

Minutes

International Relations Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 25 February 2026



**MINUTES OF CITY OF DARWIN
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS DARRANDIRRA, LEVEL 1, CIVIC CENTRE, HARRY
CHAN AVENUE, DARWIN
ON WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 11:00 AM**

PRESENT:

Lord Mayor Peter Styles (Chair)

Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

Port of Darwin Harry Cao

Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

Chamber of Commerce NT Glen Hingley

Dept of Trade Business and Asian Relations Hayley Richards

General Manager Innovation, City of Darwin Alice Percy

OFFICERS:

Vanya Bosiocic, Manager Economic Development

Jessica Fry, Manager International Relations and Sponsorship

APOLOGY:

Councillor Jimmy Bouhoris

Charles Darwin University Shannon Holborn

Larrakia Nation Michael Rotumah

Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade NT Suzy Wilson-Uilelea

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1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

City of Darwin acknowledges that we are living and working on Larrakia Country. We acknowledge the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of the Darwin region.

We pay our respects to the Larrakia elders past and present and support emerging Larrakia leaders now and into the future.

City of Darwin is committed to working together with all Larrakia to care for this land and sea for our shared future.

2 MEETING DECLARED OPEN

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair declared the meeting open at 11:05 am.

3 APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

3.1 APOLOGIES

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC001/26

Moved: Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

Seconded: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

THAT apologies from the following committee members be received.

- Councillor Jimmy Bouhoris
- Charles Darwin University Shannon Holborn
- Larrakia Nation Michael Rotumah
- Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade NT Suzy Wilson-Uilelea

CARRIED 7/0

3.2 LEAVE OF ABSENCE GRANTED

Nil

3.3 LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUESTED

Nil

4 ELECTRONIC MEETING ATTENDANCE

4.1 ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE GRANTED

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC002/26

Moved: Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

Seconded: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

THAT the Committee note that pursuant to Section 95 (43) of the *Local Government Act 2019*, the following member(s) was granted permission for Electronic Meeting Attendance:

- Dept of Trade Business and Asian Relations Hayley Richards

CARRIED 7/0

4.2 ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE REQUESTED

Nil

5 DECLARATION OF INTEREST OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

5.1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

Nil

5.2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY STAFF

Nil

6 CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC003/26

Moved: Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

Seconded: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

THAT the minutes of the International Relations Advisory Committee Meeting held on 23 October 2025 be confirmed.

CARRIED 7/0

7 MOVING OF ITEMS

7.1 MOVING OF ITEMS INTO CONFIDENTIAL

Nil

7.2 MOVING OF CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS INTO OPEN

Nil

7.3 MOVING CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS TO OPEN AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING**18.1 PROPOSAL FOR FRIENDSHIP CITY AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF ATAMBUA****COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC013/26**

Moved: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

Seconded: Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

1. THAT the report entitled Proposal for Friendship City Agreement with the City of Atambua be received and noted.
2. THAT the International Relations Advisory Committee recommend City of Darwin do not enter into negotiations with the City of Atambua to become a Friendship City.
3. THAT this report and any attachments be deemed confidential documents and be treated as such in accordance with Section 293 (1) of the *Local Government Act 2019*.
4. THAT the documents remain confidential and that this decision be moved into Open at the end of the meeting.

CARRIED 7/0

8 DEPUTATIONS AND BRIEFINGS

Nil

9 OFFICER REPORTS**9.1 UPDATE ON SISTER CITIES ACTION PLAN****COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC004/26**

Moved: Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

Seconded: Chamber of Commerce NT Glen Hingley

THAT the report entitled Update on Sister Cities Action Plan be received and noted.

CARRIED 7/0

9.2 UPDATE ON PLANNING FOR SISTER CITIES CUP AND DARWIN FUSION 2026**COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC005/26**

Moved: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

Seconded: Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

THAT the report entitled Update on Planning for Sister Cities Cup and Darwin Fusion 2026 be received and noted.

CARRIED 7/0

9.3 UPDATE ON WELCOMING CITIES**COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC006/26**

Moved: Chamber of Commerce NT Glen Hingley

Seconded: Port of Darwin Harry Cao

THAT the report entitled Update on Welcoming Cities be received and noted.

CARRIED 7/0

10 MEMBER REPORTS

Nil

11 GENERAL BUSINESS**11.1 GENERAL BUSINESS****COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC007/26**

Moved: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

Seconded: Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

THAT the Verbal Member Updates be received and noted.

Sister City Advisory Committee Kate Heelan

- International Women's Day Walk on Saturday, 7 March 2026 with initial gathering at 8:00 am at Charles Darwin University Danala Campus for opening speeches and the walk.
- There will be a number of information sessions at Danala Campus between 9:00 am – 11:00 am and the Lord Mayor was invited to participate.
- Athletics Northern Territory won the bid to host the Oceania Olympic Championships in Darwin from 18-23 May 2026.

Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

- Recent wet weather conditions have contributed to a slowdown in tourism; however, the arrival of multiple cruise ships over the past four weeks has provided a positive boost.

- Additional cruise ship arrivals are scheduled over the next six weeks, with the Queen Mary and Queen Anne cruise ships coming in March, bringing around 12,000 passengers/tourists, which are expected to further support local visitation.
- Preparations are underway for the upcoming Pitch Black event, with continued collaboration with Defence.
- Discussion is ongoing to identify opportunities to better engage audiences based in Darwin.
- The caravan and camping show initiative has commenced.
- The Lord Mayor raised questions regarding recent cruise ship arrivals. It was noted that Darwin Port provides bus transport services, and that some tourists experienced trip hazards on uneven pavement surfaces.
- The Lord Mayor enquired about the availability of existing information or data relating to cruise ship visitor experiences.

Dept of Trade Business and Asian Relations Hayley Richards

- High-level meetings with the following:
 - Minister Councillor of the Chinese Embassy in Canberra
 - Australia's Ambassador Designate to Indonesia
 - Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Brisbane
- Regular contact with consulates, particularly Timor Leste and Indonesia.
- The Minister hosted a thank you event for a number of the consular corps for their service through the year.
- There has been great engagement with the NT representative in Singapore, Michael Png, and he has been assisting a number of stakeholders with trade and investment opportunities.
- The MOU that the Territory signed with Indonesia in 2024 is still progressing, with two-way visits over the last 12 months and working on next steps.
- The Minister has an extensive programme being canvassed and planned for this year to strengthen relationships with Asian cities with a focus on investments for delegations.
- Opportunity to work collaboratively with City of Darwin for the Darwin Fusion 2026 event to bring in any support and activities that would be complementary from the Territory Government's side.

Port of Darwin Harry Cao

- Continues to maintain a strong and resilient performance baseline, reflecting robust and sustainable operational health across all core function.
- Mining activity within the Northern Territory remains stable, with ongoing ilmenite and magnetite production providing a reliable and consistent export pipeline.
- The Northern Territory was prominently represented at the China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November 2025, with Darwin Port coordinating a joint exhibition in collaboration with key supply-chain, agricultural, and pastoral industry partners.
- Cruise ship visitation has remained steady throughout this reporting period, supporting a consistent and predictable operational schedule.
- Direct air-freight connectivity between Guangzhou and Darwin has now been formally established, strengthening regional logistics and enabling new trade pathways.
- Strategic engagement continues with China Southern Airlines to optimise the performance and sustainability of the established air-freight route.
- Further work is underway to identify and progress emerging air-freight trade opportunities that align with Northern Territory export priorities.

- China's designation of Hainan Island as a free trade port has created a significant new trade zone, complemented by the commencement of a direct container shipping service operating between Darwin and Hainan.
- Planning for the 2026 Asia Promotion and Engagement Strategy is well advanced, including preparations for participation in major infrastructure and supply-chain exhibitions in Singapore and other priority Asian markets.
- The overarching strategic objective remains the sustained, high-visibility promotion of Northern Territory investment and trade opportunities across key international markets.

Chamber of Commerce NT Glen Hingley

- Key focus areas:
 - Strengthening engagement with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, particularly its international trade division.
 - Establishing and formalising cooperative agreements with Australian Chambers of Commerce across Asia, as well as Australian business councils. This includes building on the existing partnership with the Australia-Indonesia Business Council (AIBC) and deepening relationships with Malaysia, Timor-Leste, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Philippines business councils.
 - Leveraging these chamber and council relationships to identify trade and investment opportunities and to support the development of industry-led frameworks.
- Kevin Mulvale has been re-elected as Chair of the Chamber's International Business Council, with Claire Marindani appointed as Deputy Chair.
- The *Better Business Program* delivered in partnership with DTBAR, Austrade, and DFAT continues to build business development capabilities, supporting local enterprises to strengthen their participation in the import-export sector and enhance understanding of key Asian markets.
- Congratulations were extended to the City of Darwin team for the successful delivery of the Bombing of Darwin commemoration event.
- There is support for revitalising the Friendship City relationship with Honolulu, recognising the potential to develop business connections grounded in the historic ties between Pearl Harbor and Darwin Harbour.

City of Darwin Alice Percy

- Introduced Susannah Penman, the new Executive Manager Place and Economic Development.
- The Lord Mayor has been invited to go to Guangzhou in November to participate in the 7th Guangzhou Award for Urban Innovation.
- A delegation to visit is under consideration.
- City of Darwin is developing the Greater Darwin brand toolkit and feedback will be requested from committee members.

CARRIED 7/0

12 DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING**COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC008/26**

Moved: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

Seconded: Chamber of Commerce NT Glen Hingley

THAT the next International Relations Advisory Committee be held on Wednesday, 24 June 2026, at 11:00 AM (Open Section followed by the Confidential Section), Council Chambers Darrandirra, Level 1, Civic Centre, Harry Chan Avenue, Darwin.

CARRIED 7/0

13 CLOSURE OF MEETING TO THE PUBLIC**COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC009/26**

Moved: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

Seconded: Chamber of Commerce NT Glen Hingley

THAT pursuant to Section 99 (2) of the *Local Government Act 2019* and Regulation 8 of the *Local Government (General) Regulations* the meeting be closed to the public to consider the Confidential Items of the Agenda.

CARRIED 7/0

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee considers the confidential report(s) listed below in a meeting closed to the public in accordance with Section 99(2) of the *Local Government Act 2019*:

18.1 Proposal for Friendship City Agreement with the City of Atambua

This matter is considered to be confidential under Section 99(2) - 51(c)(iv) of the Local Government Act, and the Committee is satisfied that discussion of this matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest as it deals with information that would, if publicly disclosed, be likely to subject to subregulation 51(3) – prejudice the interests of the council or some other person.

20.1 Members Verbal Updates

This matter is considered to be confidential under Section 99(2) - 51(e) of the Local Government Act, and the Committee is satisfied that discussion of this matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest as it deals with subject to subregulation 51(3) – information provided to the council on condition that it be kept confidential and would, if publicly disclosed, be likely to be contrary to the public interest.

14 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IRACC010/26

Moved: Chamber of Commerce NT Glen Hingley

Seconded: Tourism Top End Samantha Bennett

THAT the open section of the meeting be adjourned at 11:46 am.

CARRIED 7/0

THAT the open section of the meeting be resumed at 11:51 am.

THAT the chair declared the meeting closed at 11:51 am.

The minutes of this meeting were confirmed at the International Relations Advisory Committee Meeting held on 24 June 2026.

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CHAIR