

REPORT TO THE SISTER CITIES NEW ZEALAND BOARD ON ATTENDANCE AT THE SISTER CITIES AUSTRALIA (SCA) CONFERENCE HELD IN BLACKTOWN FROM THE 8TH TO THE 11TH NOVEMBER 2015

Over recent years SCNZ and SCA have sent a representative to each other's conferences. This year's SCA conference was held at Blacktown which is part of the western suburbs of Sydney and about 70 people from around Australia attended. There was also an SCA Youth Conference running alongside the main conference at which about 25 people attended.

The approach taken by SCA in running their annual conference is to allocate the conference to a local Council. It appeared that the Council is then given a free hand to run the conference as they see fit with minimal input from SCA. The conference therefore had a strong local flavour where Blacktown's Sister City relationships were extensively showcased. These are Porirua, north of Wellington, Suseong-Gu, South Korea and Liaocheng in China. Representatives from these cities were in attendance and given profile throughout the conference. Gaylene Kells, an event manager from Porirua District Council was in attendance representing the Porirua Mayor.

Along with New Zealand, there was national representation at the conference by CLAIR from Japan, Guo from South Korea and China from two representatives from the Chinese People's Association with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC).

Similar to the format SCNZ follows for our conference the SCA conference provided plenty of opportunity for fellowship and the exchange of ideas, the chance to hear thought provoking and inspirational speakers, visits to local places of interest and the showcasing of outstanding Sister City achievements through the presentation of Awards.

Many Sister Cities in Australia are trying to develop a more commercial element to their various relationships with the city of Brisbane probably having the most success. However cultural and educational activities continue to be the backbone of most Sister City activity. In particular there were presentations about successful sister school relationships. The use of Skype and WeChat was making these relationships more sustainable. One such relationship showcased was between Aotea College in Porirua and Chiefley College in Blacktown. Both had a large roll of Samoan students which gave strong relevance to the relationship.

Visits made were to the Nurraging Reserve, an extensive parkland area which also contained a New Zealand and a Chinese Garden. We also visited the Featherdale Wildlife Park where a full range of Australian birds and other wildlife were on display.

Highlights of the conference programme itself were the keynote speakers. These included Hon. Bob Carr, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jessica Watson who as a teenager sailed single handedly around the world, William O'Toole, a professional events' organiser and Peter FitzSimons, former Wallaby rugby player and currently an author and public affairs commentator.

I would like to thank the members of the SCNZ for the opportunity to attend the SCA conference and say that it provided useful context in regard to how SCNZ operates.

Bernard Duncan
Board Member
Sister Cities New Zealand