

From the Board

Message from President Mayor Grant Smith

Kia ora koutou, as we come to the close of another year, I want to take a moment to thank our members and partners for the energy, commitment and collaboration that has defined Global Cities New Zealand in 2025.

It has been a busy and productive year, with our cities, communities, schools and businesses continuing to strengthen international connections in an increasingly complex global environment.

This December newsletter is a real reflection of that work. The articles highlight the depth and breadth of activity taking place across New Zealand with inspiring examples of engagement spanning China, South Korea, Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States. From Warkworth, Gisborne and Wellington in the North to Christchurch and Marlborough in the South. Using sport, education, trade, arts and festivals, literature through to cultural exchanges and people-to-people links. These stories demonstrate the value of global relationships at the local level and the impact they have for our communities here at home.

Looking ahead, planning is well underway for an important milestones in our 2026 calendar. I encourage you to save the date for our one-day Global Cities New Zealand Forum in Wellington on Friday 27 February. This will be a valuable opportunity to reconnect, share insights and explore emerging opportunities together. Contact me personally if you want to be involved or have a great case study.

Applications to register for the Forum will be sent out early in the new year. At the forum, we will also announce the host city and dates for our next biannual National Conference, at this stage to be held in September, which promises to be another highlight for our network.

As the year draws to a close, I wish you and your teams a safe, restful and prosperous festive season.

Ngā mihi nui,

Mayor Grant Smith, JP, GCNZ President



Marlborough delegation visits Ningxia and the China New Zealand Mayoral Forum

By Deborah Dalliessi, MDC Councillor and GCNZ Board Member

A Marlborough delegation visited its sister region of Ningxia, China in May 2025.

The delegation, led by Mayor Nadine Taylor and including GCNZ board member Councillor Deborah Dalliessi, Councillor Sally Arbuckle, and NMIT Executive Director Olivia Hall, spent four days in Ningxia to further strengthen regional relationships between the two wine-growing regions. The visit featured a meeting with Ningxia Governor Zhang Yupu. During the visit a renewed commitment was signed to deepen cooperation, especially in education, viticulture, and economic development.

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT) signed a new memorandum of understanding with Ningxia Institute of Science and Technology, focusing on collaborative research and joint master's degrees, expanding the scope of the partnership beyond undergraduate exchange. NMIT also renewed and enhanced its existing agreement with Ningxia University, matching Marlborough's internationally regarded expertise in wine science and viticulture with Ningxia's emerging educational programmes.



Mayor Nadine Taylor in China

Mayor Nadine Taylor emphasized that the growing partnership leverages the comparative strengths of both regions, particularly in wine tourism and technological innovation in viticulture. With Marlborough producing three-quarters of New Zealand's wine and Ningxia as one of China's top wine hubs, both sides see mutual benefit from ongoing knowledge and student exchanges.

After their Ningxia meetings, the Marlborough delegation joined other New Zealand cities at the third China New

Zealand Mayoral Forum in Chengdu, where 22 cities from both nations gathered to discuss regional cooperation. The forum underscored the importance of city-to-city ties as a platform for global collaboration in trade, education, and cultural exchange.

This May 2025 visit marks another milestone in the Marlborough-Ningxia partnership, building on almost a decade of achievements and promising new opportunities for local communities and industries in both regions.

The visit attracted good media coverage in China, including a feature in the Citydance series in China Daily.

Wellington Sakai Association – Hanami Picnic 2025

By Becci Whitton, Wellington Sakai Association

The Wellington Sakai Association held its annual Hanami picnic on Sunday 21 September 2025, in Wellington's Katherine Mansfield Memorial park.

The park boasts many cherry trees donated by Sakai City across the years, including in 2007, 2012, and at our recent 25 and 30 year anniversaries. The trees line walkways around the park and adorn the garden areas. The Sakai Cherry Walk has been supported by the Wellington Sakai Association to celebrate Wellington and Sakai's sister city relationship since 1994. The park itself is a tribute to Wellington's diverse literary heritage, making it a wonderful location to meet and celebrate shared history and lasting connections.

This year, as is typical for Wellington in spring, on the day of the picnic, the forecast threatened rain and a gale force northerly was blowing. But, you can't live in Wellington if you are going to let the wind stop you doing things, so the picnic bravely went ahead. The guests arrived bundled up in warm coats, and some shivered through the fun. The picnic tables were set up inside the shelter of a walled area of the garden. The group enjoyed eating sushi and Japanese style sweets together, with great conversation and lots of laughter.

The cherry trees were in full bloom, and their beauty was made all the more poignant by the sight of the delicate pink and white petals being scattered by the

wind. One guest commented that it looked like the trees were dancing.

The Wellington Sakai Association holds regular events through the year to celebrate the influence of Japanese culture in New Zealand, promote the value of sister city relationships, and help people to make connections. It was lovely to have a chance to enjoy Hanami with long time members, supporters of the sister city relationship, especially Ambassador Osawa and the lovely staff of the Japan Embassy, along with new friends.



The Sakai Cherry Walk, with trees donated by Sakai City (photo: Becci Whitton)



A guest enjoys a plate of sushi under the cherry blossoms (photo: Roxie Orr)

Inaugural direct flight – Adelaide to Christchurch

By Peter Cottrell, Christchurch Adelaide Sister City Committee & GCNZ Board

On a chilly late October day, Christchurch Airport welcomed Air New Zealand's newest direct flight to an international destination and to one of Christchurch's Sister Cities, Adelaide, the capital of South Australia.

There was a kapa haka group and a cake, cut by Christchurch Mayor Phil Major, and watched over by a number of people, including Justin Watson, CEO of Christchurch International Airport; Lucy Hall, General Manager of Air New Zealand Short Haul; and Peter Cottrell, Chair, Christchurch Adelaide Sister City Committee, with Air New Zealand flight crew nearby to ensure that the cake was shared fairly.

As well as cake, the group unveiled the Adelaide 'blade' of Christchurch International Airport's new direct international destination signpost (see photo). The Adelaide direct service is seasonal – end October to end of March – and twice weekly. It cuts several hours off any of the 2 flight options Adelaide to/from Christchurch and makes those direct people to people connections so much more convenient and even possible.



Christchurch Mayor Phil Mauger recognised the more than 50 years of sister city relationship with the City of Adelaide and said, "... this service is awesome. It opens the door to even more exchange, tourism and opportunity."

And personally I know at least 3 groups who have made, or are making, the direct connection this season, a family member, a member of our Committee's sub-committee from Adelaide and a colleague from the University of Canterbury who studied in Adelaide many years ago. We, my wife and I, are originally from Adelaide (we left just a few years ago – about 50!) and will be taking advantage of this direct flight to visit our extended families and friends.

This ceremony was the culmination of more than 20 years of encouragement from the Sister City Committee and more recently the 2022 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Christchurch and Adelaide airports as part of the 50th anniversary of the sister city relationship. Long may these flights continue.

Photo: Rubecca Soper-Hazlett, CIAL

Cubbin Theatre to Adelaide's DreamBIG Festival

By Hannah Wheeler and Melanie Luckman, Cubbin Theatre Company, Christchurch

The Christchurch Adelaide Sister City Committee generously funded our trip to the DreamBIG Children's Festival in Adelaide from May 7–17, 2025.

As Cubbin Theatre representatives, Hannah and Melanie travelled to experience this renowned children's arts festival during its 50th anniversary. DreamBIG primarily runs as a schools programme with a family weekend featuring public performances and free events at the Adelaide Festival Centre.

Our visit to Adelaide's DreamBIG Children's Arts Festival offered valuable insights for potential Christchurch collaborations and development opportunities for Cubbin Theatre. As the world's longest-running children's arts festival, DreamBIG presents a comprehensive two-week programme with strong schools' engagement, connecting with some 140 schools during the festival.

The festival ran exceptionally well, showcasing years of experience and strong school relationships. They prioritised accessibility, offering many free drop-in activities without bookings, making family participation straightforward.

The festival structure works brilliantly, with a middle weekend dedicated as a "Big Family Weekend" around the Festival Plaza. This featured numerous free activities including maker spaces, playable streets like an interactive plant installation, exhibitions, kiddrepreneur market, craft activities, a giant puppet to manipulate, and the lucky dip tent where you turned up and didn't know what small theatre show you would see. Kids well and truly took over the Festival Plaza and it was buzzing over the Big Family Weekend.

We made some valuable connections and strengthened

some existing relationships. We spoke about the committee and it felt really special to be connected in a sister city way or a sisterhood, as some of our meetings talked about. It was a really affirming and great learning experience for Cubbin. Out of our connections made at DreamBIG, we are looking to build a tour of our new show Bundle Baby to Australia in 2026.

Cubbin Theatre Company makes theatre and music experiences for very young children based in Ōtautahi Christchurch. They are the only theatre company making theatre work for this age group in Aotearoa, and in 2025 and 2026 are the Company in Residence at Te Matatiki Toi Ora The Arts Centre in Christchurch. For more information see cubbin.co.nz



Left: Hannah manipulating the Giant puppet, an installation created by Spare Parts Puppet Theatre. Right: Hannah and Melanie at the DreamBIG Festival. Photo provided by the authors.

Celebrating Warkworth's Global Ties

By David Parker, Heritage Mahurangi

Warkworth has several sister city affiliations around the world.

Firstly, in 1992 a delegation came from the township of Warkworth, Northumberland UK. At a special function following, an official Charter was signed. The UK township was the ancestral town from where our founder John A Brown originated in 1842.

Then there was interest from a small village called Furudono in Fukushima, Japan and another Charter was signed in 1999. Groups of students exchanged visits and so in 2000 Charters were drawn up between Mahurangi College and Warkworth Primary School.

Since then we have visited Warkworth in Ontario, Canada and during their visit to NZ in 2003 to attend our town's 150th Anniversary, we also signed a Charter. At that celebration every country sent delegations to attend and were hosted by our township.

We also have friendship agreements with Warkworth



townships in New South Wales, and Northamptonshire, UK.

This photo is of our Town Crier who welcomes most international visitors to our township. He also plays an important role in the promotion of the township in general, entertaining locals and participating in all kinds of community activity.

Expressions of Interest: Should any city/township in NZ be interested in a 'Festival of Town Criers' in either June or October 2026

then please encourage individual Town Criers to forward their interest.

In October, the township of Warkworth will celebrate it's 54th Annual Kowhai Festival to which one and all would be welcome. As the Kowhai Town & Coast of NZ we will welcome such a gathering with open arms. The exact format is yet to be decided... a bit of formality and a lot of fun and fellowship. Reply with your interest to dh.parker@extra.co.nz

Bridging Cultures Across Generations: 30 Years of Friendship Between Christchurch and Songpa-gu

By Gabriel Kim, Christchurch Songpa-Gu Sister City Committee

When Christchurch and Songpa-gu first signed their sister-city agreement in 1995, few could have imagined that three decades later, the two cities – one on the Canterbury Plains of New Zealand, the other at the heart of Seoul – would share such a vibrant and enduring bond. In 2025, the partnership celebrated its 30th anniversary through a series of meaningful exchanges that connected people, culture, and generations across the Pacific.

The anniversary year unfolded like a story told in three chapters – beginning in February, rekindled in September, and crowned in November.

February saw a delegation from Songpa-gu, led by Deputy Mayor CHOI Hong Yeon, travel to Christchurch to strengthen cooperative ties and explore new avenues for exchange. During the visit, Songpa-gu officials met with Christchurch City Council representatives including the mayor of Christchurch – Phil Mager, and the local Sister City Committee, discussing future collaboration in education and culture.

One particularly heartfelt proposal emerged – a plan to donate a collection of elementary level Korean books to Christchurch libraries, ensuring that Korean heritage and language could be shared with the city's next generation.

September 2025 - Cultural Harmony in Seoul

In September, a Christchurch delegation traveled to Seoul to mark the 30th anniversary of the sister-city relationship. The delegation – comprising Sister City Committee Chair Steven Choi, Deputy Chair Gabriel Kim and Alana Pidgeon, Samuel Marshall of Christchurch City Council, Korean Society of Christchurch president Simon Oe, and Tia Harrison-Hunt & 9 others of the Māori cultural group Pōkaikura – was warmly received by Songpa-gu Mayor SEO Kang-Seok and local officials.

Their visit coincided with the Hanseong Baekje Cultural Festival, one of Seoul's most celebrated annual events. Held on the grounds of Olympic Park, the festival pays tribute to the ancient Baekje Kingdom, which established its capital in what is now Songpa-gu over two millennia ago.

The festival weaves together traditional reenactments, parades, and performances that celebrate both heritage and modern creativity including the famous K-pop – reminding visitors that history and innovation can coexist harmoniously.

This year's festival carried a special meaning. As one of the key highlights in the 3 day festival, the Māori cultural group Pōkaikura, consisting 10 members from Christchurch performed a powerful kapa haka. Through waiata, haka, and poi, Pōkaikura shared narratives of ancestry, resilience, and identity filled with the spirit of Aotearoa, resonated deeply with the audience. For many Koreans, it was their first encounter with Māori culture – and for the delegation, it was a moving symbol of how cultural exchange can transcend language and geography. Such exchanges underline the purpose of the sister-city relationship: allowing communities to learn not only about each other's histories, but also about the people who carry those histories forward.

Beyond the festival, the Christchurch representatives visited the Hansung Baekje Museum, Songpa Book Museum, Lotte World Tower, and Songpa Sphere, sharing ideas on sustainability, culture, and future cooperation. The cities reaffirmed their shared commitment to educational and civic partnership, pledging to keep the spirit of friendship alive for future generations to come.

November - Learning, Legacy, and Love of Books

The 30th anniversary year concluded in Christchurch with a touching celebration at Tūranga Library's TSB Space – the annual Songpa Scholarship Award and Korean Book Donation Ceremony.

A central mission of both cities is to nurture the next generation of globally minded leaders. The Songpa Scholarship Program, awarding Christchurch students annually, aims to encourage cross-cultural curiosity and academic growth.

Four outstanding students from the local Korean community – Jun-beom Kim (Kirkwood Intermediate School), Hye-Seul Shin and Ye-Won Pyo (Burnside High School), and Ye-Eun Kim (St Margaret's College) – were recognized for their achievements through the Songpa Talent Development Scholarship Foundation. For recipients, the recognition was more than financial support – it was an invitation to engage with Korea, its culture, and its people.

The Songpa Public Library book-donation ceremony further added a meaningful exchange between the two cities for the next generation. The long-anticipated donation of 300 Korean children's books from Songpa-gu was officially



presented to the general public of Christchurch City. The collection will be available across the city's library network, allowing young readers — Korean and non-Korean alike — to explore the beauty of Korean stories, language, and imagination.

These initiatives ensure that the next chapter of the sister-city relationship will be shaped not only by officials and committees, but also by students and future community leaders.

Looking Ahead: A Partnership That Continues to Grow

Over the past 30 years, the Christchurch – Songpa-Gu connection has grown from a municipal agreement into a living bridge sustained by people — students, performers, educators, and community leaders who believe in the power of exchange.



Songpa-Gu Global Talent Scholarship was presented by Mayor of Christchurch Phil Mauger (right) and Deputy Chair of CSSC Gabriel Kim (left). Photo: Christchurch City Council

As both cities look to the next decade, plans are already forming for new youth exchanges, cultural collaborations, and shared projects that highlight creativity, sustainability, and global citizenship.

The 30th anniversary has proven that the relationship is not simply symbolic—it is active, evolving, and deeply rooted in community participation.

Through festivals like Hanseong Baekje, performances from groups like Pōkaikura, and student-focused initiatives like the Songpa scholarships, this sister-city connection stands as a model of how local diplomacy can bridge continents.

What began thirty years ago as a formal agreement has grown into a heartfelt partnership—one that continues to connect cultures, strengthen communities, and inspire the next generation on both sides of the Pacific.



Book Donation Ceremony - Mayor of Christchurch Phil Mauger (left), Deputy Chair of CSSC Gabriel Kim (right) and Songpa-Gu scholarship students of Christchurch. Photo: Pearl Choi

Reconnecting artistic communities

By Melanie Crawford, Wellington City Council

In November, Wellington welcomed Ngunnawal artist, Alinta Barlow, who was selected to participate in Toi Manu Tautoko, the Canberra Pōneke Indigenous Artist Exchange.

The exchange aims to strengthen cultural connections between the two cities and supports a Wellington-based mana whenua artist to go to Canberra for four weeks and a Canberra-based Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artist to visit Wellington for four weeks.

Launched in 2019, the programme was put on hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the exchange returned for 2025, allowing the two cities to reconnect through art and cultural understanding.

This exchange is a partnership between Wellington City Council, artsACT in Canberra and Massey University.

A pōwhiri was held on 4 November at Te Rau Karamu marae (Massey University) to welcome Alinta.



Alinta Barlow and Jamie Berry.
Photo: Amber-Jayne Bain



Wamburang by Alinta Barlow

Alinta is an early-career artist and educator working across music and visual arts. As a member of the Winanggaay Ngunnawal Language Group, based in Canberra, she is known for her work reviving Ngunnawal language through creative expression. This work has driven Alinta to extend her practice from music into the visual arts to explore other ways of expressing and representing culture.

Alinta will use the time in Wellington to connect with Māori artists and curators and expand her networks and knowledge of indigenous arts practice. Alinta will also share her practice and experiences during the residency through public talks and workshops.

Jamie Berry, a prominent Wellington-based multidisciplinary Māori artist (Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Ruanui) has been selected to go to Canberra. Known for weaving indigenous histories, whakapapa (genealogy), and identity into large-scale multimedia installations, soundscapes, and moving images, Jamie will leave for Canberra in late November. While there, Jamie will connect with First Nations artists and explore the aboriginal concept of Dreamtime.

"I look forward to engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and learning about their way of life, identity, culture, spirituality, and relationship to their country," says Jamie.

YAAS - Young Artists and Authors Showcase

By Jan Calder, Gisborne District Sister Cities

Sister Cities International serves as the national membership organization for Sister City programmes in over 400 communities with over 1,800 partnerships in more than 140 countries.

"The Young Artists and Authors Showcase (YAAS) is an annual contest that encourages youth worldwide to express the missions of Sister Cities International through original artwork, literature, photography, and music."

The sections are: classic art, digital art, photography, poetry, essay, original music.

Because Gisborne District Sister Cities (GDSC) has a relationship with Palm Desert Sister Cities (PDSC) USA who in turn pay a yearly membership to Sister Cities International (SCI), Gisborne District Sister Cities is eligible to submit entries from our Gisborne Area High Schools.

All entries of original work must include a written paragraph relating to the student's entry while also being in keeping with the current theme.

GDSC Committee were excited when Gisborne Girls' High School Year 13 students supported by HoD Jane Egan and music teacher Anna Maree Fenn accepted the challenge to enter.

Until 2024, eligibility had stipulated one age group, 13-18 years with the prize awarded for each section being US\$ 1st \$500, 2nd \$250 and 3rd \$100 including a certificate.

The theme for 2024 was "Climatescape – Resilient Cities for Tomorrow's Climate."

Two GGHS Year 13 students each submitted an entry in the original music section. Nikita Schwass (on behalf of her composition partner Jasmine Reynolds) gained a third

place with her entry entitled "Forgotten Futures." GDSC also acknowledges the entry of GGHS Year 13 student Coral Parsons (on behalf of her composition partner Bella Schmelz) whose entry was entitled "Devil's Paradise".

Commencing 2025, eligibility stipulated two age groups, 12-14 years and 15-18 years with the prize value increasing to US\$ 1st \$1,000, 2nd \$500 and 3rd \$250 including a certificate.

The theme for 2025 - "Friendships: the heartbeat of Global Peace".

One GGHS Year 13 student, Nina Botting submitted an entry (on behalf of her composition partner Savanah Baty) in the original music section 15-18 years and gained first place with her entry "Take my Hand".

Next year's theme is "Voices of Today, Visions of Tomorrow".

The placegetters are announced at the Sister Cities International Youth Leadership Summit which is held in New York City over five days in early August. Soon after the Summit SCI arrange a Zoom link where all winners are announced and acknowledged; participants, families and other interests can register to observe.

GDSC Committee acknowledge the fact that generously, both placegetters have shared their winnings with their fellow supporting student as it takes two to produce each entry, but the format only allows one name on the entry form.

The Gisborne District Sister Cities committee acknowledges and appreciates the support of GGHS HoD Jane Egan and music teacher Anna Marie Fenn, as well as PDSCF board member Mark Talboys, who confirms the connection of GDSC, PDSC and SCI each year.



Nikita Schwass with Jane Egan. Photo: Anna Marie Fenn, GGHS



Nina Botting & Savanah Baty. Photo: James Pocock, Gisborne Herald

Grassroots People-to-People Connection through Kyudo (Japanese Archery)

By Chris Colman, President of the New Zealand Kyudo Federation

June 2025 marked the 20th anniversary of the Wellington Kyudo Club.

On 1 November, a ceremony was held in Porirua to commemorate this milestone, followed by a seminar with New Zealand Kyudo Federation (NZKF) members and kyudo practitioners from Japan and Australia. The current president is Karyn Lo and Wellington Kyudo Club continues to practice on the grounds of the Hutt Minoh Friendship House in Lower Hutt.

At the formation of the club, kyudo was also practiced in Christchurch. The last twenty years has seen kyudo spread to Auckland and Palmerston North, and the formation of a national federation (NZKF) in 2010 leading to membership of the International Kyudo Federation (IKYF) in 2014. Participation in kyudo has grown from less than a dozen to over fifty now, and with many enquiries received in all centres from people wishing to try and perhaps take up kyudo practice, the future for Kyudo in New Zealand is looking bright.

Going back to where all this began – Douglas Milligan, President of the Wellington-Sakai Association, visited Sakai City and became very interested in kyudo. He requested a kyudo demonstration in Wellington. In early 2000 at the Michael Fowler Centre, the Sakai City kyudo practitioners demonstrated various All Nippon Kyudo Federation sharei, Honda-style and Heki-style, with traditional Japanese koto music playing in the background. This was the first time New Zealanders witnessed Japanese kyudo.

Sato Fumiko sensei, Kyoshi Rokudan, was part of that first demonstration and a long association started with Wellington and kyudo throughout New Zealand.

In 2005, Hiromi Morris, the new President of the Wellington Sakai Association and someone who was keen to carry on Douglas Milligan's legacy, informed



Sakai City that a group of Wellingtonians were passionate about learning kyudo and that they needed kyudo equipment. They were gifted target bank blocks and other essential equipment which the Sakai Kyudo Association had donated to the Wellington Sakai Association earlier (image to left).

The Wellington Kyudo Club was officially established at this time. The foundation for the practice of authentic Japanese Kyudo had been laid. From this point forth, seminars were held annually.

My journey with kyudo started in 2006, I was practicing in Auckland with a Japanese lady who had a second dan grade. We were invited to attend a seminar in Wellington which was to be run by visiting sensei from Sakai City and Hikari in Yamaguchi prefecture, and I met Sato sensei and Yago sensei for the first time. They were very interested in my plan to make a small dojo on my property and very supportive. In 2008, they visited my home to complete the dojo and held an opening ceremony.

By that time, I was practicing with three other people, Yasuda Kumiko san, Ai Dare and Glen Dare. They all attended with sensei to build the azuchi (target mound) and on the following day Sato sensei performed the Shinji following which we all practiced together and received instruction.

Slowly the number of students in Auckland grew, and practice moved from my small dojo to a sports hall in Auckland. We have tried to hold annual seminars with instruction from visiting sensei, and Sato sensei has always generously given of her time and energy together with Keiko Gunson, a longtime supporter as an instructor who is based in New Zealand.

Kyudo has brought many new friends, nationally and internationally, to me this is one of the best aspects of Kyudo reflected by the Raiki Shagi, etiquette of shooting.



Chris Colman at Kyudo-jo



Above: Enjoyable get-together dinner between members of Wellington Kyudo Club and visiting instructors & friends from Japan



Top right: Demonstration by visiting Kyudo instructors



Right: Tenchi-Barai by Mrs Fumiko Sato



Save the Date!



International Forum

James Cook Hotel function room

Friday 27th February 2025, 10:30am - 4:00pm

Fees: Members \$25 | Non-member \$45

Join us in the capital for a one-day Forum - a chance to connect, learn, and look ahead.

Hear insights and updates from Government Ministries (including MFAT), High Commissioners, and Ambassadors marking key anniversaries. Take part in panel discussions and workshops across international sectors including Local Government, Education, Business, and Sister Cities committees. Meet the GCNZ Board, network and be there for the announcement of the GCNZ 2026 National Conference venue.

For more information: National President, Mayor Grant Smith grant.smith@pncc.govt.nz

Draft agenda

- Karakia
- MFAT Govt welcome
- GCNZ President and Board welcome
- Significant Anniversaries
 - France 80 years
 - PNG 50 years
 - Vietnam 50 years
 - ASEAN 50 years
- Significant Sister City anniversaries
- Break
- Ministries/Business Councils/NGOs updates
- Council/Sister City Committees updates
- Business/Education/EDA updates.
- Break
- Workshop - 'What does future of GCNZ/ Internationalism in NZ look like 2026 onwards?'
- GCNZ Board - members survey, new website, new constitution, 2026 activity
- 2026 Conference announced
- Close and networking drinks

Building Bridges Across The Ditch: A Trans-Tasman Exchange

By Steph Walker, Word Christchurch & Christchurch Adelaide Sister City Committee

Dominic Guerrero, a Kurna poet, was supported by funding from the Christchurch Adelaide Sister City Committee to participate in the WORD Christchurch 2025 Festival. The Kurna people are the traditional owners of the land on which Adelaide, South Australia is situated.

When Dominic arrived in Christchurch for the Festival, he expected a standard literary festival appearance — perhaps a reading, maybe a panel discussion. What he experienced instead was something far more substantial: a carefully orchestrated programme that allowed him to contribute meaningfully to the local literary community whilst building lasting connections across the Tasman.

The visit wasn't just about bringing an Australian writer to New Zealand. It was about testing a new model for cultural exchange—one that prioritises genuine relationship-building over transactional appearances. Rather than the standard festival appearance, we designed a programme that gave Dominic five distinct opportunities to engage with different aspects of Christchurch's literary and arts scene. He judged emerging writers, participated in panel discussions, gave readings, and spoke to high school students about building sustainable creative careers.

"I don't think you could have done anything better," Dominic



reflected. "I loved that I got to not just be a writer, but also, give back to people."

Dominic left Ōtautahi Christchurch with concrete ideas for future collaboration. He's now planning to recommend that WORD Christchurch partner with the Adelaide Writers Week—a much larger, more established festival that would offer visiting writers access to Australia's most prominent literary figures.

"The operation that you guys are doing is on the same level as Adelaide Writers Week," Dominic said.

More ambitiously, Dominic is now developing plans for an international Indigenous writers festival, starting small with cultural exchanges between Aboriginal and Māori writers. He envisions Sister City bookshelves in Adelaide and Christchurch bookshops, online poetry readings, and gradually building towards something more substantial. We're keen to help make these happen too.

And Peter Cottrell from the Sister City Committee took Dominic to the Adelaide Garden at Halswell Quarry Park, with artworks featuring Kurna language—Dominic's own language—embedded in the ground. These small gestures of recognition matter enormously.

For us, this pilot demonstrated that with thoughtful programming and genuine cultural competency, festivals can be catalysts for lasting creative relationships.

GCNZ 2025-26 Board

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GCNZ Board. L to R: Philip, Grant, Michelle (Administrator), Peter, Danielle, Taylor and Deborah. Absent: John Christie



GCNZ board and guests strategy workshop