

Policy Title:	SISTER CITY/FRIENDSHIP CITY MANAGEMENT
Policy Subject:	Community
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Directorate:	Development & Community
Department:	Community & Economy
Section:	Community Development & Engagement
Responsible Officer:	Executive Manager - Community & Culture
Authorised by:	Director Development & Community
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Risk Assessment:	Low

OBJECTIVE:

The objective is to promote sister city/friendship city relationships that affiliate Fraser Coast Regional Council with cities in other countries where such relationships have a significant positive influence on the communities involved.

In pursuit of this objective, Council through its Sister Cities/Friendship City Community Committee may undertake or facilitate such activities as:

- an exchange of information and the appreciation of the operations and governance of local government authorities;
- stimulating exchanges of individuals, information and ideas across a wide range of interests;
- visits to sister cities/friendship cities by individuals and groups;
- arranging exchanges of news items and reports between newspapers, radio and television in the respective cities;
- supporting lectures by individuals from sister /friendship cities and their respective countries;
- exchanges and communications between churches, educational institutions, sporting bodies, clubs, societies or groups with common interest in sister/friendship cities;
- exchanges of arts, crafts and educational material between schools and other groups; and
- promoting investment opportunities through cultural and goodwill visits between sister/friendship cities.

POLICY:

Fraser Coast Regional Council's Sister City/Friendship City Community Committee will work towards achieving trust and understanding between the wider local community and with its Sister Cities/Friendship Cities by building on cultural, educational and economic relationships.

Community Committee Membership and Roles and Responsibilities

Membership:

- Mayor (or nominee) and two (2) Councillors (one which is nominated as the Chair);
- Two (2) Appointed Officers of Council;
- One community member from each of the Sister City and Friendship City Programs who will foster, maintain, advance and represent their nominated City. (One appointee will nominate as Vice-chair).

The Role of the Committee:

The role of the committee is to:

- Assist in managing the Council's Sister City/Friendship City Program;
- Provide quarterly reports to the Council through the relevant Councillor Portfolio;
- Conduct a biennial review of Sister City relationships to ensure current relevance and value;
- Conduct an annual review of Friendship Cities relationships, at which time any decision to upgrade the affiliation to that of a Sister City relationship or to discontinue the affiliation is assessed on the basis of actual program outcomes;
- Evaluate proposals for Sister/Friendship City links;
- Develop and grow the strategic importance of Sister Cities/Friendship Cities to Council and the Community;
- Assess and review project plans submitted by members of the Community or Council Officers for recommendation to Council;
- Support community, cultural and economic development in Sister/Friendship Cities by promoting educational, cultural and economic relations; and
- Build on the original reasons for establishing Sister/Friendship City relationships and ensure current relevance and value.

Community Committee Operations

Quorum, Meeting Schedule and Minutes

- For a Committee to be achieved one-half of the members (one being the Chairperson or their alternate) must be present. Where the voting on any issue is equal, the Chairperson shall have in addition to their deliberate vote, a casting vote, which they must exercise.
- The Committee will meet at least quarterly. Minutes of meetings of the Community Committee shall be recorded and prepared at the direction of the Chairperson, or his/her delegate, and distributed to all members within two weeks of the meeting taking place. A copy of the minutes shall be posted on the Council's website. Administrative support for the Committee will be provided through the Department of Community and Culture.

Project Teams

- Notwithstanding the membership criteria above, the Community Committee may establish project teams for particular events or tasks. The membership of any project team will include members of the Community Committee and additional members as determined by the nature of the project.

Projects

- Project plans must be documented and submitted to the Community Committee at the time of concept development, prior to any commitments being made.
- Project Plans should include aims and objectives, expected outcomes, timelines and budget details and should be submitted to the Chair of the Community Committee.
- Projects will be supported following consideration against the following criteria:
 - The extent to which the project reflects the focus of the Sister/Friendship City Program;
 - The availability and willingness of community members to volunteer time for project realisation; and
 - Any additional costs such as in-kind support by Council (eg. staff participation in managing the project).

City Classification System

Council operates a two-tier level of affiliation with cities and towns seeking Sister City status with the Fraser Coast Regional Council:

- a. Sister Cities – those recognised through a formal agreement to develop and maintain a substantial program with mutual long-term benefits;
- b. Friendship Cities – those consisting of a less formal arrangement with less administrative and financial expectation, which may be appropriate in meeting short term needs and supporting programs run by other sections of the community.

The consideration of Sister City status, now and in the future, is based on qualitative assessments against a range of criteria around:

- General matters such as access, links, geography, history
- Economic links
- Social and cultural links
- Educational links

(Refer to Eligibility Criteria for further details.)

Importantly it is necessary to gauge the potential for mutual benefit. With regard to relationships existing at the time of adoption of this policy, there is to be ongoing assessment in relation to communications, outcomes and current and proposed projects.

Prior to formalising any new Sister City Agreement, Fraser Coast Regional Council will enter into a Friendship relationship to explore the potential benefits.

Friendship Cities will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Sister Cities Community Committee, at which time any decision to upgrade the affiliation to that of a Sister City relationship or to discontinue the affiliation may be assessed on the basis of actual program outcomes and the above criteria. Recommendations will be referred through to Council.

Sister Cities Eligibility Criteria

The following factors will be considered in choosing or reviewing a Sister City or Friendship City relationship:

General

- a. Population and demographics (nationals of one Sister City residing in the other)
- b. Geographic location and assets
- c. Ease of access
- d. Existing linkages
- e. Relevance to local community
- f. History of diplomatic relations and/or cooperation in political, economic, commercial and cultural fields
- g. Diversity

Economic

- a. Comparison of key industries
- b. Similar economic conditions
- c. Trade and investment climates and opportunities
- d. Tourism potential

Social

- a. Similar social infrastructure and issues
- b. Opportunity for broad based activity
- c. People to people interest, energy and commitment

Educational

- a. Across economic, social and environmental issues
- b. Student/teacher exchange programs
- c. University/TAFE/Secondary Schools linkages

In considering the above factors it is necessary to compare not only the similarities but the potential for these similarities to provide mutual benefit within the existing scope and limitations of the program.

Existing relationships are also assessed against:

- a. Level of communication with Sister/Friendship City
- b. Outcomes to date, benefits seen
- c. Current and proposed projects.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Funded travel arrangements to Sister/Friendship City exchanges are be limited to Council providing financial support for the Mayor and the CEO, or their elected nominees, to cover airfares, accommodation and meals. All other committee members, councillors, council staff or spouses wishing to travel are at the expense of the individual.

AUTHORITIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Sister City Community Committee sits within the Community and Development Directorate under the Executive Manager, Community and Culture, reporting to Council.

HEAD OF POWER:

N/A

RELATED LEGISLATION:

N/A

RELATED DOCUMENTS (LOCAL LAWS, POLICIES, DELEGATIONS, ETC):

The Sister Cities Plan 2013 - 2015

ATTACHMENT TO POLICY:

Nil

DEFINITIONS:

Sister City: a relationship that is recognised through a formal agreement that develops mutual long term benefits between two cities.

Friendship City: a recognised relationship based on less formal arrangements than a Sister City.

HISTORY:

The former cities of Hervey Bay and Maryborough had both developed international relationships with a total of five cities from around the world and each of these relationships have been established to varying degrees over the periods of their existence.

The concept of Sister Cities originated during the Cold War of 1954, with Dwight Eisenhower, as a means of promoting world peace by developing networks and promoting understanding. Sister City relationships vary in focus from trade and industry to cultural and educational exchange, but typically incorporate all these elements.

The current Sister/Friendship Cities are:

a. LESHAN, CHINA since 1997 (Sister)

Leshan is a city of 3,235,756 people, located in the Sechuan region of China. The Sister City relationship was established in 1997 when the late Councillor David Ruddiman, who took a keen interest in driving Economic Development in the City of Hervey Bay, supported finding a Chinese Sister City, based on the predictions of the emergence of China as the next super power and close neighbour to Australia. Expansion of Hervey Bay's industry and employment base was paramount to building this relationship. Early discussions focused primarily on tourism, development, and student

exchange, including Chinese students attending USQ. Since its inception, the following achievements and activities have been undertaken between Hervey Bay City Council/Fraser Coast Regional Council and Leshan, China:

The Hervey Bay–Leshan Sister City relationship has remained active and strong largely due to the excellent Foreign Affairs staff in Leshan and many of the formal as well as informal relationships established at various levels of government and across a range of spheres from education, tourism, business, independent travel and the cultural exchange program.

There are a number of current active projects operating between the countries including the Leshan Garden at the Hervey Bay Botanic Garden, the Australian Garden in Leshan, the Cultural Exchange Program, education exchanges and ongoing independent travellers from Hervey Bay to Leshan and surrounds. In 2015, the Fraser Coast participated in the Sichuan International Travel Expo.

b. OTSUKI, JAPAN since 1998 (Friendship)

Ōtsuki is a city of 35,000 people, located in Yamanashi, Japan. A Friendship City Agreement was signed in 1994

Contact with Otsuki City had been minimal for a period of time; however the Hervey Bay Regional Gallery contacted the City in 2007/08 to discuss potential cultural/exhibition exchanges.

Contact has been re-established with a friendship group from this region and an agreement with them was signed in October 2013.

There are a number of current active projects operating between the countries including education exchanges and ongoing independent travellers.

c. KASUKABE AND TOME (formerly Nakada), JAPAN since 1998 (Friendship/Sister)

Kasukabe is a city of 236,106 people, located in Saitama, Japan. In 1997, Hiroshi Tsurumi (then President of the Kasukabe International Friendship Association - KIFA) led a group from the Association for a visit to Maryborough, with the timing of the visit to coincide with the Maryborough Sesquicentenary. They held discussions with Mayor Alan Brown and CEO, Noel Gorrie. On their return to Japan, they issued an invitation for Council to visit Kasukabe.

Mayor Alan Brown and wife June led a group from Maryborough including staff and Councillors and a Councillor from Tiaro. During the visit, a friendship agreement was signed. Rotary members also visited the Rotary Lunch Club Kasukabe West and it was agreed that this Club and the Rotary Club of Maryborough Sunrise would exchange visits. These visits have occurred but since lapsed.

The group also travelled north to Nakada as a result of approaches from Maryborough West State School that had a relationship with the city. The group met with the full Council although no formal agreement was entered into.

After 1997, an International Friendship Association was formed in Maryborough, but later folded. After the 2007 visit to Japan, Council determined to resurrect the group to promote various international friendships. The exchange visits between Rotary Clubs have not occurred for some years. Student exchange programs and cultural exchange continue to be strong. The Kasukabe Council provides secretariat support to Kasukabe International Friendship Association supported by local Businessmen and the Council.

In September 2014 a delegation from Fraser Coast travelled to Kasukabe and a formal Sister City Agreement was signed.

d. HONIARA (Friendship)

Honiara is a city of 64, 600 people, located in the Solomon Islands. On the 28th of September 2005 the former Maryborough City Council signed a Statement of Partnership and Friendship with Honiara City Council. Through the Commonwealth Local Government Forum South Pacific Project the Council entered into an agreement to exchange information, expertise and culture for the mutual benefit of both Councils.