

## 7. SISTER CITIES CONFERENCE: 15-17 MAY 2001

<b>Officer responsible</b> Manager	<b>Author</b> Lesley Keast, DDI 371-1564
---------------------------------------	---

The purpose of this report is to update the Community Services Committee on the Sister Cities Conference held in New Plymouth on 15-17 May 2001.

The conference was attended by Councillor Anderton and myself. Two staff members, Barbara August and Dave Adamson, also attended the conference. Dave Adamson is a Director of Sister Cities NZ.

The conference was attended by some 85 overseas Japanese visitors who were accompanied by a cultural group from Mishima. The cultural group gave a performance on their traditional drums. The NZ Ambassador to Japan, Mr Phillip Gibson was a guest speaker at the Conference, which was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister Jim Anderton.

Mr Saito of Blue Pacific Tours spoke of changes that have occurred past 25 years in visitor's coming to New Zealand. In the 1970's, the Japanese knew very little about New Zealand. Today there are over 20 charter groups sending visitors to New Zealand from Japan. Mr Saito stressed the importance of the younger generation in building on the foundations already established between Japan and New Zealand and he suggested that the cities name a street or park after their sister city link.

All speakers stressed the importance of the cultural exchange programmes and networking between the sister cities. Education was big business throughout New Zealand and likewise our teachers in Japan were very well received.

A Sister Cities website has also recently been established and in the short time it has been operating some 677 people had visited the site.

Dave Adamson from Christchurch City Council spoke on our link with Mozambique. The important point to note from his discussion was that links can be established with some Sister Cities that are not based predominantly on trade or tourism issues. In the case of Mozambique, a 21 year old high school teacher, Carlos Maduela, was hosted in Christchurch from April 2000 to March 2001. Funding contributions were made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, a language college and donations from various sources. The NZ High Commission in Pretoria handled the choosing of the person to come.

In February this year, the council has also agreed to bring one person a year from Mozambique for a period of three years and fund half the costs of this project for the next three years, on condition the other half was met from elsewhere. MFAT have since agreed to do that. Save the Children and MFAT are absolutely delighted with the Council's initiative. We are the first local government in NZ to undertake a programme such as this.

There were many other speakers at the conference with much to contribute and it was clear to all that Sister Cities were now assuming a new accountability. Significantly, it was no longer exclusively a council activity. There were many economic benefits generated by the Sister Cities relationships, one speaker cited an 18 month survey which showed an extra \$50 million was injected in New Zealand's economy in 1998-99.

However, first and foremost it was important to recognise that sister-cities were about connecting with people culturally, socially and humanly - which takes on new significance in this age of globalisation.

It made both Carole Anderton and myself very proud of our City when Dave Adamson and Barbara August won a prestigious Air New Zealand Award for their presentation on our Sister City Garden at Halswell Quarry.

Finally, the Japan Society of Hawkes Bay are to host the 8<sup>th</sup> biennial conference for Japan – New Zealand Societies from 20 to 21 October 2001. This conference is to be held in conjunction with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japan Society of Hawkes Bay. I believe that our Council should have a representative present.

**Recommendation:** That the information be received.