

Press release

18 December 2009

Santa comes early to Clermont Kindy

While most people think that Santa Claus lives in the North Pole, the children of Clermont Kindergarten and Day Care Centre will tell you that their very own Santa calls Japan home.

For more than 25 years retired Japanese business executive Satoru Murai has been sending Christmas gifts to the Centre, a tradition he started when he was executive managing director of J-Power, a joint venture partner in Blair Athol Mine.

And now, even though he has long since retired from his role on the project, Mr Murai continues to load up his Santa sack and send new toys and gifts to the Centre which the children look forward to every Christmas.

Blair Athol Mine general manager operations Andrew Cole said Mr Murai's continued relationship with the staff and children of the centre was a great symbol of a long lasting and endearing community partnership.

"From the very beginning of the Blair Athol Mine Mr Murai was committed to establishing Clermont's first kindergarten and day care centre – and when it opened 25 years ago the centre was named Satoru House to reflect this dedication," Andrew said.

"When he would visit Clermont as part of joint venture meetings Mr Murai would always stop into the kindy and say hello to the children, and has even donned a Santa suit to hand out his gifts in person over the years.

"But this tradition is not one sided. Each year the children use their creative skills to make a special Christmas present for Mr Murai which they send to him in Japan – and I know that he has kept each and every one to bring a little bit of Clermont to his home in Japan."

Andrew said that Rio Tinto was committed to continuing this tradition that has grown between the Centre and the mine, and this year the company's newest mine has funded an extension to the Centre.

"Our Clermont Mine which is currently under construction has pledged to carry on this support of the Clermont Kindergarten over the last 25 years through funding a much needed extension to the Centre," Andrew said.

"When it opens next year the kindy is hoping that Mr Murai will be able to make the trip and officially open the next instalment of his long lasting legacy to the children of Clermont."

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