

2018 SISTER CITIES AUSTRALIA NATIONAL AWARDS

Category No. 1: Community Involvement

Project Title: Community Partnerships Program (CPP) between Blacktown City Council and Liverpool Plains Shire Council – ‘Hangi in the Country 1’

Blacktown Council and Sister Cities

Blacktown City Council has had a long-standing commitment since 1984 to its Sister Cities program with 4 formal Sister City partnerships and an agreement with the League of Cities, Philippines.

With a population of over 350,000 people from 176 countries of origin and speaking some 169 different languages, the City of Blacktown is enormously culturally diverse. The Sister Cities relationships that are in place provide an effective and practical means to relate to the local residents across this diverse range of cultures.

Project Summary

Blacktown has maintained a positive and active relationship with Liverpool Shire Council since the signing of the Sister City agreement in 2005. Liverpool Plains Shire, with a population of 7,000 people is primarily an agricultural region and is situated 360 kilometres north-west of Blacktown in New South Wales. The Council Centre is located in Quirindi, the main town in the Shire.

The CPP commenced in September 2015. The key principle of this community based inclusive program was to facilitate the bringing together of identified and comparable community groups from both partners using Sister Cities as the catalyst for participation and involvement. Sixteen community groups from Blacktown have visited Liverpool Plains in either 2015 or 2016 and 12 active partnership programs and/or projects initiated.

The 72-person 2017 delegation, the largest ever to leave Blacktown, visited Liverpool Plains Shire Council from 4 and 6 August 2017 and consolidated the foundations of those partnerships.

In a first, the 2017 delegation comprised a significant proportion of Maori performers and cultural identities, designed to engender support from the large Maori mining community who reside within the Liverpool Plains Shire while promoting Maori culture, music, craft, food and dance to the residents of Liverpool Plains Shire Council and surrounds.

The initiative was branded ‘Hangi in the County 1’ and with support from State Rail NSW of significantly reduced fares, the ‘Kiwi Express’ from Central Station Sydney to Quirindi evolved.

The generation of economic return from external visitation was a key element of the initiative.

High profile New Zealand and Australian actor, singer, performer and entertainer Jay Laga'aia, with the support of the Quirindi RSL Club, was engaged to deliver many of the cultural elements of the program. Specialist Hangi cooks and other Maori performers and entertainers also joined the team.

Maori workshops, specialist cultural sessions, live performances and a traditional hangi meal with Maori entertainment for 230 patrons with 150 paying customers, were conducted as part of the initiative.

The \$13,800 cost of the 2017 program was shared between both partners.

A video of the key highlights produced by a technician from Blacktown community radio SWR999fm is supplied.