



**Swan Hill Rural  
City Council**

# **UNSCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING**

**Tuesday 23 January 2024  
to be held at 12:00 PM  
Council Chambers  
Swan Hill Town Hall  
53 – 57 McCallum Street, Swan Hill.  
VIC 3585**

## **AGENDA**

### **PUBLIC ACCESS**

Open to the public and  
Live streaming from Council's  
website: [www.swanhill.vic.gov.au](http://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au)

## Governance Rules

A copy of Swan Hill Rural City Council's governance rules can be found at <https://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au/about/overview/policies/governance-rules-2020/>

## Executive Leadership Team

Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer

Bruce Myers, Director of Community and Cultural Services

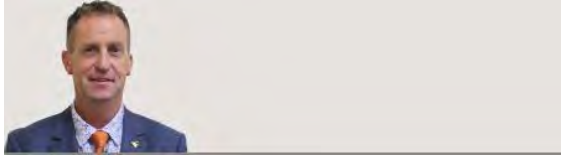
Michelle Grainger, Director of Development and Planning

Bhan Pratap, Director of Corporate Services

Leah Johnston, Director of Infrastructure

## Swan Hill Elected Members

### Mayor

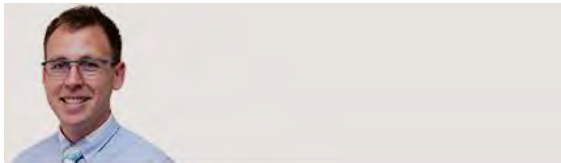


**Cr Stuart King**

0437 967 531

[stuart.king@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:stuart.king@swanhill.vic.gov.au)

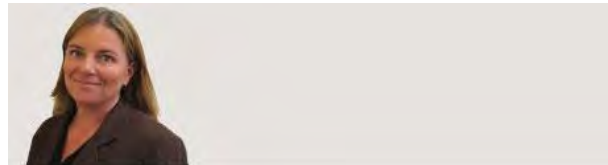
### Councillors



**Cr Chris Jeffery**

0429 447 802

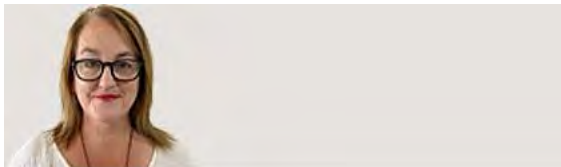
[chris.jeffery@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:chris.jeffery@swanhill.vic.gov.au)



**Cr Nicole McKay**

0436 299 842

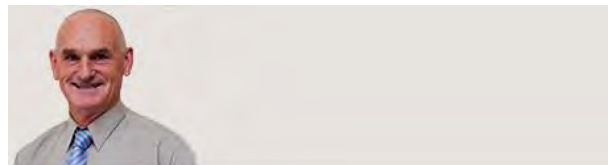
[nicole.mckay@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:nicole.mckay@swanhill.vic.gov.au)



**Cr Jacquie Kelly**

0436 804 012

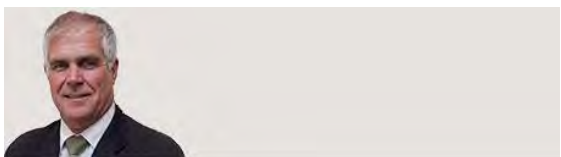
[jacquie.kelly@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:jacquie.kelly@swanhill.vic.gov.au)



**Cr Bill Moar**

Mobile: 0429 496 194

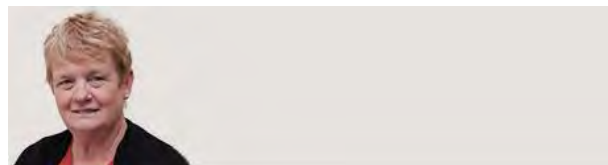
[bill.moar@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:bill.moar@swanhill.vic.gov.au)



**Cr Les McPhee**

0427 319 394

[les.mcphee@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:les.mcphee@swanhill.vic.gov.au)



**Cr Ann Young**

0409 503 711

[ann.young@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:ann.young@swanhill.vic.gov.au)

## Vision Statement

Built on strong foundations that embrace our rich History and natural environment, our region will be a place of progressions and possibility. We are a community that is happy, healthy and harmonious - we are empowered, we are respectful and we are proud.

## Our Mission

We will lead, advocate, partner and provide efficient services and opportunities for growth and the wellbeing of our community, environment and economy.

## Our Values

Council values our residents and community and will be responsive to their needs. In pursuing our objectives, we believe in, and are committed to, the following values:

**Community engagement** - We will ensure that our communities are consulted, listened to and informed.

**Leadership** - We will be at the centre of our community and by actively engaging our community we will form the collective view on strategic issues and will then express our views through strong advocacy and action.

**Fairness** - We will value and embrace the diversity of our community and ensure that all people are treated equally.

**Accountability**- We will be transparent and efficient in our activities and we will always value feedback.

**Trust** - We will act with integrity and earn the community's trust by being a reliable partner in delivering services, projects and providing facilities.

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## 1 Procedural Matters

### 1.1 Welcome

### 1.2 Acknowledgement Of Country

*“Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays its respects to their elders, past and present.”*

### 1.3 Prayer

*“We beseech you Lord, that we may be granted wisdom, understanding and sincerity of purpose, in the decisions we are called on to make for the welfare of the people of the Rural City of Swan Hill.”*

### 1.4 Apologies / Leaves of Absence

Apology Cr Chris Jeffery.

Leave of Absence Cr Les McPhee.

### 1.5 Directors / Officers Present

### 1.6 Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

## 2 Officer Reports for Decision

### 2.1 Visit to sister cities - Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux

**Directorate:** Chief Executive Officer

**File Number:** S16-02-03

**Purpose:** For Decision

#### **Council Plan Strategy Addressed**

**4. Leadership** - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

**4.3 Bold leadership, strong partnerships and effective advocacy**

4.3.1 Create meaningful partnerships across our communities

#### **Current Strategic Documents**

No strategic documents applicable.

## Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

## Summary

The purpose of this report is to share feedback provided by the community, via the Mayor and Member for Mildura, Jade Benham, regarding the recent decision to authorise travel for the Mayor to visit Yamagata, Japan and not authorise travel to Villers-Bretonneux, France in April 2024.

## Discussion

At the Scheduled Meeting in December 2023 (full report attached), Council considered two invitations received by the Mayor to visit Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux in April 2024, the following motion was put and carried:

### That Council:

- 1. Formally thank the Mayor of Yamagata for the invitation to Swan Hill Rural City Council's Mayor;**
- 2. Authorise the Mayor to accept the invitation to visit Yamagata in 2024.**

The Mayor has received community feedback, along with an email via the CEO and cited an accompanying letter to the editor of the Sunraysia Daily from Jade Benham, Member for Mildura.

The Mayor has advised of general community concern including feedback from residents after this decision, expressing concerns regarding Council's decision for the Mayor not to accept the invitation to attend the 40th Anniversary of the sister city relationship between Robinvale and Villers-Bretonneux.

Council may unintentionally offend one of our sister city relationships with the contradiction of accepting an invitation from Yamagata, while rejecting the invitation from Villers-Bretonneux.

According to Jade Benham, the decision has raised concerns within the Robinvale community, particularly given the special significance of this year being both the 40th anniversary of our sister city relationship during Robinvale's centenary year.

Council has been asked by the community to reconsider this decision made in December 2023, for equal consideration of both sister cities.

New information to be considered by Council is that from 2003 to 2023, Council records show that representatives have officially visited Yamagata five times and Villers-Bretonneux once.

Acknowledging the importance of maintaining both sister city relationships and continuing the great work that the Council has accomplished over the past 40 plus

years, officers are recommending an amendment to the December 2023 motion be made.

### **Consultation**

Email and article from Jade Benham, Member for Mildura (attached).  
Direct contact with the Mayor.

### **Financial Implications**

Nil financial implications as the Mayor Cr King has said that he would pay for his own expenses.

### **Social Implications**

The Yamagata exchange and Villers-Bretonneux visit will foster and maintain cultural and social relationships. Creating a richer appreciation and understanding of the wider world.

It should also be noted that previous Council representatives have more frequently visited Yamagata than Villers-Bretonneux.

Council risks offending volunteers associated with either sister city arrangement when we accept one and not the other.

### **Economic Implications**

There are no significant economic ties between Yamagata and Swan Hill Rural City Council or Villers-Bretonneux and Swan Hill Rural City Council.

### **Environmental Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Risk Management Implications**

Not applicable.

- Attachments:**
1. Yamagata Villers- Bretonneux Report Scheduled Council Meeting unconfirmed MINUTES 19 December 2023 [2.1.1 - 5 pages]
  2. Jade BENHAM MP LTE - SHRCC Villers Bretonneux trip [2.1.2 - 1 page]

### **Options**

Council may choose to adopt or amend the recommendation.

1. Continue with the resolution as per the December 2023 meeting
2. Amend the resolution to refer to Villers-Bretonneux in place of Yamagata as the approved destination
3. Amend the resolution to enable the Mayor to attend both



4. Support another Councillor to attend the alternative location to the location attended by the Mayor for 2024 (at their own cost)
5. Support another Councillor to attend the alternative location to the location attended by the Mayor for 2024 (at Council's cost)

### **Recommendation/s**

#### **That Council:**

- 1. Setup an alternating sequence of sister city visits, to ensure equal attention is given to both sister city relationships when Councillors are permitted to travel;**
- 2. Formally thank the Mayor of Villers-Bretonneux for the invitation to Swan Hill Rural City Council's Mayor;**
- 3. Authorise the Mayor to accept the invitation to visit Villers-Bretonneux in 2024.**



## 2.5 Mayoral Visit to sister cities - Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux

**Directorate:** Chief Executive Officer  
**File Number:** S16-02-03  
**Purpose:** For Decision

### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

**4. Leadership** - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

#### 4.3 Bold leadership, strong partnerships and effective advocacy

4.3.1 Create meaningful partnerships across our communities

### Current Strategic Documents

No strategic documents applicable.

### Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide details of invitations to the Mayor Cr King to visit Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux in April 2024 to celebrate the relationship of the sister cities.

### Discussion

Sister city and twin town relationships give Council and our community new economic and education opportunities. It also expands our international communication, cultural awareness and co-operation.

Council has strong ties with its international partners, including cultural, education, economic and historic links.

The relationship between Swan Hill and Yamagata officially started in 1980. It was one of the earliest Sister City arrangements with Japan.

Villers-Bretonneux was adopted as the twin city of Robinvale in 1984-1985. However the first visits were made in late 1970s including a youth exchange.

The 40 plus years of association with Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux has provided many opportunities for students and community members to build long and lasting friendships.



The exchange provides invaluable experiences for culture and hospitality of our sister city and twin town relationships.

**Consultation**

Not applicable.

**Financial Implications**

Nil financial implications as the Mayor Cr King as indicated that he would pay for his own expenses.

**Social Implications**

The Yamagata exchange and Villers-Brettonneux visit will foster and maintaining cultural and social relationships. Creating a richer appreciation and understanding of the wider world.

**Economic Implications**

There are no significant economic ties between Yamagata and Swan Hill Rural City Council or Villers-Brettonneux and Swan Hill Rural City Council.

**Environmental Implications**

Not applicable.

**Risk Management Implications**

Not applicable.

- Attachments:**
1. Invitation From LaurenceLelieur [2.5.1 - 1 page]
  2. ITINERARY DRAFT Japan Yamagata Sth Korea April 2024 [2.5.2 - 1 page]

**Options**

Council may choose to adopt or amend the recommendation.

**Recommendation/s**

**That Council:**

1. **Formally thank the Mayor of Yamagata and Villers-Brettonneux for the invitation to Swan Hill Rural City Council's Mayor;**
2. **Authorise the Mayor to accept the invitations to visit Yamagata and Villers-Brettonneux in 2024.**

**CM 2023/116 Motion**

**MOVED Cr McPhee**

**That Council:**



1. **Formally thank the Mayor of Yamagata for the invitation to Swan Hill Rural City Council's Mayor;**
2. **Authorise the Mayor to accept the invitation to visit Yamagata in 2024.**

**SECONDED Cr Young**

**The Motion was put and CARRIED 4 / 1**

Cr King returned to the meeting at 2:49 pm and was informed of the decisions.

The Mayor Cr King assumed the Chair.

MINUTES - Scheduled Council Meeting - 19 December 2023

**From:** Laurence Lelieur <[Laurence.Lelieur@villers-bretonneux.com](mailto:Laurence.Lelieur@villers-bretonneux.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 21, 2023 1:29 AM  
**To:** Les McPhee <[les.mcphee@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:les.mcphee@swanhill.vic.gov.au)>; Stuart King <[stuart.king@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:stuart.king@swanhill.vic.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Invitation Jumelage de Villers-Bretonneux / Robinvale  
**Importance:** High

Monsieur McPhee,  
Monsieur King,

Hello,

5 May 2024 is the 40th anniversary of the Villers-Bretonneux / Robinvale twinning.

On this occasion, we have the honor and pleasure to invite you to participate to the anniversary ceremony that we will organize on Saturday 27 April 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

We chose this date because a sports event with the Australian Football League will take place in the city on the same day. In addition, on 25 April, Anzac Day commemorations occur at the Australian National Memorial (Dawn Service) and in Villers-Bretonneux. It seemed appropriate to us to take advantage of the presence of Her Excellency Mrs. Gillian Bird and the many Australians and New Zealanders in our town that week.

We would be very honored to welcome you and invite you to spend a few days in our city.

Best regards,

Didier DINOUARD  
Maire de Villers-Bretonneux



## SWAN HILL YAMAGATA CLUB Inc



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*Secretary*

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### 2024 – 44<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY YAMAGATA-JAPAN TOUR

#### ITINERARY

**Itinerary will be similar to cancelled 2020 Tour leaving 13 April 2024**

**Day 1** – Fly to Tokyo for 3 nights

Validate 14 day Japan Rail Pass on first day.  
JR pass to be used for intercity travel and Tokyo subway.  
*Options:* Mt Fuji, Royal Palace, Disneyland, Harbour Cruises.

**Days 4-7** – Train to Yamagata for 4 nights. Homestay possible.  
Itinerary expected to involve celebratory dinners and extensive and busy local day tours.  
Always a trip highlight!

**Day 8** – To Kyoto via Tokyo for 2 nights.  
Geisha district; Naro (old city) tours; Hiroshima day trip (or from Fukuoko).

**Day 10** – Train to Fukuoko City via Hiroshima (optional stopover).  
4 nights in Hakata on southern island of Kyushu.  
Japan's oldest city. Kuju Flower Park, Canal City Hakata, Nagasaki Peace Park day trip.

**Day 14** – 2 *options* – Fly to Seoul, Sth Korea for 10 day tour.  
Jeju Island; Busan; National Parks; Museums, DMZ (border area) and Seoul.

OR

Night flights home to Melbourne (from Osaka?)

# Jade Benham MP

The Nationals Member for Mildura

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



 (03) 5021 2828  [jade.benham@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:jade.benham@parliament.vic.gov.au)  35a Deakin Avenue, Mildura Vic 3500

Thursday 12 January 2024

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my deep disappointment regarding the recent decision made by the Swan Hill Rural City Councillors on December 19, 2023, to decline an invitation for the Mayor to attend the 40th Anniversary of the Sister City relationship with Robinvale and Villers Bretonneux.

This decision has not only disheartened me personally but has also left the Robinvale community, especially the dedicated Villers Bretonneux Association, feeling let down. What makes this decision particularly disheartening is the fact that the invitation and the subsequent trip were to incur no cost to the Council and ratepayers.

The Villers Bretonneux Association, a volunteer organization, has consistently demonstrated remarkable dedication in fostering an incredibly close and connected relationship with our sister city since its inception. Their efforts contribute significantly to the cultural exchange and mutual understanding between our communities.

The decision to accept the invitation from Swan Hill's sister city, Yamagata, while rejecting the invitation from Villers Bretonneux, seems contradictory to the commitment the Council has made in servicing Robinvale as a major centre rather than a small service town. This decision threatens to undermine some of the commendable work the Council has accomplished over the past four years.

In a significant year, when we celebrate not only the 40th anniversary of our sister city relationship but also Robinvale's centenary year, choosing to favour one sister city over another feels akin to choosing a favourite child. I believe such a decision sends the wrong message and risks eroding the strong bonds that have been cultivated over decades.

I strongly urge the Councillors to reconsider this decision and avoid showing favouritism towards one sister city over another. I hope the Councillors can honour the sentiment this brings, and I trust that they will reconsider their decision in the best interest of our community.

I hope to see a positive resolution for the sake of our Sister City relationships and the Robinvale community.

**Media contact:** Dominic Mezzatesta (03) 5021 2828 [jade.benham@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:jade.benham@parliament.vic.gov.au)

### 3 Close of Meeting