

Draft Sister City and Friendship City Policy

INTRODUCTION

This Policy establishes Cumberland Council's position and policy framework in forming and maintaining effective ongoing formal civic relationships within Australia and internationally.

It also outlines Council's commitment to ensuring that all formal civic relationships established and maintained will be meaningful, effective, accountable, appropriately resourced and based on clear economic, social and cultural benefits to Council and the community.

PURPOSE

This Policy provides an overarching framework for Council in defining and establishing any ongoing formal civic relationships within Australia and internationally.

This Policy recognises that Council operates a two-tier level of formal civic relationships with cities or councils, which includes:

- Sister City relationships
- Friendship City relationships

The Policy guides Council decision-making in establishing and maintaining Sister City and Friendship City relationships, and ensures that the primary focus of any relationship is consistent with Council's Community Strategic Plan and current legislation.

SCOPE

This Policy is designed to assist Council to prioritise which civic relationships it pursues as well as outlining the criteria and the process for the establishment and maintenance of formal Sister City and Friendship City relationships with Cumberland Council.

The key components of this Policy include:

- Definitions of the types of formal civic relationships recognised by Council.
- The principles or criteria utilised by Council for the establishment and maintenance of Sister City and Friendship City relationships.
- The process for establishing Sister City and Friendship City relationships.
- Ongoing relationship management, including evaluation, regular review and resourcing considerations.

This Policy applies to all Councillors, Council staff and community members carrying out their responsibilities as part of a Council Sister City or Friendship City relationship.

This Policy excludes requests for one-off visits from international groups or delegations, which are provided for under the *Councillor Facilities and Expenses Policy*. It also does not preclude Council from entering into cooperative relationships with other metropolitan councils.

DEFINITIONS

Council	Cumberland Council
Friendship City Relationship	<p>Recognised through a formal Friendship City Agreement, which may be appropriate in meeting a short term or specific need.</p> <p>A Friendship City relationship involves less administrative requirements and resourcing expectations than a Sister City relationship, and does not require Council to allocate a budget to a specific program or activity outlined in the agreement.</p> <p>A Friendship City relationship must be formally endorsed at a Council meeting but does not require a public exhibition period as it does not require Council to allocate a budget to specific programs or activities outlined in the agreement.</p> <p>Examples of activities include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of information via written or electronic communication. • Hosting of delegations on occasions of visits or activities linked to Council's events program in accordance with the <i>Councillor Facilities and Expenses Policy</i>. <p>A Friendship City relationship can be used as a first stage in establishing a Sister City relationship, and where there is a clear alignment and commitment to mutual long term benefits following a review period, it may be appropriate to progress to a Sister City relationship.</p>
Sister City Relationship	<p>Recognised through a formal Sister City Agreement, which involves a clear commitment to developing and maintaining a program of activities with mutual long-term benefits.</p> <p>Examples of activities include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of trade and economic opportunities between business and industry, such as attracting new businesses to Cumberland, facilitating local jobs or expansion of locally based businesses. • Practical applications related to cultural projects or educational exchange, such as touring exhibitions or performance programs linked to Council's Cultural Plan, events or public programs in libraries and arts facilities. • Programs that promote community participation and inter-cultural harmony, such as schools, youth and sporting exchanges. • Staff exchanges, particularly in relation to civic relationships within Australia, allowing exposure to diverse skills and professional development opportunities. <p>A Sister City relationship must be formally endorsed at a Council meeting and requires Council to allocate a budget to specific programs or activities outlined in the agreement to ensure adequate resourcing is in place.</p> <p>Council will undertake a 28 day public exhibition period in relation to the Council's proposal to pass the necessary resolution to approve a Sister City Agreement to enable adequate consultation with the community.</p>

POLICY STATEMENT

Council's decision to enter into Sister City and Friendship City relationships will be based on their economic, social and cultural benefits to Council and to the community and must be meaningful, effective, accountable and appropriately resourced.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles provide the criteria for the establishment, maintenance and review of Sister City and Friendship City relationships.

The criteria is applicable irrespective of whether Council proactively identifies an opportunity to develop a Sister City or Friendship City relationship of benefit to Council and the community or is responding to an external request to form a Sister City or Friendship City relationship.

1. Council's Sister City and Friendship City relationships must meet all of the following essential criteria:
 - a) Share strong historical, cultural, social, economic, educational, environmental and geographic similarities or links.
 - b) Clearly demonstrate a meaningful mutually beneficial relationship and outline specific activities based on a commitment to shared objectives.
 - c) Are purposeful and established with clear objectives, responsibilities, timeframes and outcomes that align with Council's Community Strategic Plan.
2. Council's Sister City relationships must meet all of the following additional essential criteria:
 - a) Demonstrate communities of interest, including community support in forming and maintaining the relationship and evidence that the community is prepared to actively participate in the relationship.
 - b) Promote economic growth and clear economic-based outcomes, including but not limited to increased tourism, educational or learning opportunities, business or trade links and local job creation.
 - c) Evidence and capacity of both parties to contribute financial and other required resources to the agreed specific activities to ensure the relationship is appropriately resourced and sustainable over the agreed period.

REQUIREMENTS

Establishment of Sister City and Friendship City Relationships

1. A proposal to establish a Sister City or Friendship City relationship, whether from the Cumberland community or a potential Sister City or Friendship City, must be put forward to the Mayor and General Manager with a rationale outlining the purpose of the relationship and how the relationship addresses the essential and additional criteria (where relevant) as outlined under the Principles of this Policy.
2. A pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest or pre-existing relationship of a Councillor or Council staff with the proposed city must be declared. The proposal will be considered if any conflicts of interest are overcome.
3. In assessing the proposal, the General Manager will consider:
 - a) How the proposed relationship aligns to the Principles of this Policy;

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- b) The purpose of the proposed relationship;
 - c) The relevance and value it has to the Cumberland community;
 - d) Council's capacity to support and resource the proposed relationship;
 - e) Whether the proposed relationship links to existing Australian and NSW Government, industry, university and other non-government programs, policies or relationships that can provide additional supports or resources to the relationship.
4. Council will not enter into more than one Sister City and one Friendship City relationship in any one country.
 5. Council will establish formal relationships with a maximum of three international cities and one domestic or Australian based city or council at any one time.
 6. The General Manager will develop a draft agreement between Council and the proposed Sister City or Friendship City based on the details of the relationship and the essential and additional criteria (where relevant) as outlined under the Principles of this Policy.
 7. If approved by the General Manager, a Sister City or Friendship City relationship and the related agreement must be formally endorsed at a Council meeting.
 8. As a Sister City relationship requires Council to allocate a budget to specific programs or activities outlined in the agreement and adequate consultation with the community, Council will undertake a 28 day public exhibition period in relation to the Council's proposal to pass the necessary resolution to approve a Sister City Agreement.
 9. Following a resolution of Council, a Sister City Agreement or a Friendship City Agreement must be signed by the General Manager and the equivalent representative of the Sister City or Friendship City.
 10. Council will make public its existing and ongoing Sister City or Friendship City relationships on the Council website so as to adequately inform the community of the Council's activities under this Policy.

Ongoing Relationship Management

11. Council acknowledges that delegations and face to face contact are only one aspect of maintaining a Sister City or Friendship City relationship. Budget constraints mean that electronic communication and engaging across a number of tools may be appropriate.
12. Agreements formally approved by Council in the establishment phase (as outlined above) allow both organisations to commit to working co-operatively together and specify the ongoing objectives, obligations, outcomes and mutual benefits available from the relationship, as well as any costs and limitations.
13. Costs associated with the operation of a Sister City relationship require Council to allocate a budget to specific programs or activities outlined in the formal agreement at the time of establishment. This ensures that financial implications are identified upfront and the relationship is sustainable, transparent and adequately resourced.
14. Both Sister City and Friendship City relationships must:
 - a) Have ongoing Council support and acknowledge the primary role and function of the Mayor in maintaining the relationship.
 - b) Be fully compliant with the *Councillor Facilities and Expenses Policy*.

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- c) Be fully compliant with the *Code of Conduct*.
- d) Demonstrate measurable ongoing Council and community activity, relevance and benefits throughout the term of the relationship.
- e) Be adaptable to meet changing Council and community needs.
- f) Be reviewed and can be exited if Council and community outcomes are not demonstrated.
- g) Be established on a fixed term (of a maximum of 3 years) with renewal dependent on successful evaluation.
- h) Have no binding agreement and can be terminated on request by either party.

Evaluation and Review of Sister City Relationships

15. A comprehensive review by the General Manager will be undertaken at the end of the Sister City or Friendship City term (as defined in the approved agreement) in which the objectives, obligations and outcomes stated at establishment will be evaluated.
16. A review of a Sister City or Friendship City relationship may also be undertaken by the General Manager at any time if:
 - a) The relationship appears to have stalled or there are no demonstrable community outcomes of the relationship.
 - b) The essential and additional criteria (where relevant) as outlined under the Principles of this Policy are not met or are breached.
17. The outcomes of the review will determine whether the relationship continues for the duration of the existing term or for another term, or is exited.
18. A relationship may be successfully evaluated each fixed term (of a maximum of 3 years) and continue over many years as long as there is a successful review at the end of each subsequent renewal of the agreement.
19. A review will also be conducted by Council within 12 months of the general election of Council to ensure existing Friendship or Sister City relationships continue to meet the essential and additional criteria (where relevant) as outlined under the Principles of this Policy and there is adequate support from the Council for the relationship to continue. Should it be recognised that such is no longer the case, negotiations with the Sister City or Friendship City will be undertaken with a view to discontinuing any formal arrangements.

RELATED LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 1993

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COUNCIL POLICY

- Community Strategic Plan
- Code of Conduct
- Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy
- Protocol for Hosting of Delegations
- Employment and Innovation Lands Strategy
- Cumberland Events Strategy
- Cumberland Cultural Plan

AUTHORISATION & VERSION CONTROL

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