

## Category Five – Overall Program

Port Stephens and Bellingham, USA; Yugawara, Japan; Tateyama, Japan; and Kushiro, Japan

The program aims to increase local participation in the Sister Cities activities of Port Stephens, As a reflection of the diverse nature of our community, we undertook a range of activities in 2018/19 including:

### Cultural exchanges:

1. Seaside Singers. 16 members of the Port Stephens Seaside Singers plus our Chairman and viola accompanist undertook a 19 day exchange to Japan in October 2018. The group visited our Japanese sister cities, Yugawara, Tateyama and Kushiro. In all locations, the Singers performed in public concerts, joined in workshops with Japanese choral groups and sang in impromptu “pop-up” concerts in parks and gardens.
2. Bellingham dance group. 16 Bellingham dancers of high school ages and 8 support staff performed at seven schools in the Port Stephens municipality in July 2018. Home hosting was arranged through the local Robyn Yvette Dance Centre.

### Education-based activities

3. Yugawara student visit. A total of 6 students and their teacher from Yugawara participated in that city’s sixth annual visit to Port Stephens in August 2018. The students attended classes at St. Philip’s Christian College in the spirit of a cultural exchange, and school parents provided home hosting. An adult delegation from Yugawara visited in September 2018 to hold talks on maintaining the incoming student exchange and expanding cultural, educational and tourism exchanges in future.

### Sporting exchanges

4. International marathon running events. 2 runners represented Port Stephens in the Wakashio Marathon in Tateyama in January 2019. This is the sixth consecutive year of Port Stephens entrants to this event. We also supported 4 runners to compete in the Bellingham Bay Marathon in September 2018, the first time that Port Stephens had been invited to send runners to this event. To complete the loop of international exchange, 5 runners from Bellingham and 2 from Tateyama joined local runners in the Hunter Valley Winery Running Festival in July 2018. This was an inaugural exchange and was facilitated by volunteers from the Nelson Bay Hash House Harriers providing home hosting.
5. Pacific Rim Yachting competition (PacRim). The latest of this biennial event, first held in 1990 and hosted by Port Stephens in 2012, was held in Tauranga, New Zealand in March 2018, involving crews from Australia, Russia, USA, Japan, Canada and new Zealand.

### Community/governance interaction

6. Bellingham Mayoral Summit. The Port Stephens Mayor and General Manager attended the Bellingham Mayoral Summit in September 2018, which celebrated Bellingham’s 60th anniversary of its relationship with Tateyama. In addition to Port Stephens and Tateyama, Bellingham has sister cities in Nahodka – Russia, Punta Arenas – Chile, Cheongju – South Korea, Vaasa – Finland and Tsetserleg – Mongolia, all of which were represented at the Summit.