

SISTER CITY VISIT A SUCCESS

The City of Cockburn's first visit to its Sister City of Split, Croatia, since the agreement was formed in 1998, proved to be an overwhelming success. The delegation of five Cockburn representatives, headed by Deputy Mayor Kevin Allen, attended the annual Split 'Sudamja' Festival from 5 – 9 May 2008, the highlight of which was the solemn mass held in honour of the City's patron Saint Domnius, which attracted an estimated 400,000 attendees.

While the Cockburn delegation was in Split, it also made presentations to a youth organization centre, known as 'Info Zone', the Split Chamber of Commerce, the Australian Ambassador to Croatia and, of course, the Mayor and Members of the City of Split.

As a result of these delegations, a number of exchanges and other programmes have been either established or mooted for future consideration.

First and foremost, the delegation conducted fruitful discussion with the Split City Council and presented the Mayor with a leather bound 'Visitors Register' which will be made available for all residents of Cockburn to sign as part of a 'visitors exchange programme' now established between the Cities. This programme aims to encourage residents of Cockburn who may be visiting Europe to include Split in their itinerary and visit the City offices to not only sign the Visitors Register, but also be welcomed by friendly colleagues who will be glad to pass on helpful tips and information about Split and Croatia. Conversely, residents of Split who have reason to visit Australia will be prompted to visit Western Australia and the City of Cockburn where similar friendly advice and hospitality will be provided.

Initial discussion has also taken place on the possibility of both Cities partially sponsoring a talented junior singer or musician to participate in the Split Summer Festival International Talent Quest in July 2009. Further details of this will be published as developments occur.

A meeting with the City of Split youth 'Info Zone' was successful in providing contact points in each City for the exchange of information and ideas which will lead to a mutual understanding of youth related issues which are affecting both communities and information on how such issues can be addressed and promoted in each City.

A major outcome of the visit was that a meeting between the Cockburn delegation and the Split Chamber of Commerce was successful in persuading a visit from the Split Chamber to include Perth in its itinerary to Australia and New Zealand in October this year. Initially, this visit was only scheduled for Melbourne, Sydney and New Zealand, however, following our meeting, the Chamber intends to send a 10 person delegation to visit Perth, (and Cockburn) as part of its programme. It is also expected that the City of Split will be represented by, as a minimum, the City's Mayor, Mr Ivan Kuret.

The delegation was also fortunate to arrange a meeting with the Australian Ambassador to Croatia, Tracy Reid, OAM, who was excited at the prospect of greater development of relationships between Australian and Croatian Cities,

particularly as the global economy may have the potential to benefit both countries. Although this is seen in the wider context, city to city relationships are a vital first step in exploring the possibility of greater opportunities developing between our two countries. As a result of our meeting with the Ambassador, she has also committed to come to Western Australia on her next visit 'down under' later in 2008 to discuss how she may be able to assist both Cities, and in turn both countries, achieve more benefit in terms of economic potential out of our relationship.

The delegation also met with Professor Boris Skvorc, Head of the Department of Croatian Studies at the University of Split. Professor Skvorc is also a Senior Lecturer at Macquarie University in Sydney and has a strong association with both countries.

A presentation from the City's Youth delegate, Jade Castle, was to be made directly to students at the University's Faculty of Philosophy, however this was not possible due to the University being closed for student activity at the time. A copy of the presentation has been made available to Professor Skvorc and it is hoped that reciprocal information can be sourced from Split for conveyance to high school students in Cockburn.

While the tour was very demanding and exhausting for all participants, it was a thoroughly rewarding experience which is intended to ensure the continuing and ongoing development of the relationship with our beautiful Sister City of Split.

Further information and images of the visit will soon be available on Council's web site (www.cockburn.wa.gov.au).

Kevin Allen

Tony Romano

Don Green

Jade Castle- YAC 2007 Deputy Youth Mayor

Melinda Simich- Croatian community delegate