



SISTER CITIES
NEW ZEALAND

Connecting people globally for peace and prosperity

A Forty Year History

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APRIL 2021

Original Logo



Let's think back to the year 1980. The Rt Hon Robert Muldoon is Prime Minister of New Zealand and Sir Keith Holyoake is Governor-General. Already there are about twenty-four Sister City or Friendship relationships in place between New Zealand towns and cities and communities around the world.

International Travel has been ramping up and many New Zealanders are getting their first taste of relatively easy long-distance travel. It is now realistic to visit those far-flung relationships in say North America and Europe. It means boarding an Air New Zealand DC10 (the one with three engines!) and taking three to five flights, hopping from Auckland to Hawaii to Los Angeles to New York and on to London. This improved air travel is enhancing existing Sister City relationships and making more of them possible.

Looking further back the very first relationships New Zealand set up came after the First World War through French and Belgian links formed by returning soldiers. The real surge in Sister City links, however, came in the wake of the Second World War with US President Eisenhower in 1956 making the call to establish 'People-to-People' programmes between cities and towns across the world. This was an investment in citizen diplomacy and a way to give world peace a better chance.

These early links often had an old world or English language connection being mostly focussed on the UK, the USA and Australia. Then in the late 1970's New Zealand started to focus on Asia with two links established to cities in Japan followed in 1981



by our first link to a city in China. These three relationships were the start of massive growth over the next twenty-five years. Links were invariably initiated by city and district councils, but many community groups were also involved, including service clubs like Rotary and the Returned Services Association and occasionally schools setting up exchange programmes.

The Inaugural seminar for a possible national Sister City organisation took place in Wellington on the 3rd November 1980. It was chaired by the Wellington Mayor, Mr Michael Fowler, and thirty people attended representing some of the existing twenty-four relationships, but others were from Air NZ, NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as it was then and Sister Cities International (SCI) based in Washington DC.

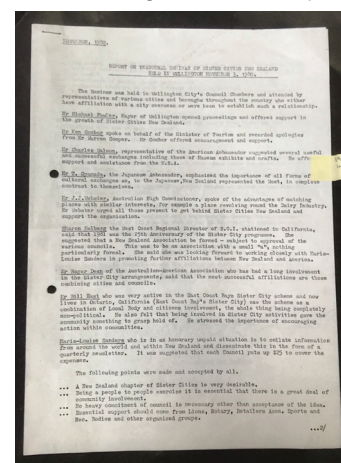
By the end of the meeting it was agreed that:

- A New Zealand branch of Sister Cities be formed,
- A secretariat be set up,
- That the membership fee be \$25 annually,
- That efforts be made to encourage a network of Sister Cities throughout New Zealand and around the world.

This agreement suggested that the new entity was a branch of SCI. This reflected SCI representatives providing a lot of help to the new organisation. The meeting set up a leadership group chaired by William East and with Marie-Louise Sanders (now Blockley) appointed as the first administrator.

Air New Zealand played a large part in the launching of the new organisation, particularly Bill Davies, who was a senior executive in charge of Special Interest Tours for the airline, and passionate about the value of the Sister Cities movement. Air New Zealand assisted with the cost of flights and hotel accommodation for office holders. They provided office facilities for the new organisation and played

Inaugural Seminar Report



a big part in the establishment of the Sister Cities NZ Award program in the late 1990's which still operates today with some assistance from them. One year this support included flying Sister City NZ representatives to the USA to attend the annual Sister Cities International conference in Portland, Oregon PLUS a Maori Concert party! Needless to say, they were a major hit at that conference!

Over the next two years, Marie-Louise Sanders, future President Brian Crawshaw, and Bill Davies worked as a triumvirate, tirelessly travelling the country to promote the new organisation to existing relationships and to actively encourage the setting up of new ones. Marie-Louise, in particular, was involved in setting up a number of exchanges with links to cities in the USA including with secondary schools, the police, librarians, accountants, quilting groups and art exchanges.

While much energy was being put into new links others worked on a constitution for the new organisation, including developing a Constitution, a Mission Statement, and overall Objectives and Goals to guide activity. The outcome of this work was presented at a second conference in Taupo in 1982.

Thirty-five people were present representing ten links from around the country with representatives from Australia and the USA including the President of Sister Cities International. It was agreed to set up an Incorporated Society called Sister Cities New Zealand. A Board of Directors of eight was appointed with William East appointed as the first President of SCNZ. It was agreed that the value of the new organisation lay in providing a co-ordination and communication role between the relationships around the country as well as assisting councils wanting to set up new relationships. The role youth could play in the organisation and in international exchange generally was seen as a major priority.

The problems facing the new organisation were similar to those faced today. The first was how the new organisation could be funded on a sustainable basis. In those early years it was the energy of those highly enthusiastic volunteers who made up the Board which ensured the survival and ongoing development of Sister Cities NZ. Existing or former mayors holding the office of President were a great help to the new organisation given the resources, influence, connections and administration aid they brought to the role. As the number of relationships grew, so its membership grew. As time went



Marie-Louise Blockley



Jeremy Dwyer

by the organisation came to be funded by a scaled annual subscription along with whatever surplus was available from each years' annual conference.

The second challenge was a debate about whether sister city links should be a precursor to a commercial benefit to local business interests. Councils in and around Auckland saw this as an imperative while others, particularly in the regions, felt that building friendship and international connections between communities was the primary objective. Most councils were happy that sister city activity added cultural diversity to their cities with opportunities for students and other citizens to travel to or host people from diverse parts of the world they wouldn't normally have contact with.

By 1983 the number of relationships had reached fifty-one, this growth being mostly with the UK and the USA. The 1980's and 1990's then saw rapid growth in the number of links with Japan, reaching thirty-three relationships by 1996. This was followed by China where nine links in 1996 became thirty-six by 2014. This increase reflected New Zealand's growing trade ties firstly with Japan and then with China. Demand from each side wanting to learn more about the other was also a factor. Easier travel to Asia via New Zealand's growing number of flight connections and cheaper air fares also helped.

By the early 1990's SCNZ had grown in confidence and stature in the role it could play in helping New Zealand communities develop international connections. When Sister Cities International proposed that there should be a World Forum, SCNZ made a bid to host and was selected. This event was held in Christchurch in 1992. Over one hundred people attended with big delegations coming from Japan and China.

The main event on the SCNZ calendar has always been the annual conference with thirty-nine being held so far. These events are an opportunity for members to hear from international sister city speakers, to learn about other programmes or exchanges and a chance for councils new to the movement to talk to the experts about what might work best for them. Councils around NZ are canvassed for their interest in running the event and, in conjunction with the Board, an outline of how the programme might look is developed. The availability of local sponsorship is also important. By the 2000's attendance at conferences had grown to around 200



people making them an attractive event for councils wanting to showcase their region.

The early 2000's saw Sister Cities NZ evolving and maturing as an organisation. The former Mayor of Hastings, Jeremy Dwyer was appointed as President in the year 2000 and left an indelible mark on the organisation. Firstly, Jeremy led the development of a new Business Plan to guide the organisation through to 2010 with the banner; "The New Century: A New Vitality". He then negotiated an employment grant and sponsorship with New Zealand Trade and Enterprise. This allowed the employment of a part-time administrator, to be based in Hastings, the development of a website, and for Sister Cities NZ to become a better resource base for its members. Today Local Government NZ generously makes office space available to us at their Wellington offices.

Sister Cities NZ today is far removed for the fledgling organisation of the early 1980's.

- New Zealand today has 159 links spread across 24 countries: 44 with Japan, 38 with China, 24 with Australia and 20 with the USA.
- Our board now fully represents the constituencies that make up the Sister City movement. These being elected Mayors and Councillors, Council staff who assist with the management of Sister City links and community volunteer committees who fully reflect the 'people to people' engagement which is at the heart of the Sister Cities movement.
- We fortunate to be able to collaborate with a wide range of partners to foster international connection and where our objectives are aligned. Some of these include, Air New Zealand, NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, the Office of Ethnic Communities, CLAIR of Japan, CPAFFC of China, Sister Cities Australia, Sister Cities International, Asia New Zealand Foundation, Local Government New Zealand and many of the Embassies of those countries where we have Sister City Links.
- We work hard to have a youth focus to our activities, providing young people the opportunity to visit other countries and to discover new cultures.
- We showcase the organisation and promote International connection through our website and make full use of social media.
- We hold a programme of Regional Forums in different locations around New Zealand each year to assist local people with their Sister City activities.

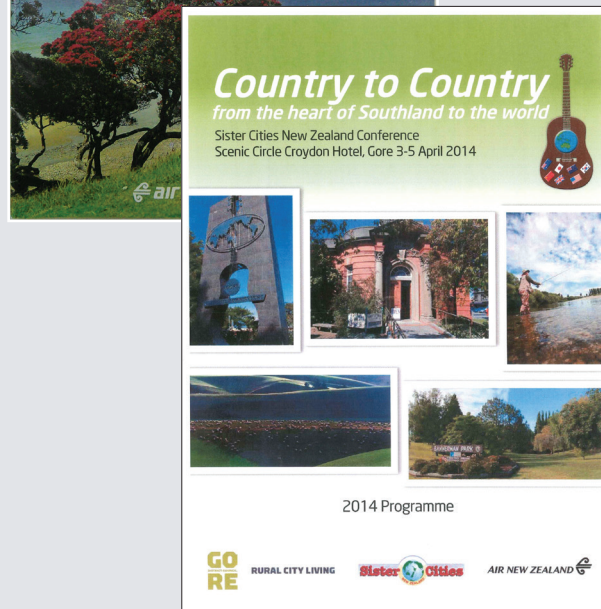
The survival of Sister Cities NZ to allow us to celebrate our 40th Anniversary is a milestone we can all be proud of. It reflects the enthusiasm and drive of our members volunteering their time over those forty years because they were committed to providing citizens with the opportunity of meaningful international connection.

This is particularly true of those thirteen individuals, often former Mayors, who have accepted the role of President of Sister Cities NZ, from William East, the Inaugural President in 1980 to Hiromi Morris our President today, the first non-New Zealand national in the role, not connected to Local Government and our longest serving President by some margin.

The efforts of those thirteen and their Board colleagues are the reason we are here today.

Sister Cities New Zealand Presidents

1980 – 1984	William East Inaugural President (Wellington) (Dec'd)
1984 – 1987	Sir John Kennedy-Good (Former Mayor Lower Hutt) (Dec'd)
1987 – 1989	Sir Barry Curtis (Former Mayor Manukau)
1989 – 1993	Brian Crawshaw (Former Mayor Gisborne) (Dec'd)
1993 – 1996	Lorraine Brill (Former Mayor Whakatāne) (Dec'd)
1996 – 1998	John Burke (Former Mayor Porirua)
1998 – 2000	John Strevens (Former Deputy Mayor Auckland)
2000 – 2005	Jeremy Dwyer (Former Mayor Hastings) (Dec'd)
2005 – 2006	Dave Adamson (International Affairs Co-ordinator - Christchurch)
2006 – 2010	Peter Tennant (Former Mayor New Plymouth)
2010 – 2012	Bill Woods (Former Mayor Selwyn)
May – Nov 2012	Kevin Watkins (Councillor Hastings)
2012 – present	Hiromi Morris (Wellington, longest serving President!)



REPORT ON INAUGURAL SEMINAR OF SISTER CITIES NEW ZEALAND
HELD IN WELLINGTON NOVEMBER 3, 1980.

The Seminar was held in Wellington City's Council Chambers and attended by representatives of various cities and boroughs throughout the country who either have affiliation with a city overseas or were keen to establish such a relationship.

Mr Michael Fowler, Mayor of Wellington opened proceedings and offered support in the growth of Sister Cities New Zealand.

Mr Ken Comber spoke on behalf of the Minister of Tourism and recorded apologies from Mr Warren Cooper. Mr Comber offered encouragement and support.

Mr Charles Salmon, representative of the American Ambassador suggested several useful and successful exchanges including those of Museum exhibits and crafts. He offered support and assistance from the U.S.A.

Mr T. Oyamada, the Japanese Ambassador, emphasised the importance of all forms of cultural exchanges as, to the Japanese, New Zealand represented the West, in complete contrast to themselves.

Mr J.J. Webster, Australian High Commissioner, spoke of the advantages of matching places with similar interests, for example a place revolving round the Dairy Industry. Mr Webster urged all those present to get behind Sister Cities New Zealand and support the organization.

Sharon Helberg the West Coast Regional Director of S.C.I. stationed in California, said that 1981 was the 25th Anniversary of the Sister City programme. She suggested that a New Zealand Association be formed - subject to approval of the various councils. This was to be an association with a small "a", nothing particularly formal. She said she was looking forward to working closely with Marie Louise Sanders in promoting further affiliations between New Zealand and America.

Mr Roger Dean of the Australian-American Association who has had a long involvement in the Sister City arrangements, said that the most successful affiliations are those combining cities and councils.

Mr Bill East who was very active in the East Coast Bays Sister City scheme and now lives in Ontario, California (East Coast Bay's Sister City) saw the scheme as a combination of Local Body and citizens involvement, the whole thing being completely non-political. He also felt that being involved in Sister City activities gave the community something to grasp hold of. He stressed the importance of encouraging action within communities.

Marie-Louise Sanders who is in an honorary unpaid situation is to collate information from around the world and within New Zealand and disseminate this in the form of a quarterly newsletter. It was suggested that each Council puts up \$25 to cover the expenses.

The following points were made and accepted by all.

- ... A New Zealand chapter of Sister Cities is very desirable.
- ... Being a people to people exercise it is essential that there is a great deal of community involvement.
- ... No heavy commitment of council is necessary other than acceptance of the idea.
- ... Essential support should come from Lions, Rotary, Retailers Assn. Sports and Rec. Bodies and other organized groups.