinion, the international global court, tribalisation being brought about through the break up of USSR and the move from independence to inter-dependence.

He talked of the need to celebrate uniqueness and the success of the future being in intimate relationships. His theories on economies of scale are 'Small is good', 'strategic alliances = committed cosmonauts' and 'Collaboration leads to thriving'. Dr Ellyard finished his presentation with two great quotes – '*You cannot work to create the future if you cannot imagine it*', and '*Those not in the future today will live in the past tomorrow*'.

Secondly, Francis Wong presented a paper on Business Migration opportunities. Mr Wong is a businessman who migrated to Adelaide under the Business Migration Programme and has achieved resounding success in Australian tourism. He was appointed by the Minister of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to serve on the Business Advisory Panel, advising the Minister and the Department on migration programmes. Mr Wong has previously been Chairman of the Adelaide–Georgetown, Penang Sister City Committee.

Mr Wong spoke of recent research undertaken of the Business Skills migrant programme and the economic benefits delivered to Australia. After three years in Australia, 441 Business Skill Class settlers who arrived in 1994/95 had:

- transferred \$295M to Australia
- invested \$500M in their businesses
- created almost 1400 jobs, and
- achieved over \$33M in annual export earnings.

The key to the success of the business migrant programme has been:

- streamlining requirements
- simplifying application processes
- developing measures to introduce flexibility and certainty, and
- being responsive to the global market, the requirements of the Australian economy and the changing nature of business.

Mr Wong concluded his presentation recognising the need for a culturally diverse society and the role that Sister Cities has in developing global networks.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ADELAIDE

While in Adelaide, Vincent Chew and I took the opportunity to visit Fred Newman, Manager of the Office of Economic Development. We discussed the Business Plan that has been developed by the Christchurch–Adelaide Sister City Committee. Fred Newman has contracted a business consultant to consider the plan developed by the Christchurch Committee and to consult locally in Adelaide to agree a way forward with the components of the plan. I discussed with Fred the management of Sister City relationships in Adelaide, all of which are managed by his office. He provided some interesting comparisons and also some potential ways of managing parts of the programmes.

CENTRAL CITY MARKETING

Dennis Weaver, Treasurer of the Adelaide–Christchurch Committee and also a member of City Centre Matters (City Mall Retail Marketing group), joined me in discussions with the Rundle Mall Manager, David West. Ron Tomlian, Manager of Marketing and Communications for City of Adelaide, also joined us to discuss central city issues. Specifically, we sought information on the management structure for Rundle Mall and special promotions such as Christmas and Christmas decorations.

Findings from that meeting will be reported back to the Retail Strategy meeting of the Central City Revitalisation programme.

FUTURE INVOLVEMENT IN ASCA CONFERENCES

The conference programmes presented by ASCA and YASCA were varied and inspiring. The opportunity to share knowledge of practical ways in which we can initiate new international experiences, and also consider triangular relationships within existing networks, provided a great deal of food for thought.

Many of the delegates we spoke to, while well travelled, had not been to New Zealand, yet had a reasonable knowledge of the country. Councillor Wells and I discussed the possibility of bidding to hold a joint New Zealand and Australian Sister City Conference in Christchurch. This has not been raised with the New Zealand Sister City Association nor ASCA, however, it would prove a topic worthy of discussion.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That an approach be made to the New Zealand Board of Sister Cities to seek their support for Christchurch bidding for a joint New Zealand/Australian Sister Cities Conference in 2003.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.