

The General Manager  
Blue Mountains City Council  
Locked Bag 1005  
KATOOMBA. NSW 2780

Dear Sir

Thank you for supporting the Blue Mountains Sister Cities Committee for the past 19 years.

As our Committee, the Blue Mountains Sister Cities Committee, and the Council have both had many changes over recent years; and in order to put the role of our committee into perspective we felt it necessary to share the following information with you and others who are concerned within the Council

Enclosed is a report outlining our Committee's Mission and Vision statement, History and a brief synopsis of our committee's Programs, the benefits we provide to the local government area and an indication of the committee's continuing viability.

As requested by Julie Bargaquast, we are also enclosing a copy of our projected budget and our report outlining the financial benefits our programs generate for the Blue Mountains Local Government Area.

If you have any further questions or queries please get back to us.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs) Chris Wenman  
Chair, Blue Mountains Sister Cities Committee

**BLUE MOUNTAINS SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE**  
**REPORT REGARDING THE BENEFITS and FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

**Vision**

Promote the affiliation of Sister Cities by helping towns and cities to motivate communities to extend the hand of friendship nationally and internationally.

**Mission**

Provide a forum for culture, educational and economic interchange between communities and to encourage friendship, co-operation and understanding to improve the quality of life worldwide.

**History**

The Blue Mountains City Council set up Sister Cities friendship relationships with Flagstaff in U.S.A. in 1967 and Sanda Japan in 1988. The City Council handed the running of the Sister Cities Program over to the Blue Mountains Sister Cities Community Committee in 1990.

**Regular Programs**

**Sister Cities Schools Exchange Programs** exists between St. Columba's High School and Hokusetsu High School; and Winmalee High School and Arima High School. This involves travel for students and teachers to and from Blue Mountains and Sanda. Approximately 80+ students, plus up to 10 staff, come to the Blue Mountains for periods up to 10 days over a two year period.

Because of the success of the Sister Cities Schools Program with St Columba's and Winmalee High Schools further Japanese student groups, from other regions of Japan attend programs at Winmalee, Blaxland and Springwood High Schools. Each student would spend approximately \$200 to \$500 each locally and the staff who accompany these students would spend considerably more (\$2000 plus).

In addition to this up to 4 students per year attend St. Columba's and Winmalee on a long term, 6 to 12 month program. These students spend a great deal more in the local government area and their families often come to visit them during their stays and spend additional funds in the area.

A **Student Language Exchange Program** sponsored by the Blue Mountains Sister Cities Committee brings a further two students from Sanda for a period of two to three weeks.

All students, under the above programs, stay with host families whilst the adult members stay in local accommodation, hotels and bed and breakfasts. During their visits they use many local facilities and spend money on items such as tourist attractions e.g. Scenic World and Edge Cinema; bus and car hire, employment of local guides and E.S.L. teachers, use of conference facilities, gifts and souvenirs, specialist items, jewellery, artworks. Even local supermarkets and fruit shops benefit from these visits. Local restaurants and cafes are also frequented.

Many students and visitors make return visits bringing additional family and friends. All visitors travelling to and from Sanda spend large amounts of money at local businesses.

The **Youth Ambassador Program**, a recent initiative of the committee, has been well received and has resulted in one of our ambassadors attaining employment at a tourist shop in Katoomba as a result of his improved skills in the Japanese language. This generates further revenue by having a local converse easily with customers.

The **Runners Program** is widely acclaimed in Sanda; and the City of Blue Mountains receives much press from major newspapers in Japan because of its involvement in the Sanda International (Half) Marathon. This event is reciprocated in that each year 2 runners from Sanda are invited to come to the Blue Mountains to take part in the Woodford/Glenbrook Classic (Fun Run). These runners, who are sometimes accompanied by family members generally stay with host families but are taken to visit local attractions and purchase many unique Blue Mountains gifts to take home.

### **Cultural and Friendship Exchanges**

Many of the Blue Mountains Sister Cities Programs have been **Cultural Exchanges** and over recent years we have had many groups such as Garden Groups, a Baseball Club, a Kendo Group, Choirs, Girls and Boy Scout Groups, a Rugby Club, a Ballet Group, Quilting Groups, Artists i.e. glass blowers, potters and media artists.

The **Student Artwork Program** allows our local schools to send artwork to our sister cities to display in local festival exhibits. This encourages exchange and visits from our overseas counterparts.

Cultural and friendship exchanges can't be quantified but all groups generate expenditure in the Blue Mountains.

An unquantifiable number of tourists come to the Blue Mountains on recommendations from visitors who have previously travelled to the Blue Mountains and an unquantifiable number of tourists come here because of the Sister-City relationship.

All members of the Sister Cities Committee are volunteers, who accept no payment from the group's budget, and all activities are organised in members own time. This alone saves the council a sizeable salary. In comparison, our Sister City of Sanda employs four full-time members of staff to deal with its Sister City programs and one full-time secretary to its International Association.

In-Area Budget Expenses are channelled back into the community; this involves community hall hire, advertising in the local Blue Mountains Gazette, catering, all gifts are purchased through the Blue Mountains information centres, track suits for runners, promotional material.

Our Committee keeps the Blue Mountains City Council informed of its activities and expenditure via monthly Minutes, Annual Report.

We as a committee believe we provide great benefits to the local government area both culturally and financially and that the committee and its programs are both viable and relevant.

Attached are letters from Nadia Ireland a member of the Sister Cities Committee and past language teacher in Sanda; and Lindsey Ashby, a past participant in the Sanda International Marathon.

## **Blue Mountains Sister Cities Committee - Projected Budget**

### **From July 2009 to June 2010**

The following costs are estimated on past expenditure ... and envisaging that we will continue with existing programs.

If the City Council wishes to extend or introduce any additional programs funding for these needs to be added.

Hire of Neighbourhood Centre for meetings and Junior Ambassador Program	\$550
Monthly Gazette Meeting Notice	\$320
Gazette Advertising and Promotion for Runners & Junior Ambassador Program	\$1,000
Internet connection	\$360
Telephone	\$200
Australian Sister Cities Association	\$500
Air fares for 2 runners	\$3,300
Runner's entry fees	\$80
Track suits for runners	\$150
Jackets tops for runners & Junior Ambassador	\$240
Money for host families support for 2 students 2 x \$250	\$500
Springwood Foundation Day costs	\$100
Printing & Promotional expenses	\$750
Post Office box rental	\$130
Air faire Junior Ambassador	\$1650
Committee expenses (postage, airport visits & parking, some local attractions, printer consumables)	\$500
Welcome Party for runners, and catering for cultural activities ie 4 July	\$500
Additional activities/functions	\$500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,330</b>

If the Blue Mountains City has an official delegation from either Sanda or Flagstaff, additional moneys need to be allocated. In the past, this has been taken from other Council funding.

## **To whom it may concern**

Eleven years ago I went to Sanda City as a member of the Blue Mountains Community Choir "Crowd Around" who was invited to sing at the Sister Cities 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. During that trip my husband and I were offered jobs teaching English at a small English School in Sanda. We ended up living in Sanda for three years and whilst there teaching at various primary, junior high, senior high and cram schools.

In the past ten years I have known of at least ten other Blue Mountains residents who have also taught English in Sanda. There is one there now who has been there for about four years.

All of the Blue Mountains residents who have spent time living in Sanda were well-known within the Sanda community, were participants of various "Sanda International Association" activities and played a big part in promoting the Blue Mountains as a great tourist-destination-spot.

My husband and I have had over thirty (known) visitors from Sanda visit the Blue Mountains because of our acquaintance. One of them stayed in the Blue Mountains for one year. We continue to encourage our friends from Sanda to visit the Blue Mountains. Our most recent guest was here for two months during summer this year.

Living in Sanda was by far the most rewarding experience of my life. As a result I learnt the language and culture and made many, many friends.

The people of Sanda know about the existence of the Blue Mountains because of the Sister City relationship we have with them and because people, like myself, go to Sanda and teach the people there about where we come from. The Blue Mountains residents who have taught in Sanda have done so because the Sister City relationship exists.

Our schools are learning about Japan and Sanda, their schools are learning about Australia and the Blue Mountains. Exchange programs are happening within Sanda and Blue Mountains schools because the relationship exists.

The Sister City relationship is beneficial to all sorts of Blue Mountains businesses. Visitors from Sanda and the Blue Mountains residents who visit Sanda, all spend vast amounts of money at our tourist attractions, hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, gift shops etc.

The Sister City relationship has opened up many doors for many people in the Blue Mountains and in Sanda. Because of the relationship, my life has been enriched enormously. I am a Sister City committee member because I believe in encouraging friendship between cultures and I want to support other people in discovering the benefits of cultural exchange.

The Blue Mountains and Sanda City have had a good and strong friendship now for twenty years. I do not believe it is possible to put a monetary value on friendship.

Yours Sincerely  
Nadia Ireland  
Sister Cities Committee member

Dear Mayor, Councillors, General Manager,

Please be aware that as a 'host father' for two Sanda City runners at different times, I am uniquely placed to comment on their spending habits whilst in the Blue Mountains.

In my role as 'host father', I felt obliged to return the hospitality shown whilst in Sanda City. Thus, I spent money on transporting guests, feeding and showing them the sights which involved fees such as at the Scenic Skyway, the Cable Car, etc. Many mountains based activities were engaged in such as visits to local souvenir shops, so our guests could buy gifts for family and friends back home.

Food of course was bought locally and recreational activities were substantially local because guests wanted to see and experience the Blue Mountains.

I have visited Sanda City twice, once as a Blue Mountains City representative runner and once as a Sanda City invited Guest. On both occasions numerous Made in Australia gifts were bought in Blue Mountains Gift shops from Katoomba to Leura to Glenbrook.

My wife and daughter also went on the first occasion and again gifts were purchased- Made in Australia and bought from Blue Mountains businesses. As custom demands gifts were bought for entire family groups with whom we stayed- fathers, mothers and children. Multiply all these costs by the scores of runners who have represented Blue Mountains City and the dollar value of our Sister City relationship stacks up.

Whilst in Japan I met literally dozens of people from dancers, to musicians, to choristers, to runners who had been to the Blue Mountains. The choristers were a very big group and used a bus (instant big dollars) to travel around to the various sights buying souvenirs and adding dollar value to our Sister City relationship. All Sanda City guests take gifts home as is the custom, for friends and loved ones. Again the dollar value of our relationship stacks up.

Any attempt to dilute or break this relationship on the grounds that the Sister City relationship might not pay for itself is incorrect and misdirected. Such an activity will only serve to lessen incoming tourist dollars. Now, with the worldwide economic downturn and subsequent drop in overseas visitors, is not the time to weaken our Sister City relationship with Sanda for the Sanda City runners and other Sanda groups will arrive and continue to support us whilst many tourists from other nations will not.

Sanda City guests spend whilst here and when they go back after a wonderful time in the Blue Mountains become advocates for Blue Mountains tourism.

Host parents spend to ensure their guest stay is as hospitable as a stay in Sanda. The winners in this relationship are the Blue Mountains ratepayers and especially Blue Mountains businesses and services.

Lindsay Ashby- Blue Mountains ratepayer and resident since 1974.