

Title: *International Relations*

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Responsibility: *General Manager Community & Cultural Services*

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1	20\2501	23/02/10	Adopted
2	21\5274	28/03/17	Policy renamed from Sister Cities to International Relations and revision adopted by Council

1 Policy Summary

City of Darwin embraces Darwin's history, geography and rich diversity of population. With such diversity comes responsibility for enriching and developing community life and Darwin's place in the global community.

This Policy provides a framework to guide Council's directions in advancing the city's future and cultural development through international and community relationships. Person to person linkages, a hallmark of the international relations movement, is realised by Council's many generous volunteers who contribute to an inclusive, well governed, community lived Sister Cities Program.

2 Policy Objectives

- To articulate a context and framework for City of Darwin's role and activity in international relations engagement.
- To provide a context for City of Darwin's role in supporting the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments in advancing priorities described in Council's Strategic Directions and Municipal Plans.
- To elevate and enhance the value of cultural exchange, diplomacy and community capacity building in an international context.

- To provide a framework for the redevelopment of the Sister Cities Program Guidelines in place of the Sister Cities Program Handbook, to better align with volunteer practices and aspirations.
- To draw on the Sister Cities program review feedback to contemporise program and policy design.

3 Background

Strategic Plan Context

City of Darwin's Evolving Darwin Towards 2020 Strategic Plan provides an operating context and contributes to the broader directions of Council's international relations endeavours. Council's Sister Cities program is but one dimension of its international relations remit.

Goal 4	Historically and Culturally Rich City
Outcome	Community life rich in creativity
Strategy 4.2.2	Embrace national and international partnerships

Sister City Program Parameters

Following review in 2015, Council confirmed its program parameters to ensure existing relationships and partnerships were serviced in alignment with available resources and to maximise outcomes. The parameters are:

- That Council maintain the existing six Sister City relationships and two Friendship relationships within a community, cultural and educational context.
- That all future Sister City and Friendship requests be declined.
- That the Sister Cities Policy and Handbook be reviewed to include a broader framework for Council's international relations activities

4 Policy Statement

4.1. International Relations Activities Framework

Context

City of Darwin has a proud history of internationalism and rich cultural diversity. The person to person linkages between the northern Australian landmass and island communities across the seas and straits to the north pre-date British colonisation.

For centuries, Darwin's Traditional Owners, the Larrakia people traded with South East Asian neighbours. A great deal of cultural exchange occurred between the Yolngu and Macassans, including trade, work and travel that has had a lasting imprint on Darwin's local culture and language.

The modern city of Darwin and its predecessor settlements since 1869 have been at the forefront of Australia's international engagement in peace and in war. Its population diversity reflects, and in some aspects predates, modern multicultural Australia.

While other levels of Government in Australia have formal responsibility for international relations and matters of trade, diplomacy, tourism and investment, City of Darwin has long welcomed all international engagement and visitors. The City actively encourages and proudly celebrates its rich cultural make up and enduring person to person linkages.

City of Darwin collaborates with the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments on visits, activities and protocol requirements in respect of foreign dignitaries, delegations, military and diplomatic representatives and welcomes global citizens travelling to, and through, the Territory for business, tourism, education and training, cultural and sporting purposes.

Internationally, the expectations of the role and reach of local government and the status of its officials differ considerably, requiring sensitive management in a cross cultural context.

Since establishment, Council has engaged in cultural diplomacy, local hospitality and international relations by receiving official visitors and delegations from overseas. A more formal program began in 1982 with Council's participation in the international Sister City movement through the establishment of a twinning arrangement with Kalymnos in Greece.

Vision

For Darwin to be recognised as a vibrant, contemporary, culturally diverse, prosperous international capital city, committed to strategic relationships that advance cultural diplomacy, business, education, trade and peace building opportunities of mutual benefit.

Principles

The following principles guide and underpin Council's involvement in international relations in support of its vision:

- Mutual respect
- Cultural diversity
- Cultural diplomacy
- Peace building through humanitarian endeavours including ethical practices.
- Co-operation on opportunities of mutual benefit including cultural exchange, business development, arts, cross cultural understanding, community harmony, tourism, education, youth development, skill sharing and inclusion.

Promotion

- To showcase Darwin, promoting and building upon its international reputation with emphasis on fostering friendship, cultural exchange, business, skill and learning opportunities.
- To build, develop and enhance cross-cultural relationships.
- To promote Darwin as a vibrant, contemporary city that creates opportunity and choice and where history, culture, lifestyle and location as a Northern Australian international destination are highly valued.
- Profile Darwin as a destination of choice for international study, tourism, conferences, cultural experiences, sport and business.

Leverage

- Maximise opportunities of mutual benefit.
- Capture and share innovative and best practice approaches.
- Encourage meaningful exchange and shared experiences through collaboration.
- Broker partnerships that advance strategic benefit for cultural, economic, sports, education, business, arts, tourism and humanitarian matters.

Linkages

- Be underpinned by mutual respect, understanding and cultural diplomacy.
- Enhance the City and Council's international profile and reputation positively.
- Facilitate connectivity and partnerships of mutual benefit.
- Support Commonwealth and Territory Government international engagement activities where appropriate.

4.2. Sister Cities Program

The Sister City Program is an important component of Darwin's international engagement portfolio. City of Darwin has five formal sister city relationships that reflect aspects of its history and more recent overseas linkages that are significant to the development of the City and the Northern Territory.

- Kalymnos (Greece)
- Anchorage (USA)
- Ambon (Indonesia)
- Haikou (China)
- Dili (Timor-Leste)

City of Darwin has two additional friendship arrangements that reflect some specific connections and aspirations:

- Honolulu (USA)
- Santa Cruz-Galapagos (Ecuador)

City of Darwin also shares a domestic Sister City relationship.

- Milikapiti (Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory)

In more recent times, City of Darwin has formalised a Memorandum of Understanding in support of local economic development brokered by the Northern Territory Government with:

- Rizhao (People's Republic of China)

Limited number of relationships

Council purposefully limited Sister and Friendship City relationships in 2015 to ensure that existing commitments can be properly serviced within available resources. This does not preclude engagement with other cities and jurisdictions in other ways where appropriate and when determined by Council.

Focus on community, culture and education

In 2015, Council confirmed that Sister and Friendship City relationships shall continue to focus on community, cultural and educational matters. Given this scope, there is substantial opportunity for alignment with the arts, education, business and sports etc that emerge through community and cultural development pursuits.

Governance arrangements

Governance of the Sister City Program is provided through two levels of committee with Council acting as the authorising body for particular matters.

Advisory Committees

Five of Council's Sister City relationships are supported and activated by local advisory community based committees, generously supported by volunteers. Committees operate for:

- Kalymnos
- Anchorage
- Ambon
- Haikou
- Dili

Each committee provides advice, expertise and deep cross-cultural linkages that facilitate and bring to life each Sister City relationship at a community level.

A template for the membership, appointment duration, role, purpose and meeting frequency of these committees is described within the Sister Cities Program Guideline document that steers all operational aspects of the program. Additionally, the annual Council Committee Booklet, each Council's Strategic Plan, annual Municipal Plans and a range of strategies such as Young Darwin 2016-2021 set out more specific governance arrangements and project collaboration themes.

Community and Cultural Services Committee (CCS Committee)

A standing Committee of Council, the Community and Cultural Services Committee comprises the Lord Mayor and a number of Elected Representatives appointed annually. Its responsibilities include the functional areas of the Community and Cultural Services Department including the Sister Cities and International Relations portfolio. The Committee hold some delegations with a requirement for international travel and matters concerning budget approvals to be determined by Council.

Committee Procedures and Program Guidelines

The Sister Cities Program Guidelines complement this policy and provide detailed guidance for the program's operations and procedures.

General City of Darwin corporate policies and procedures are also pertinent and provide a basis for decisions and approvals on matters not covered in the Guidelines.

Advisory Committee Delegation

As a means of providing each Sister City Advisory Committee with operational decision making, Council has delegated authority to each Committee to determine the power to make decisions within the approved Committee budgets of \$4,000 annually on the proviso that:

- Funds are limited to \$4,000 each financial year.
- There is no carry forwards for unspent budget allocations.
- All requests concerning international travel requires Council approval.
- Projects can be planned and delivered over more than one financial year.

4.3. International Engagement

Reception of Visitors, Delegations and Conference activity

Broader international engagement beyond the Sister Cities program extends to cultural diplomacy including the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, Council staff and community advisory committee members receiving dignitaries and delegations, representational attendance at conferences, meetings, celebrations and events with an international dimension. This activity may be in Darwin, elsewhere in the Northern Territory, Australia, or overseas. Attendance may be by invitation or on request. Formal

approval must comply with Council finance, travel and hospitality policies and procedures.

City of Darwin is a financial member of Sister Cities Australia (SCA). SCA hosts a national conference annually which provides opportunity for international engagement beyond the operational, and enables City of Darwin representatives access to best practice across the Sister Cities movement. Relationship building is also valuable in advancing Darwin's interests with visiting delegations from other municipalities overseas.

Exchanges

Periodic professional exchanges between City of Darwin and other international entities foster goodwill, skill sharing, community connectivity and capacity building and as well as advancing specific interests and mutually agreed projects. Exchanges typically involve person to person linkages and cultural diplomacy that continue to be the bedrock of peace building initiatives internationally.

Coordination with NT Government

Council's representation on the Northern Territory's International Engagement Coordination Group, chaired by the Department of Business, and on other Territory bodies ensures that the two levels of government are appraised of each other's international activity and can coordinate and compliment activities as appropriate. The Northern Australia Capital City Committee is also an established strategic level forum where cross government matters can be advanced.

5. Related Documents

Besides periodic reports to Council on international activities in relation to Council Meeting agenda items, information availability and transparency of activity is provided through City of Darwin's Annual Report and mechanisms such as the International Relations Newsletters published on the Council website.

5. Legislation (Terminology and References)

The NT Local Government Act provides the basis for City of Darwin to occupy a broad role in promoting the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of its local community and for community participation in such activities.

6. Implementation and Delegation

The Community and Cultural Services Department has particular responsibility for the implementation of this policy. Elected Members, other Departments and committees also have roles in ensuring adherence and working collaboratively to further program outcomes.

In accordance with Policy 032- Policy and Procedures Framework, clause 7.2 – Implementation and Delegation, Council has delegated to the CEO the authority to decide those matters needing to be referred to Council for adoption.

In order to maintain the currency of the Sister Cities Program Guidelines, subject to Council approval of this Policy, Council has delegated to the CEO, authority to approve further updates of the Sister Cities Program Guidelines to reflect amendments necessary for various reasons including changes emanating from relevant Council decisions.

7. Evaluation and Review

This policy is to be reviewed in accordance with Policy 032 – clause 5.3 – Reviewing Existing Policies. Sister City Advisory Committee members are also invited to provide feedback on program reviews as required to inform program development.