

T150 Pacific Forum & Festival in Townsville Iwaki Delegation's Sister City Visit

In the last issue of *Iwaki Vision*, we covered the Micronesian delegation's visit to Iwaki City. Since then, there have been other various international exchanges taking place. However this time *Iwaki Vision* reports about the Iwaki mayor's recent visit to Townsville, Iwaki's sister city.



Commemorative photo taken at the top of Townsville's Castle Hill with Iwaki's Mayor Toshio Shimizu and Townsville's Mayor Jenny Hill to the left and right of the centre respectively.

2016 marks 50 years since Iwaki was established after an amalgamation between 14 smaller cities, towns and villages. However this year also happens to be the 150th anniversary since Townsville was declared as a municipality. To celebrate this occasion, Townsville recently held the T150 Pacific Forum from the 3rd to 5th June and invited mayors and other representatives from their sister cities including Iwaki City. The city used this occasion to celebrate its sister city exchanges, including its industrial and cultural exchanges with Iwaki, both past and present.

Mayor's Visit

On the 2nd June, the day before the Pacific Forum, Mayor Shimizu made a courtesy visit to Townsville City Council and met with Mayor Hill, where she praised the people of Iwaki for their resilience 5 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and wished for their continued efforts towards creating an even brighter Iwaki than before. Mayor Shimizu used the visit as an opportunity to hand over a letter of invitation for Iwaki City's 50th Anniversary Ceremony, which is to be held on the 1st October this year, with the Townsville mayor expressing her desire to visit Iwaki later this year for the ceremony. As this year also marks 25 years of Iwaki-Townsville sister city relations, the two mayors also shared ideas for future exchange projects.



T150 Pacific Forum

The main portion of the visit, the Townsville Pacific Forum, was held on the 3rd June and included presentations from the mayors and business leaders of each sister city. For his presentation, Mayor Shimizu gave a brief summary of Iwaki, described how the city was affected by the earthquake and reflected on the city's sister city exchange with Townsville before finally touching upon some of Iwaki's future events and initiatives.

Guide around Townsville

As part of the visit, Mayor Shimizu and the Iwaki delegation visited several facilities in Townsville. One of those facilities included Townsville Hospital where the mayor met with Tony Mooney AM, the recently appointed Board Chair of the Townsville Hospital and Health Service and former mayor of Townsville, and discussed the progress on construction of a new hospital in Iwaki. The Iwaki delegation also visited The Strand foreshore area and Reef HQ Great Barrier Reef Aquarium among other main attractions of the city during their stay.

T150 Pacific Festival

Whilst there was a formal aspect to the visit, Iwaki's Yunohanakai (an all-female Jangara group) took part in a cultural festival to showcase the city's traditional Jangara Nenbutsu Odori (a description can be found in the Autumn 2015 edition of *Iwaki Vision*). Members of the audience said the Jangara was peaceful and calming yet inspiring at the same time – even bringing tears to some of those who were watching. The Yunohanakai Jangara group demonstrated that their performance can cross boundaries and was glad that they were able to convey Iwaki's traditional art across the globe.



Overall, the Iwaki delegation to Townsville were greatly impressed by the hospitality of the Townsville mayor and locals and were grateful of the opportunity to exchange with not just Iwaki's sister city of Townsville but also with those cities that Townsville shares sister city relations with. Thanks to the Sister City Mayoral Forum and Iwaki's Jangara Nenbutsu Odori, the guests were able to promote some of the fascinating things Iwaki has to offer during their time in Australia.

Townsville Running Festival: Iwaki-Townsville Marathon Exchange Program

As part of Iwaki and Townsville's sister city exchanges, two Iwaki runners went to Townsville to take part in the Townsville Running Festival's marathon. Iwaki and Townsville both send their best placed male and female local runners to take part in the other city's marathon each year. The two runners who competed in this year's Townsville Marathon were Tsubasa Fuji (right) and Yumiko Yoshida (centre).



It was the first time both of these runners had visited Australia, so it was a good opportunity for them to not only to take part in the marathon but also experience some of Townsville's sights and Australian culture. During their time in the city, they also had the chance to meet Mayor Jenny Hill, be interviewed by local media and appear in a local news bulletin and newspaper. They also enjoyed visiting Reef HQ, Magnetic Island and hugging a koala.

The marathon itself was held on the 7th August 2016 and started at the relatively early time of 5:30am. It is unique for starting in the dark with the sun gradually rising during the race and becoming daylight by the time the first runners finish. What also makes the marathon appealing is the incredibly flat course and scenic coastal views throughout the entire race.

Iwaki's runners showed great effort during the marathon. Tsubasa Fuji, Iwaki's male runner, was right up at the front during the first few kilometres and held a top ten position for most of his race until he unfortunately had to retire at the halfway point due to injury. Meanwhile Yumiko Yoshida, Iwaki's female runner, maintained a consistent pace throughout the entire 42km course and completed her run in 3 hours and 45 minutes. Not only did she win 1st in her age category, but was the 9th fastest out of all the female competitors.

The Iwaki runners ended up having an incredible time in Iwaki's sister city and the fastest male and female Townsville runners will be coming to Iwaki next year to challenge the mid-winter Sunshine Marathon.