

## From the Board

### Message from President Mayor Grant Smith



Kia ora koutou,

As we step into the final quarter of 2025, I'm pleased to share another vibrant edition of our GCNZ newsletter - highlighting the enduring value and innovation of international city and community partnerships across New Zealand.

This month, we're proud to see momentum growing around citizen diplomacy and intercultural connection, with exciting initiatives from both local and international partners.

One standout is the Embassy of Japan, who have just launched their latest JET Programme intake - a cornerstone of people-to-people exchange that continues to enrich lives in both our countries. Also from our Japanese partners, the Garden Photo Competition is now underway, offering a visual celebration of friendship and nature. We encourage your communities or Councils to get involved!

Several cities and Councils across New Zealand are continuing to fly the flag for international cooperation:

Wellington, our capital, has just announced a unique "Capital Connections" initiative - partnering more intentionally with its Pacific capital counterparts, including Suva, Fiji. While hosting the Australian Navy, Wellington also marked the occasion by formalising a relationship with our trans-Tasman friends in Canberra.

In the Waikato, Waipa District, through the town of Cambridge continues to nurture its long-term ties with

Bihoro, Japan, reinforcing the role of smaller communities in global engagement.

As he prepares to leave office, Lower Hutt Mayor Campbell Barry reflects in this issue on the city's enduring relationships with Tempe, USA and Minoh, Japan. His insights highlight the people and projects that have made these partnerships thrive over the decades.

And in Palmerston North, an impactful and deeply moving Hiroshima 80<sup>th</sup> Atomic Bomb anniversary exhibition has opened - honouring the victims and promoting peace through memory and education.

On the administrative front, while Local Government enters a quieter period in the lead-up to council elections, we're pleased to welcome a new face to the GCNZ team. Michelle Smith joins us as Administrator, bringing over 30 years' experience in administration and bookkeeping. We're delighted to have her on board. For any administrative or member-related queries, you can reach her at: [admin@globalcities.org.nz](mailto:admin@globalcities.org.nz)

As always, thank you for the work you all continue to do, both locally and globally, to build bridges between communities. GCNZ remains committed to supporting and amplifying these efforts.

Ngā mihi nui,  
Mayor Grant Smith, JP, GCNZ President

## New Zealand Japanese Garden Photo Contest

### By Embassy of Japan in New Zealand

**We are excited to announce the New Zealand Japanese Garden Photo Contest, a nationwide search for the most stunning photographs of Japanese gardens across the country.**

From tranquil ponds to graceful cherry blossoms, we want to see how you experience the harmony and beauty of Japanese gardens in Aotearoa. Whether it's a well-known public park or a hidden gem in your local community, your photo and story could inspire others to explore these unique spaces. Join us in celebrating the beauty of Japanese gardens, connecting with garden lovers across New Zealand, and helping us discover new places to enjoy!

#### How to Enter:

1. Take a photo of a Japanese garden in New Zealand.
2. Write a short description (location, what makes it special to you, etc.).
3. Share your photo and description before 19 September 2025 on Instagram/Facebook with the hashtag #NZJapaneseGardenEOJNZ and tag [your account]. Make sure your post is set to "Public."

**Prizes:** Award certificate and special commemorative gift, available only to winners who can collect them at the Embassy.



# Hosting Bihoro Students – Sharing Our Dairy Story

By Liz Stolwyk (Waipa District Council) & Andrew Reymer (Te Awamutu Federated Farmers)

It was a real pleasure to recently host the Bihoro students here on our dairy farm in Ohaupo. Andrew and I really enjoy experiences like this that highlight just how valuable it is to share New Zealand's dairy farming story with the world.

We began the day with a hearty lunch, joined by members of the Cambridge Community Board and Cambridge High School's principal. On the menu was my homemade steak pie and the famous peach dessert—both proving to be a hit with our guests. The room was full of conversation, laughter, and a genuine sense of connection.

After lunch, it was time to head out onto the farm. The students got hands-on with feeding newborn calves, tried their hand at milking cows, and even enjoyed a bit of slug gun target practice—much to everyone's amusement. They were amazed by the wide-open paddocks our animals enjoy, such a contrast to the farming practices they know back home.

This visit is part of Cambridge's long-standing relationship with Bihoro, which in recent years has also opened the door to valuable agri-business connections. Every opportunity to showcase our dairy sector contributes to New Zealand's goal of doubling export value by 2034—and it's well worth the effort.

Over the past 10 days, we've also proudly hosted delegations from both Japan and China, flying the NZ flag high. Andrew is the Chairperson of Te Awamutu Federated Farmers and I am currently Deputy Mayor Waipa District Council. With farming playing a vital role in sustaining our economy, we're glad to do our bit—whether that's sharing knowledge, building relationships, or simply offering a warm Kiwi welcome.



## Lower Hutt Tempe exchange delegates welcomed

By Suzi Duffin, Hutt Sister City Foundation

**On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, we held the official welcome ceremony for our Tempe exchange delegates.**

Every year Lower Hutt, New Zealand and Tempe, Arizona host student and educator exchanges.



This year, by happy coincidence, all the United States delegates were in New Zealand at the same time. We were glad to welcome Laura and Sara (educators), and Claire, Ella, Hannah and Piper (students).

The event was led by Cam and Aletia. Many former delegates and Board members attended, along with Councillors, and GCNZ Emeritus President Hiromi Morris. Paul Duffin (President) and Campbell Barry (Mayor) addressed the group, and beautiful gifts were exchanged.

Afterwards, we all mingled over a light supper.

The official welcome ceremony is a highlight of our annual exchanges. This is a time for us all to gather and celebrate all the (really, really) hard work that goes in to these life-changing exchange programmes.



# 30 Years of Friendship with Minoh, Japan

By Mayor Campbell Barry, Lower Hutt City Council

In May, I led a delegation from Lower Hutt to our sister city, Minoh, Japan, to mark 30 years of friendship between us. Joining me were Deputy Mayor Tui Lewis, Councillors Andy Mitchell and Brady Dyer, and four representatives from mana whenua, Te Rūnanganui o Te Āti Awa, including Kura Moeahu and Wirangi Luke.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations began with a visit from Mayor Ryo Harada and his team in February this year. Over two days, we shared kai, kōrero, and performances including a welcome at Waiwhetū Marae. We looked back on three decades since the International Co-operating Cities Agreement was signed in 1995 by then-Mayor Glen Evans and Mayor Takahashi Hashimoto.

Our trip to Minoh, from 21–24 May 2025, was a chance to return that hospitality and talk about the future of the partnership.

## Highlights included:

- A visit to Saito no Oka School, where tamariki performed a haka gifted by mana whenua.
- Time at Katsuo-ji Temple.
- A tour of the Minoh Water Treatment Plant – as Chair of the Wellington Water Committee, I was particularly interested in their treatment technology and insights on how they work with their community on water infrastructure.
- A meeting with the Minoh Chamber of Commerce on ways to support local businesses during periods of disruption.
- A formal anniversary ceremony, where I met Setsuko Hashimoto, widow of the late Mayor Hashimoto, who helped establish the partnership in the 1990s.

In Lower Hutt, a permanent reminder of this relationship is the Hashimoto Memorial Walkway in Riddiford Garden, opened in 2009 and lined with Sakura trees gifted by Minoh.

We also used the visit to discuss future projects like growing school and cultural exchanges, sharing approaches to environmental care, exploring digital collaboration, and strengthening the connection between Māori and Japanese communities. I also asked about Minoh's experience supporting businesses during big infrastructure projects, which is something front of mind for us as we deliver Te wai Takamouri o Te Awa Kairangi (RiverLink) here in Lower Hutt.

The trip had its lighter moments too. One story warmly remembered in Minoh was Chairperson Satoshi Okazawa's surprise encounter with a duck during his February visit to Lower Hutt. Moments like that remind us these relationships are built on shared experiences, not just official agreements.

The Hutt–Minoh link is one of 44 sister city partnerships between New Zealand and Japan. After three decades, it's still delivering opportunities, friendships, and shared learning. My thanks goes to Mayor Harada, the Minoh City Council, the Minoh-Hutt Friendship Club, and the people of Minoh for their generosity and warmth.

Ngā mihi nui, arigatou gozaimasu.



Above: Cake presented at the Minoh Delegation Celebration in Lower Hutt - February 2025

Top right: Minoh Delegation and Hutt City Councillors, Hashimoto Memorial Walk Riddiford Gardens in Lower Hutt- February 2025

Right: Mayor Campbell Barry, Councillor Brady Dyer, Councillor Andy Mitchell and staff member at the Water Treatment Plant in Minoh - May 2025

Inset: Mayor Ryo Harada and Mayor Campbell Barry at the Minoh Wellbe Ceremony in Minoh - May 2025







MOU signing – Mayor Tory Whanau and ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr (photo: Damon Keen, WCC)



Students from Victoria University of Wellington International Leadership Programme onboard HMAS Canberra (photo: Rozina Khan, Victoria University of Wellington)

## Capital Connections – Sister Cities in Action

By Melanie Crawford, Wellington City Council

**For four days in June, Wellington was buzzing with activity as it celebrated its sister city partnership with Canberra.**

Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister Andrew Barr led an official business delegation, underscoring the close ties and shared priorities between Wellington and Canberra. The visit highlighted the strength and significance of the relationship, further deepening the bonds of friendship and collaboration between the two capitals.

As part of the celebrations, the HMAS Canberra, the Royal Australian Navy's flagship, also visited. With the ship's company taking part in several community activities, including assisting at a local soup kitchen, cleaning up selected coastal areas and tracks around the city and an AFL match against their Royal New Zealand Navy counterparts. But the centrepiece of their visit was the Freedom of Entry to the City parade through the central city where the crew was seen in full ceremonial splendour.

Students from Victoria University of Wellington International Leadership Programme also had a unique opportunity to tour the ship and take part in a roundtable discussion with junior officers—an inspiring exchange of ideas and experiences.

Adding to the momentum, Canberra, Wellington, and Suva signed a new agreement to strengthen connections

between Pacific capital cities. The aim is to work together on big-picture issues like climate change, sustainable development, city planning, economic growth, arts and culture, and good governance. It's an exciting step toward deeper regional collaboration.

The formal sister city relationship between Wellington and Canberra began in July 2016, with a commitment to foster collaboration across economic development, and the tourism, education, and creative sectors. Local institutions like Zealandia and Wellington Zoo have agreements with Mulligans Flat Sanctuary and Canberra's National Zoo & Aquarium. There are strong ties between our two Chambers of Commerce, aimed at making business and trade easier.

Creative and educational exchanges continue to play a vital role too. This year, Toi Manu Tautoko (the Canberra Wellington Indigenous Artist Exchange) will resume after a pause caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing fresh energy to the cultural ties between the cities.

The Wellington Canberra sister city relationship isn't just about formalities and official visits, it's a natural connection built on shared values, similar challenges, and genuine respect. As both cities look to the future with goals around sustainability, inclusion, and growth, this partnership shows how working together can make a real difference in our communities.



Some of the HMAS Canberra crew with Ghost Diving New Zealand (photo: Ghost Diving NZ)



Crew with Conservation New Zealand at Owhiro Stream (photo: Conservation NZ)



Freedom of Entry to the City Parade (photo: Damon Keen, WCC)

# Exhibition highlights devastating effect of atomic bombs 80 years on

By Gabrielle Loga, Palmerston North City Council

A powerful and moving memorial exhibition was displayed at Palmerston North Central Library in August to mark 80 years since nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

As global tensions persist, Manager of International Relations Gabrielle Loga says the messages shared by Japan's hibakusha (nuclear survivors) are more relevant than ever.

"Their stories serve as both a solemn reminder and a call to action, urging the world to remember the terrible impact of these weapons and ensure the horrors of nuclear war are never repeated."

*Remembering for Peace – 80 Years on from the Atomic Bomb* featured a series of compelling photographic posters and personal testimonies from survivors.

Mrs Loga says the free exhibition not only highlighted the human toll of nuclear war but also the importance of diplomacy and peace.

"We are honoured to have been given the chance to host this exhibition which bears witness to one of the darkest chapters in modern history. It also underlines the importance of international relationships, such as those we have with our Japanese sister city Mihara, which is part of the wider Hiroshima prefecture."

Presented in partnership with the Embassy of Japan, this exhibition is part of a national programme of memorial events that took place across Aotearoa in August.

"In August 1945, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were devastated by atomic bombs killing hundreds of thousands of people and causing suffering that continues to this day," says Mrs Loga.

"Eighty years on, this exhibition offered a space to honour those who were lost, hear the powerful voices of those who lived through it and reflect on the shared learnings which are still so relevant today."

The exhibition was presented by PNCC in partnership with the Embassy of Japan, in honour of our sister city relationship with Mihara, Hiroshima Prefecture.

Mayor Okada of Mihara sent a pre-recorded video message along with a personal testimony of a Mihara resident who survived the bombing in 1945.

In addition, as part of their peace memorial efforts, Mihara City is preparing to send us a special gift — bundles of Senba-zuru, or a thousand paper cranes. In Japanese tradition, the crane symbolises longevity and hope. These cranes, which have also become global symbols of peace, remind us of the prayerful efforts of young Sadako Sasaki, who folded paper cranes in faith and hope while suffering from atomic bomb disease.

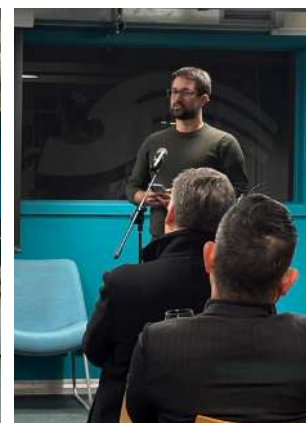
The Senba-zuru that Mihara will be sending have been part of the Peace Memorial Ceremony that was held in Mihara on August 2. Sharing a portion of them with us is a deeply meaningful gesture — one that reflects the enduring connection between our cities, and the shared commitment to remembering the past while fostering peace for the future.



First viewing of the exhibition



Minister Oshima remarks



Reflections by Markku Braid, grandson of a survivor Ms Taeko Yoshioka



# Palmerston North's Global Youth Summer Camp success in Guiyang

By Kate Harridge, Palmerston North City Council

**A 33-year sister city partnership is creating the next generation of global citizens. When 19 secondary students from Palmerston North returned from their life-changing experience in Guiyang, China, in the Term 2 school holidays, they brought back more than just memories - they returned as ambassadors for international understanding and the power of sister city relationships.**

The Global Youth Summer Camp represents the evolution of Palmerston North and Guiyang's 33-year sister city relationship.

"What started as an agreement on paper has become something extraordinary," says Kate Harridge, International Relations and Education Advisor at Palmerston North City Council. "We're witnessing genuine cultural exchange that's shaping the next generation of global citizens."

Unlike typical student tours, this programme offered authentic cultural immersion through homestays with families from Guiyang No. 6 High School. Students didn't just visit - they lived, learned, and connected across cultures in a city of over 6 million people, creating the perfect culture shock that transforms perspectives.

The 10-day experience included traditional crafts like wax dyeing, exploring ancient towns, interacting with ethnic minority groups, performing at the famous Roadside Music Concert, and most importantly, forming genuine connections with their Guiyang counterparts.

"I loved witnessing the friendships that blossomed between our Palmerston North students and their Guiyang peers as they navigated the slight language barrier," Harridge reflects. "There was lots of laughter, spontaneous singing, filming TikTok dances, and

eventually tears at the airport. It's clear that these aren't just fleeting holiday friendships; they're life-long connections that will enrich their understanding of the world and of themselves."

The programme's impact extends far beyond cultural appreciation. Students have returned with enhanced communication skills, greater cultural awareness, and an international network that could open doors well into the future. They've experienced first-hand what it means to be a global citizen in an interconnected world.

This pilot has laid groundwork for annual exchanges, with plans for reciprocal Guiyang student visits to Palmerston North, and opens doors for expanded collaboration across education from high school student recruitment to revitalised tertiary-level research exchanges. The programme's success demonstrates how sister city relationships create tangible benefits beyond diplomatic goodwill.

"This programme is an investment in the future," Harridge emphasises. "The connections made here will grow into partnerships, innovations and solutions that benefit both communities for generations."

For GCNZ members, Palmerston North's experience offers a powerful template: sister city relationships aren't just ceremonial - they're transformative tools for creating global citizens and building sustainable international partnerships.

The Global Youth Summer Camp was coordinated by Palmerston North City Council in partnership with Guiyang Municipal Government, with support from the Foreign Affairs Office, Department of Education, and Guiyang No. 6 High School.



Top left: Students mastering the ancient art of staying cool by making traditional bamboo fans.

Top right: Conquering the 'mini Great Wall' in Qingyan Ancient Town one step at a time.



Bottom left: Students getting into the groove at Guiyang's famous Roadside Music Concert.

Bottom right: Kate fielding questions from local media - our visit certainly brought a lot of attention.

# 2025 Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme Update

By Takako Taguchi, Embassy of Japan

**The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme has been one of the most important and successful cross-cultural grassroots initiatives, particularly here in New Zealand.**

I have been working in New Zealand for about two years, and I'm always pleasantly surprised by the popularity of, and fondness for, Japan here. I believe one major reason is the large number of JET participants in this country. In fact, in my work I often meet members of the JET Alumni Association (JETAA). It's not an exaggeration to say that JETAA members are everywhere in New Zealand. Many are active contributors to New Zealand society, and for us at the Embassy, this is both a source of gratitude and a reminder of the importance of building an even stronger network with them.

This year marks the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the JET Programme, which began in 1987, and New Zealand has been involved from the very first year. Since then, more than 3,500 Kiwis have participated. Considering New Zealand's population of about 5.16 million, this is an impressive figure. In fact, when looking at the number of current JET participants in Japan, 171 in total, relative to each country's population, New Zealand ranks second in the world, after Trinidad and Tobago. These numbers really highlight the significance of the programme.

On 1 August, we hosted a warm send-off reception, or "Itterasshai" reception, at the Ambassador's Residence for the ten successful 2025 JET Programme participants from New Zealand, wishing them the very best for their time in Japan. The next day, they departed for Japan, spending three exciting days at Tokyo Orientation before heading to their new homes across the country to promote internationalisation at a local, person-to-person level. Strengthening this connection further, several JETs were placed in areas with sister-city links to New Zealand, including Minoh City in Osaka Prefecture (sister city to Lower Hutt in the Wellington region) and Tendo City in Yamagata Prefecture (sister city to Marlborough), as well as eight other cities.

Rose, who departed for Minoh City and gave a warm speech at the "Itterasshai" reception the day before departure, told me she was excited but also a little nervous. She will be partly taking over from Trees, a highly active Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) in Minoh City who has made a remarkable contribution to the community. Indeed, Trees adapted to life in Minoh well and became a valued member of the local community. I reassured Rose that she didn't need to be nervous, she has the skills and enthusiasm to continue the same great work. Earlier this year, in February, Trees visited New Zealand as part of a Minoh City delegation to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hutt-Minoh sister-city relationship. It was wonderful to see her in action during the visit, since we seldom have the opportunity to observe CIRs at work.

With so many valuable sister-city placements fostering cross-cultural communication across the seas, it's no surprise that Japan and New Zealand enjoy 44 sister-city relationships. It is always exciting to see these important ties maintained over the years, and we wish our New Zealand JETs all the best for the years ahead.

If you know someone who might be interested in applying for the JET Programme, please check our website or contact us by email ([jicc@wl.mofa.go.jp](mailto:jicc@wl.mofa.go.jp)) or phone (04-495-8333). We're always happy to answer any questions and eager to send as many Kiwis as possible each year. Applications for the 2026 New Zealand JET Programme intake are scheduled to open in mid-September and close in December—so there's no time like the present to start getting your documents ready. We can't wait to see who heads over next!

For more information, please see our New Zealand JET Programme website:

[www.nz.emb-japan.go.jp/culture\\_education/JET.html](http://www.nz.emb-japan.go.jp/culture_education/JET.html)

Or check out the New Zealand JET Programme Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/JETProgrammeNZ](https://www.facebook.com/JETProgrammeNZ)



Successful 2025 JET Programme participants from Wellington enjoyed their "Itterasshai" Farewell Reception on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August alongside Ambassador Osawa the evening before their departure for Japan.



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