

**Gladstone Saiki Sister City Advisory Committee
President's Report 2023**

**“A frog in a well does not know the greatness of the sea.”
A Japanese proverb attributed to the Chinese philosopher, Zhuang Zhou.**

In the President's Annual Report 2022, I emphasised that the Gladstone Saiki Sister City Advisory Committee was an active committee that had grown in numbers, facilitating significant achievements. It is very pleasing to note that this trend has continued throughout 2023 and the enthusiasm and expertise of all members of the Committee are exceptional. Our Secretary, Rebecca, is an integral part of the organisation and vision of this Committee.

Although the post-pandemic School Exchanges have not yet resumed, there is renewed optimism that they will occur in the foreseeable future following positive communication between the schools concerned. Both parties have expressed their enthusiasm for exchanges and it is the practicalities that are being resolved. In addition, the Mayor of Gladstone's invitation to the Mayor of Saiki is a welcome first step to resuming regular mayoral visits. During the year, a Member of the Committee privately visited Saiki and was warmly welcomed, making several contacts, and another Member is actively seeking a more formal relationship between her school and a school in Saiki. Other Members are investigating the possibility of online gaming competitions and Sporting and Cultural Exchanges. We are very fortunate to have Members who kindly provide Japanese translations to promote authentic communication with Saiki City. All of these personal exchanges are significant aspects of the Sister City Relationship.

The Committee exists to communicate with the Gladstone Regional Council, to whom it is heavily indebted for practical support and encouragement. The staff and volunteers of the Gladstone Regional Art Gallery have also been extremely generous in their wonderful support of the Sister City Friendship. They have planned and organised many of the events that have caught the imagination of so many residents of the Gladstone Region. All ages, from Primary School students to Seniors, have been able to enjoy such events as the Saiki Children's Art Competition, the Children's Day Activities, the Celebrate Australia Primary Schools Art Competition, and the InterCity Images Photographic Exhibition. The staff of the Gladstone Tondoon Botanic Gardens have sensitively appraised and planned many projects to promote awareness of the friendship between the Gladstone region and Saiki City, including wooden carvings, signage, native fish and plants, a tipping water feature and basin, and bonsai exhibitions. Their care of the Japanese Tea House and Garden of Stillness is ongoing and much appreciated.

The Committee also exists to inform the public and to facilitate understanding between the Gladstone Region and Saiki City. Throughout the year, other events that are firmly embedded in the local calendar have included the Annual Book exchange at the Mayor's Youth Breakfast and interactions with the public at Flourish and the PopCon events. Packages of materials, including lesson plans, have been distributed to local schools to commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Friendship and the installation of the Shorebirds Artwork. The Gladstone Regional Council Brand and Communications Team is in the process of redesigning and updating the Sister City website.

During the past year, the Gladstone Saiki Sister City Advisory Committee has worked to enhance the lives of the people of the Gladstone Region and Saiki City. It has continued traditions, and also sought new ways of communicating with the local community and our friends in Japan. While 'A frog in a well does not know the greatness of the sea', they have enabled others to see the possibilities of self-growth and community development through our Sister City Friendship.

Wendy Marsh
16 November 2023