

**DIRECTOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
COUNCILLOR DISCUSSION GROUP MEETING
9 JUNE 2009**

**BRIEFING NOTE
SISTER CITY ARRANGEMENTS**

It is considered timely to consider Council's current (and future) Sister City arrangements.

Background

The following is an extract from a report the author presented to the former Gladstone City Council in December 2007:

"Sister City" relationships are a global movement brought about by a desire to connect international communities and promote tolerance, understanding and goodwill. The following extract is taken from the Australian Sister Cities Association website, 6 December 2007:

"The Sister City movement, as a worldwide concept, came into its own very shortly after World War Two. National Sister Cities efforts were independently started on many different continents, but all had the same goal; to help develop enduring networks of communication between the cities of the world to cut across boundaries and reduce the likelihood of polarisation and conflict among nations. (US) President Eisenhower's People to People program, which began in America in 1956, gave a huge boost to the concept of twinned cities. Some linkages occurred before that, but the Civic Committee of People to People (one of 40 People to People committees) which promoted town affiliations, eventually became Sister Cities International in 1974.

Because Sister Cities programs were initiated at the national level in many different countries during the same time period, approaches as to how the program would be structured and function varied. In Europe, the program enjoys great popularity and involves thousands of cities of all sizes linked with two, three and more partners. This is often known as Twinning or Twin Cities. The links tend to be very formal with resolutions establishing them accompanied by documents of agreement detailing the kinds of exchanges to be undertaken. In many countries links have to be approved by the national governments.

In Australia, the appeal of "international understanding and friendship" has been attractive to community minded local citizens since at least the 1930's. The Shire of Parkes, New South Wales, claims a Sister City affiliation with Coventry in England that originated in 1939. A relationship was established between Saddleworth in South Australia and Saddleworth Parish in the United Kingdom in 1941, while one has existed officially between Hunters Hill and Henley-on-Thames since

1950, and one between Bega, New South Wales, and Lyttleton, Colorado, United States of America, since 1956.

Today Australian cities have nearly 470 Sister City Agreements throughout the world and this number increases every year."

Gladstone City formed a Sister City relationship with Saiki City, Japan on 4 September 1996. Like others across the world, the relationship is founded on a desire to communicate and exchange cultural experiences at a person-to-person level through city-to-city affiliations.

The new Council affirmed its commitment to the arrangement in ...

Committee

In practice, Council's Sister City activities are undertaken by a small committee of volunteers elected each year for the purpose. The committee oversees three (3) major initiatives:

1. *The Intercity Images:* Offering photographers of both cities the opportunity to capture lifestyle images and have these exchanged and exhibited.
2. *Get to know Gladstone:* An opportunity for Gladstone families to host Saiki visitors in the first week of August every year. The Saiki delegation comes to Gladstone to be part of the Multicultural Festival as well as to experience the Gladstone Region generally.
3. *Student Exchange:* Saiki and Gladstone schools work jointly to promote and strengthen educational links between the two nations.
4. *Annual Multicultural Festival:* In 2009, Saiki visitors will hold a cultural stall, in which Japanese calligraphy is shown/taught, "origami" is displayed and exhibited.

In recent times, Council has hosted a visit by Japanese doctor and drummer, Tahara. Mr Tahara is providing Taiko lessons to local schools using a drum he donated to the Gladstone Municipal Band.

In recognition of the Sister City Program, Council has also developed the "Japanese Tea House", currently located at the Botanic gardens.

Officers seek some guidance from Council about future Sister City activities, in particular:

- 1 **Official Visit** - Should an international visit be arranged? Officers acknowledge the difficulty of justifying such expense, particularly given recent media scrutiny of Queensland examples. Perhaps a reciprocal visit each term (ie. Gladstone Mayor visits Saiki once every four years, with

Saiki visiting two years following on a four-year rotation) might be acceptable and appropriate?

- 2 **Join Sister City Australia** - this is an umbrella body for sister city participants <http://www.sistercitiesaustralia.com/>
- 3 **Participate in activities organised by the Japanese Consulate-General** - Council has recently been invited to attend of function (yet to be finalised) in the official residence of the Japanese Consul-General. The purpose of the gathering is to revitalise sister city relationships.

Naturally, the extent to which Council participates in such activities is a matter of principle for the Mayor and Council of the day.

Officers have budgeted \$10,000 for Sister City initiatives in 2009/10.



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SISTER CITY

Gladstone has a sister city agreement with Saiki in Japan.

THE AGREEMENT: This was signed by both cities on September 4th 1996, with Mayor Peter Coronos and Mayor Yuichi Sato taking part. The link is designed to foster community, industrial, trade and cultural links between the two port cities.

Prominent signs erected at the southern and northern approaches into Gladstone are reminders of the sister city arrangement.

SAIKI CITY Saiki calls itself "A Marine Culture City" and is located on the southern-most island of Kyushu. It is the island's most easterly city, therefore the first to welcome the rising sun.

At the mouth of the Bansyo River, Saiki is a beautiful, prosperous and clean city. Its industries include port trade, ship building, timber, woodchip and pearling.

SURROUNDS The city is surrounded by steep mountains with forested slopes, and green agricultural fields and rice paddies. Strawberries, vegetables and flowers are among the crops. Mount Shiroyama rises from the middle of the city.

HARBOUR The port is a naturally deep, protected port similar to Gladstone. Water depth is 20 to 30 metres and the harbour is dotted with conical green islands. Large harbourside reclamation projects are being undertaken for future industry. It recognised as the potential Gateway Port to Eastern Kyushu.

With clean rivers and canals and about 70 harbour inlets, fishing is an important industry, with fish farming on the increase. Pearl culture is also undertaken.

THE PEOPLE Saiki's population is about 52,000, the majority of whom are elderly. This is still a very traditional part of Japan. People still eat seated on the floor, and schoolchildren remove their shoes and wear slippers to enter classrooms. There is genuine goodwill towards visitors who are welcomed with a high level of hospitality.

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Being the base for a Naval Air facility since 1934, Saiki's military facilities received continuous bombardment during World War Two, with many lives lost. Saiki was declared a "City of Peace" in August 1985 with the opening of the Saiki Peace Memorial Hall in March 1997.

COMMITTEE

The Gladstone City Council has formed an Advisory Committee to co-ordinate and promote inter-city activity. Current membership is:

President: Mr Ed Morris, Gladstone Stationery
Vice-President: Mr Noel Wootton, GAPDL
Secretary: Mrs Glenne Carter, Port Authority
Co-ordinator: Mr Kevin Wormald, City Council
Advisors: Ms Pam Brown and Ms Kim Norton

VISITS

There have been several visits since the agreement was established, including:

TO GLADSTONE

- * Industrial/shipping representatives.
- * A visit to Gladstone by a delegation of 24 women, with interaction particularly with women's groups [August 1997]
- * Board of Education representatives [November 1997]

TO SAIKI

- * A group of Rotary members.
- * Indigenous youth musicians and dancers [November 1997].

ANNIVERSARY

Celebrations are held each year on a date/week as close as possible to the anniversary.

In late August 1997, this included:

- ♦ The visit by the women's delegation.
- ♦ A school art competition with some items sent to Saiki for display.
- ♦ A community reception and display of craft items and music.

A document outlining some aspects of Japanese protocol is attached

Revised: November 1997

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