

GLADSTONE SAIKI SISTER CITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024

As President of the Gladstone Saiki Sister City Committee, (the Committee), I thank you for the opportunity to present the President's Report for 2024.

Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy that encourages small, continuous changes, initiated by all members concerned.

Throughout the year, all those involved in the Sister City relationship have, once again, enthusiastically and successfully demonstrated the philosophy of kaizen.

The generous support of the Mayor, Councillor Matt Burnett, and the Gladstone Regional Council, cannot be overestimated. The enthusiastic efforts of our Secretary, Rebecca Creedy, and the involvement of the Councillors, Leanne Patrick and Simon McClintock, have been significant. The Mayor's commitment to the Sister City friendship was highlighted at the Annual Book Exchange at the Mayor's Youth Dinner. Also, regular communication between the Mayors of the Gladstone Region and Saiki City, including invitations for mayoral visits, are an integral part of the Sister City relationship. The major redesign and maintenance of the Sister City page on the Council website has had a highly positive impact.

The staff and volunteers at the Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum have all emphatically demonstrated the philosophy of kaizen. They are constantly striving to make their numerous events even more exciting and relevant for their wide range of audiences. They have inspired all ages at events including the Australia Day Primary School Art Exhibition, the Intercity Images Photographic Competition, Children's Day and Saiki Family Fun sessions.

Similarly, the staff and volunteers of the Toondoon Botanic Gardens have initiated many changes. They have organised new signage to promote the Japanese Garden and displayed incredible bonsai. Throughout the year they have maintained the Japanese Garden and Tea House, and improved the plants, water quality of the pond, and the electricity supply.

The hard-working, enterprising Committee has also maintained its community involvement at Luminous 2024, EcoFest and PopCon. A multi-user video game has been successfully trialled to encourage interactions between the Youth of our Sister Cities in the near future. These events were carefully planned, with changes made based upon previous experiences, resources available and the individual skills of the volunteers, Councillors and Council employees involved.

Kaizen, small continuous changes while maintaining traditions, initiated by all members involved, has been emphatically demonstrated in the Gladstone Region and Saiki City Sister City relationship. It is disappointing that the fantastic Student Exchanges, involving Toolooa State High School and Tannum Sands State High School, have not yet

resumed, post pandemic. Even here, though, there are positive signs in the most recent communication that obstacles to exchanges are being overcome. It was also disappointing that no member of the Youth Council was able to accept our invitation to become a member of the Committee. Previous Youth Council Members have played significant roles and have provided valued insight.

But the Sister City relationship has not just demonstrated kaizen. It has exceeded the philosophy. There have been major achievements. To mark the 28th anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Friendship on 4 September 1996, the Evening in the Japanese Garden was a unique and exciting event. Highlights were the display of bonsai, a history of the Sister City relationship, captivating Taiko Drummers and even an esteemed Koto player. We were privileged to welcome the Queensland Consul General, Mr Gomakubo, and the Consul, Mr Yamagida, as guests of honour. In addition, three community Taiko Drumming Sessions and two Koto visits to local High Schools were informative and enjoyable. The drumming workshops and performance were sponsored by an RADF grant, and Mr David Shield, the talented Koto player, kindly donated his time.

Further, it was wonderful to see our very own tipping water feature in the Japanese Garden. The Garden, officially named the Garden of Stillness in Movement, was specifically included in the terms of the original Declaration of Friendship. The silent, steady flow of the water, and the sudden movement of the tipping mechanism, are confirmation of the depth and breadth of the continuing, meaningful Sister City friendship.

Looking forward, the enthusiastic participation of those involved in the Gladstone Region and Saiki City Sister City relationship will ensure small and large changes are achieved. In particular, the encouragement of Youth Council participation and the planning of mayoral visits and Student Exchanges will continue to deepen the communication.

I am personally grateful for the support and friendship I have received as a Member of the Committee, and I am confident that all involved will continue not only to demonstrate the philosophy of kaizen but will continue to exceed expectations.

Wendy Marsh

President of the Gladstone Saiki Sister City Committee

14 November 2024