

Notes from the Sister Cities New Zealand Regional Focus Group Meeting held in Rotorua 8 March 2016 in the Council Chamber at the Rotorua Lakes Council Building commencing at 11am.



Host Council, Rotorua Lakes Kaumatua performed the powhiri to all members.

Rotorua Mayor **Steve Chadwick** extended a warm welcome to everyone present.

Sister Cities New Zealand President **Hiroimi Morris** also welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. She then outlined what Sister Cities New Zealand does as an organisation and what plans it had for the future.

Meeting facilitator SCNZ Vice President Mayor **Ray Wallace** thanked both Steve and Hiroimi and then outlined the format for the meeting and goals that was being sought. Ray outlined that the Board had felt with the very positive Annual Conference held last year in Wellington there was support for more discussion around regional co-operation. Members felt there was opportunity for all regions to come together more frequently to discuss sister city programme, benefits and opportunities of working with a more regional approach to Sister Cities. This was particularly beneficial to the smaller areas where cost was a real factor. Ray advised the first of these Regional meetings had been held in Wellington and was extremely successful.

Guest Speakers

Ray then invited **Simon Draper** to speak about his role as Executive Director for Asia New Zealand and how the organisation could help develop and strengthen existing Sister City Relationships within Council and Citizen Groups. Simon stressed that relationships are built on trust and friendship and should not be entered into for economic benefit, otherwise they would fail. The Asian culture centred on Trust. At the conclusion of Simon's very detailed presentation he took questions from the floor. Simon finished by saying he was happy for any members to ring him personally if they wanted more information or to discuss opportunities.

Simon Draper is an experienced diplomat who has worked for Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade since 1991. Most recently he held the role of director United Nations, Human Rights and Commonwealth Division. A key part of the role was to drive New Zealand's successful campaign for a United National's Security Council seat.

Masahisa Yoshimi Deputy Director of CLAIR Sydney (Japan Local Government Centre) spoke about the very strong relationship it has with Sister Cities New Zealand, Local Government New Zealand and also with many of the TLA around the Country. As an Organisation Yoshimi san said CLAIR is very keen to foster and support further relations with its JETS programme with in New Zealand

Matamata-Piako Mayor Jan Barnes talked about the first NZ/China Mayoral Forum held in Xiamen last September, on behalf of Local Government NZ.

Meri Gibson (Education Rotorua), **Chris Leckie** (Rotorua English Language Academy) and **Patti Sutton** (Western Heights High School) talked about the benefit of educational programmes which leads to the youth development.

After a break, the meeting resumed at 1pm with presentation from **Mayors and representatives** of Rotorua, Taupo, Tauranga, Whakatane, Hamilton and Gisborne. Members outlined the success and failure of relationships and programmes. Members found this very useful in the sharing of ideas.

The meeting then went on to a group discussion to answer collective questions

- How does Sister Cities activities benefit your region
- How have you measured economic , cultural and other benefits of your relationships
- How do you encourage community participation and what are the challenges
- How are you engaging youth in your relationships and opportunities for youth leadership
- Working collaboratively how will that benefit your sister city relationships.

There was a good robust discussion on all of the points. It was felt working collaboration as a region was a good idea and gave smaller TLA areas the opportunity to get involved. While no one had actually undertaken an assessment of the economic benefit everyone said they got economic social and cultural benefits from their relationships. Having youth involved was crucial for ongoing success and the establishment of a youth arm of SCNZ was a good idea.

In closing **Ray Wallace** thanked everyone for their contributions and robust discussion. He said it was clear from the discussions today there was further opportunities for the Region to grow new and strengthen existing Sister City Relationships. Everyone felt it would be good to have another meeting towards the end of the year. **Mayor Steve Chadwick** offered Rotorua Lakes to organise.

Meeting closed with Drinks and nibbles and networking at 3pm