

Sister Cities & Friendship Cities Policy

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City of
Newcastle

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Part A Preliminary

1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- 1.1.1 Facilitate the development and maintenance of effective international and domestic relations that promote and enhance City of Newcastle's (CN) vision to be an outstanding place to live, work, learn and play;
- 1.1.2 Outline the rationale and criteria for entering into such relationships;
- 1.1.3 Provide CN with guidelines and a framework for initiating and accepting requests to engage in new relationships.

2 Scope

2.1 This Policy covers all elected members of Council, all CN staff, any person or organisation acting on behalf of CN, and any person or organisation participating in delegations led by CN.

3 Principles

3.1 CN commits itself to the following:

- a) **Accountability and transparency** – This Policy provides a governance framework for the transparent and merit-based provision of support and a system of accountability for CN.
- b) **Alignment with CN's Community Strategic Plan (CSP)** – This Policy aligns with and supports the delivery of the CSP and the Four-Year Delivery Program.
- c) **Collaboration** – CN values the relationships with other local governments and community groups. Collaboration enhances positive community and economic outcomes through the delivery of initiatives and improved relationships funded by CN.
- d) **Inclusiveness** – CN makes its best efforts to reach, involve and hear from those who are impacted directly or indirectly by our decisions.
- e) **Values** – CN is committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Embedding local action as part of our global relationships assist in delivering for our community and others: good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; climate action; peace, justice and strong institutions and partnerships for growth.

Part B Roles and Responsibilities

4 Designated Officer

- 4.1 The Designated Officer will determine appropriateness of application against the assessment criteria in accordance with the Sister Cities and Friendship Cities Policy.
- 4.2 The Designated Officer will make their recommendation which is to be considered and determined by the Assessment Panel.
- 4.3 The Designated Officer will undertake a review of the relationship to ensure it still meets the minimum requirements against the assessment criteria and provide their recommendation for determination by the Assessment Panel.
- 4.4 The Designated Officer will manage any Expression of Interest from Councillors for any future Visitation Program.

5 Assessment Panel

- 5.1 The Assessment Panel will include the Lord Mayor and elected Council.
- 5.2 The Assessment Panel will assess and determine applications as an item to be considered during an Ordinary Council Meeting, following a report and recommendation from the Designated Officer. The report should not be marked confidential.

6 Lord Mayor

- 6.1 The Lord Mayor is to formalise the entering of a Sister City Relationship, only after formal endorsement by the Assessment Panel, on behalf of the City.
- 6.2 This is to be done by way of signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sister City.

7 Sister City or Friendship City

- 7.1 Successful Sister City or Friendship City applicants are required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding in order to formalise the relationship.

Part B Policy Details

8 Objectives of Sister City Relationships

- 8.1 Extend the hand of friendship nationally and internationally on a person-to-person basis, utilising the resources of local government;
- 8.2 Develop economic, trade, cultural, educational and other beneficial exchanges;
- 8.3 Perpetuate an understanding between people at all levels and different countries and cultures;
- 8.4 Bring together like-minded interest groups of each city;
- 8.5 Provide a forum for the exchange of sister city experiences;
- 8.6 Promote knowledge and understanding and extend the level of contacts through all sectors of the community.

9 Policy Statement

- 9.1 CN is committed to establishing and maintaining effective relationships with international, interstate, and intrastate local governments to facilitate sustainable and continuous improvement in the development of its economic, educational, cultural, social and environmental objectives.

10 Assessment Criteria for Consideration of Relationships

- 10.1 A relationship may only be entered into if it is likely to yield one or more of the following outcomes:
 - 10.1.1 Economic
 - (a) Business partnerships and opportunities;
 - (b) Trade, investment and/or export opportunities;
 - (c) Industry attraction and expansion;
 - (d) Introduction of new technologies or processes;
 - (e) Tourism promotion opportunities.
 - 10.1.2 Educational
 - (a) Enhanced education and training opportunities;
 - (b) School student/teacher exchange programs;
 - (c) Attraction of new university, school, adult training or tertiary institutions and students;
 - (d) Tertiary education linkages generally.
 - (e) Local Government knowledge sharing and information exchange.
 - 10.1.3 Environmental
 - (a) Ecosystem and biodiversity research and conservation partnerships;
 - (b) Environmental and climate change adaptation information exchange;
 - (c) Environmental technology and innovation exchange.
 - 10.1.4 Social/Cultural
 - (a) Cultural enhancement;
 - (b) Attraction of sporting competitions and events;
 - (c) Improved governance, leadership and internal standing.

11 Policy Process

- 11.1 All relationship initiatives must contribute to the achievement of at least one of the CN's CSP strategy objectives.
- 11.2 The CN staff designated by the CEO shall be the central point of coordination and will provide recommendations for consideration by the elected Council as the Assessment Panel, including the terms of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- 11.3 In considering the establishment of a new relationship, the Assessment Panel is to consider the acceptability of the terms of the MoU to determine if a relationship would be beneficial to the City, with their decision binding.
- 11.4 A new relationship will be entered into upon the signing of the MoU by the Lord Mayor following its endorsement by the elected Council as the Assessment Panel.
- 11.5 The MoU will be reviewed by the Designated Officer after a period of five years, or earlier if appropriate, to determine if the Sister City relationship continues to be beneficial to the City.
- 11.6 The relationship is to have demonstrated adequate activity in the areas of economic development, education, the environment, social or cultural exchanges for it to continue following each review.

12 Visitation and Funding

- 12.1 CN will support a visitation program of each of its Sister Cities. Any program of visiting delegations, both inbound and outbound, will be supplemented by an appropriate funding allocation in CN's annual budget or by quarterly review. The visitation program will allow for delegations to be reciprocated to or by the partner City in the following term of office.
- 12.2 Council will encourage all delegates (both inbound and outbound) to be supplemented with representatives who may be able to assist in furthering the benefits of these relationships, as noted at Clause 6.
- 12.3 Outbound delegations will be led by the Lord Mayor and accompanied by up to a maximum of three (3) other Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or nominated representative, and relevant CN staff. In the event of the Lord Mayor not being available to attend any outbound delegation, the Deputy Mayor will be nominated to undertake this responsibility.
- 12.4 The principle of selecting Councillors referred to in Clause 7.3 will be as following:
 - 12.4.1 Following expressions of interest by Councillors to the Designated Officer;
 - 12.4.2 At the discretion of the Lord Mayor in accordance with current CN *Instrument of Delegation to the Lord Mayor*;
 - 12.4.3 Excluding Councillors whom previously participated in an outbound delegation within the current council term.
 - 12.4.4 A register of delegates attending outbound delegations is to be established and maintained by the Designated Officer.
- 12.5 The Lord Mayor, accompanied by the CEO or their delegate and any other CN staff or community members whose participation is deemed appropriate, may participate in a delegation, subject to provisions being made in CN's adopted budget for that financial year and in accordance with CN's *Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy*, *Overseas Travel Policy* and *Travelling Arrangements and Expenses Policy - Staff*. CN will not pay or reimburse any associated expenses of other councillors, CN officers, community members or spouses wishing to travel with the delegation.
- 12.6 A Councillor may, as part of other travel whether personal or otherwise, be provided with a letter of introduction to visit a Sister City. Such a visit is not considered to be an official Sister City visit and is not to be funded by CN, under this Policy or otherwise.

- 12.7 Any travel related to Sister Cities that is not in accordance with this Policy will not be funded or reimbursed by CN.
- 12.8 All conduct by attendees during visitations will be in accordance with CN's relevant *Code of Conduct*.

13 Compliance with Australia's Foreign Policy

- 13.1 Any activities, relationships or agreement between CN and any foreign entity, including local governments, agencies and departments, shall be in compliance with *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020*, and subsequent legislation.
- 13.2 All foreign Sister City relationships, including those previously entered into, shall be notified by the officer designated by the CEO to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade via the Online Notification Portal under the *Foreign Arrangements Scheme*.

14 Relationship Definitions

Model	Purpose	Duration
Sister City	A formal, long-term relationship based on diverse linkages between the two cities, including but not limited to, cultural, educational, tourism, sporting and business links, Sister Cities often have similar demographics and other characteristics. The relationship requires a high degree of commitment from both sides.	Long-term commitment, however to be reviewed by CN Designated Officer every five (5) years, and by the Council every ten (10) years.
Friendship City	A less formal relationship with generally a lower profile. It is likely to be a long-term relationship, but the level of required community support and involvement not as high as a Sister City. For example, the purpose may be for only a particular sporting event held on an annual basis, cultural diversity, a specific project, specific objectives and opportunities between the cities, or mentoring.	Generally enduring, but can be set for a specific term. To be reviewed by CN Designated Officer every five (5) years.

15 Dissolving Sister City Relationships

- 15.1 Relationships may be dissolved upon mutual agreement of the two cities, or if CN determines upon review that the relationship has ceased to meet the assessment criteria. Dissolution will be a decision for the elected Council, following review and

recommendation by the Designated Officer.

15.2 A formal notice of CN's decision will be forwarded at the earliest opportunity to the relevant city.

ANNEXURE A - DEFINITIONS

Assessment Criteria means the method used to evaluate an application.

CEO means Chief Executive Officer of the City of Newcastle and includes their delegate or authorised representative.

References to the Chief Executive Officer are references to the General Manager appointed under the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW).

City of Newcastle (CN) means Newcastle City Council.

CN Staff means employees of CN (including full time, part time, fixed term and casual) or Specific Talent Contractor who is engaged under a CN position description.

Community Strategic Plan (CSP) is the highest level of strategic planning undertaken by CN. It identifies the main p[r]iorities and aspirations of the community and provides a clear set of strategic directions to achieve the community's vision.

Council means the elected Council.

Councillor means a person elected to civic office as a member of the governing body including the Lord Mayor.

Unless stated otherwise, a reference to a section or clause is a reference to a section or clause of this Policy.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) a MoU is a document describing a bilateral or multilateral agreement between parties. It expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action, and may not imply a legal commitment. It is a more formal alternative to a Statement of Intent, however lacks the binding power of a contract.

Visitation Program means a delegation of an official, in-person representation of the City, backed by the City's resources and a structured program of activities. The delegation's role is to actively pursue one or more of the relationship outcomes as per the Memorandum of Understanding.

ANNEXURE B - POLICY AUTHORISATIONS

In accordance with section 378 of the Local Government Act 1993, the Chief Executive Officer delegates the following functions to the positions listed:

Title of authorisation	Description of authorisation	Position Number and Title
Assessment criteria including review	Determine and approve weightings for assessment criteria in accordance with the Sister Cities and Friendship Cities Policy.	Officer/s designated by the Chief Executive Officer

ANNEXURE C - SISTER CITY APPLICATION FORM

Sister City Application Form



Details of City		
City Name		
State/Province		Country
Type of Partnership		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sister City	A formal, long-term relationship based on diverse linkages between the two cities, including but not limited to, cultural, educational, tourism, sporting and business links, Sister Cities often have similar demographics and other characteristics. The relationship requires a high degree of commitment from both sides.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friendship City	A less formal relationship with generally a lower profile. It is likely to be a long-term relationship, but the level of required community support and involvement not as high as a Sister City. For example, the purpose may be for only a particular sporting event held on an annual basis, cultural diversity, a specific project, specific objectives and opportunities between the cities, or mentoring.
Stage 1: About your City		

Sister City Application Form



Stage 2: Evaluation

How would a Partnership be mutually beneficial and what outcomes are desired in respect of the following:

Economic

Education

Environment

Social/Cultural

Contact Details

SIGNATURE

Signature of City Contact: _____ Date:

Name of City Contact:

Job Title:

Email Address:

Sister City Application Form



Stage 3: Risk Assessment & Recommendation (to be completed internally by CN Designated Officer only)

RISK RATING Select a risk rating based on [all of the available information](#) (examples or risks are below)

Low Risk

Medium Risk

High Risk

Comments:

As a result of the evaluation and risk assessment undertaken it is recommended that the partnership is established:

Yes

No

Comments:

SIGNATURE

Signature of Designated Officer: _____ Date: _____

Name of Designated Officer: _____

Next Review Date (+5 years): _____

Compliance with Australia's Foreign Policy

I confirm the activities and agreement under this partnership [are in compliance with Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020](#), and subsequent legislation.

Upon its effect, this partnership has been notified to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade via the Online Notification Portal under the *Foreign Arrangements Scheme*.

Signature of Designated Officer: _____ Date: _____

Name of Designated Officer: _____

ANNEXURE D - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING TEMPLATE

THE CITY OF NEWCASTLE - CITY OF XXX SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIP MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

In accordance with the authorisation and endorsement expressed by the City of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, and City of XXX, XXX State, XXX Country, it is declared that a 'Sister City Partnership' between the two cities is hereby established for the following purposes:

1. To promote and expand the effective and mutually beneficial cooperation between the people of City of Newcastle and City of XXX; and
2. To promote international goodwill, understanding, and expanded business relations between the two cities and their respective nations by the exchange of people, ideas, and information in a wide variety of economic, social, cultural, environmental, youth, and other endeavours; and
3. To foster and encourage charitable, scientific, trade and commerce, literary and educational activities between the two cities; and/or
4. XXX other purpose.

With the above purposes in mind, the Lord Mayor of the City of Newcastle and the Mayor of the City of XXX solemnly confirm that these two cities are united by an official partnership by the protocol of this Memorandum of Understanding.

This agreement comes into effect from the date of signatures.

Date: DAY MONTH YEAR

Cr XXX XXX
Lord Mayor
City of Newcastle

Cr XXX XXX
Mayor
City of XXX

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Policy title	Sister Cities & Friendship Cities Policy
Policy owner	Chief Executive Office
Policy expert/writer	Policy Advisor
Associated Guideline or Procedure Title	Nil
Guideline or Procedure owner	N/A
Prepared by	CEO's Office
Approved by	CEO
Date approved	3/01/2024
Commencement Date	3/01/2024
Next review date	30/04/2027
Termination date	30/04/2028
Version #	Version number 1
Category	Elected Council
Details of previous versions	NIL
Keywords	Relationships, partnerships, international, community, economic development, cultural, exchange
Relevant Newcastle 2040 Theme/s	Liveable Sustainable Creative Achieving Together
Relevant legislation/codes (reference specific sections)	This Policy supports CN's compliance with the following legislation: <i>Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020</i>
Other related documents	Nil
Related forms	Nil
Required on website	Yes
Authorisations	Functions authorised under this Policy at Annexure B