

SISTER CITIES AUSTRALIA NATIONAL AWARD SUBMISSION 2015

Category 1 (Community Engagement) Category 2 (Youth Engagement)

Entrant: Cairns Regional Council

Project name: Sister Cities Youth Ambassadors Program

Date of Event: 30 July – 8 August 2014

Name of participating Sister City/s:

Oyama, Japan; Minami, Japan; Zhanjiang, China; Sidney, Canada; Scottsdale, USA; Riga, Latvia; and Lae, Papua New Guinea.

Summary of the event:

BACKGROUND 1. Aim

The exchange program aim was to promote international understanding and friendship, and to introduce Cairns as a student friendly city. As participants were learning, they taught the people they met about their country, their culture, and their ideas. They became Youth Ambassadors, helping to bring the world closer together and making some good friends in the process.

Young representatives of Cairns' Sister Cities enjoyed a taste of life in Cairns, thanks to the Sister Cities Youth Ambassador program. The young ambassadors experienced some of Cairns' favourite attractions during their 10-day visit.

The program invited two students chosen by their respective local governments in:

Zhanjiang, China; Oyama City, Japan; Minami Town, Japan; Riga, Latvia; Sidney, Canada; and Scottsdale, USA to visit Cairns from 2 - 11 August 2014.

The students were aged 15 to 17 years, and some spoke basic English. Students were hosted by a family and attended a secondary school with a local student of the same age to act as their "buddy". On the weekend of their arrival, the students attended an orientation and toured the city of Cairns. During the following weekend students visited the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Marine Park and other popular tourist destinations.

2. Details of the influence of the project on the Community, also the impact on economic and social development.

Through the Multicultural Advisory Committee, community groups were able to provide support to the visiting ambassadors from their own cultural background and increase the wider communities awareness of the sister cities program. By raising awareness that partnerships with sister cities is not exclusive to local governments and CALD committees, but is open to all communities. This had a positive impact and was very tangible by the increased requests of visiting community members from the various cities, and the increased demand by sister cities for visiting programs. This has seen an increase in requests to use our model to execute similar programs throughout the region. ☐ Partnering schools The Sister Cities Advisory Committee appreciates the contribution of participating schools who welcomed students from the program to attend their school for five days. This allowed the students to experience school life in Australia and promote Cairns as a student-friendly destination.