

Sister City Relationships Policy

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1. Scope

This Sister City Relationships Policy (**Policy**) applies to the formation, development, and maintenance of all Sister Cities Relationships, whether initiated by the Lord Mayor, Councillors, CEO, City of Parramatta Council staff, or the City of Parramatta Community (**Community**).

The Policy applies to the Lord Mayor, Councillors, CEO, City of Parramatta Council staff, any person or organisation acting on behalf of City of Parramatta Council (**Council**), any person or organisation participating in delegations led by Council, and Community members carrying out their responsibilities as part of a Sister City Relationship.

The Policy also applies to Sister City Relationships with other Australian councils and is not necessarily intended exclusively for foreign entities. However, the Policy does not preclude Council from entering cooperative partnerships with other Australian/NSW/metropolitan councils, as required.

2. Purpose

This Policy guides the formation, development, maintenance, and review of effective international and domestic relations that promote City of Parramatta's 2050 vision to be a global city full of world-class experiences and opportunities to gather, create, and accelerate.

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This Policy has been developed to ensure Council forms and maintains Sister City Relationships that are strategic, meaningful, and accountable to the City of Parramatta Community.

3. Policy

3.1 Principles of Sister City Relationships – Criteria for Formation and Assessment (Principles)

The following Principles provide the essential criteria for the formation, development, maintenance, and review of a Sister City Relationship. Council's Sister City Relationships must meet all the following criteria.

The Sister City Relationships:

- a) are between cities which share historic, cultural, social, economic, demographic or geographic ties, similarities, or synergies;
- b) clearly demonstrate a meaningful reciprocal partnership or activity built on mutual respect, understanding, and a commitment to shared objectives;
- c) are purposeful and established with clear motives, obligations, and objectives;
- d) are likely to yield positive economic, trade, educational, environmental, philanthropic, social, and/or cultural outcomes;
- e) show that the communities of both cities have a demonstrated commitment to, and interest in, forming and maintaining the Sister City Relationship;
- f) promote genuine people-to-people and cultural links amongst both communities; and
- g) align with Council's Community Strategic Plan and Parramatta 2050.

3.2 Considerations for Evaluation of Sister City Relationship Proposals and Review of Existing Sister City Relationships (Considerations)

A proposal to establish a Sister City Relationship, whether from the City of Parramatta Community or a potential Sister City, must be submitted to the Lord Mayor and CEO with a rationale outlining the purpose of the proposed Sister City Relationship and how the proposed Sister City Relationship addresses the Principles.

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In evaluating the proposal, the CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor, will consider:

- a) if the proposed Sister City Relationship meets the Principles;
- b) the purpose of the proposed Sister City Relationship;
- c) the relevance and value of the proposed Sister City Relationship to the City of Parramatta Community;
- d) NSW Government international programs, policies or partnerships;
- e) Commonwealth Government international programs, policies or partnerships;
- f) whether, pursuant to the relevant provisions of *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 (Cth) (Foreign Relations Act)*, negotiating or entering into the proposed Sister City Relationships:
 - i. would adversely affect, or would be likely to adversely affect, Australia's foreign relations; or
 - ii. would be, or would be likely to be, inconsistent with Australia's foreign policy;
- g) the nature and scope of existing Sister City Relationships; and
- h) Council's capacity to support and resource the proposed Sister City Relationship.

3.3 Conflicts of Interest

Any interest or pre-existing relationship of the Lord Mayor, Councillor, CEO, or Council staff with the proposed Sister City must be declared. The proposal will be considered only if all conflicts of interest can be appropriately managed in line with Council policies, procedures, and guidelines, as amended from time to time.

A person must not obtain a private benefit or advantage by virtue of their position as a Council Official. Additionally, a Council Official must not misuse the power or authority of their position to unfairly influence or decide a matter where they have a real or perceived private interest.

All conflicts of interest must be disclosed promptly and fully to prevent bias and to remove the appearance of bias, in decision-making. All conflicts of interest must be managed effectively, in a transparent manner, and in favour of the public interest.

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At any time that the Lord Mayor, Councillor, CEO, or Council staff communicates and/or engages relevant stakeholders relating to a Sister City Relationship, it must be clear that the communication and/or engagement is on behalf of Council.

If the Lord Mayor, Councillor, CEO, or Council staff officer communicates and/or engages with another Australian or overseas local government for the purposes of a private relationship or partnership, they must clearly state it is not on behalf of Council. This must be declared as an interest or pre-existing relationship.

A Sister City Relationship may give rise to the perception of corruption and risks to the integrity of Council (see also, [Independent Commission Against Corruption New South Wales, Guidance for councillors on corruption risks associated with overseas travel \(June 2024\)](#)).

At all times, the Lord Mayor, Councillors, CEO, Council staff, and Community members engaged for the purposes of assessing, facilitating, maintaining, and reviewing a Sister City Relationship are to comply with Council's:

- relevant Code of Conduct;
- Business Ethics Policy;
- Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy;
- Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy;
- Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy;
- Gifts and Benefits Guidelines;
- Information Security Management Policies;
- Lobbying Policy;
- Public Interest Disclosures Policy;
- Work Health and Safety Policy;
- Guidelines for managing gifts and benefits;
- Guidelines for declaring and managing conflicts of interest; and
- other policies, procedures, and/or guidelines, as applicable.

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4. Delegation

There are no Administrative and/or Legislative Delegations applicable to this Policy.

5. Procedure

5.1 Formation of Sister Cities Relationships

Should a proposal to establish a Sister City Relationship satisfy the Principles and Considerations, the CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor, will undertake the following process to form a Sister City Relationship:

- a) The CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor, will develop a memorandum of understanding between Council and the proposed Sister City for a fixed term of five years, or up to five years, based on the details of the relationship and the Principles.
- b) If a Sister City Relationship is proposed to be established with a local, municipal, or other government entity outside Australia, Council must provide notice of the proposed Sister City Relationship to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in accordance with the manner prescribed under section 34(2) of the Foreign Relations Act and section 5F of the *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Rules 2020* (Cth) (**Foreign Relations Rules**) (see also, [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(DFAT\), Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020 Fact Sheet 1 – Overview \(September 2021\)](#); [DFAT, Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020 Fact Sheet 3 – Local Government \(January 2021\)](#); and [DFAT, Australia's Foreign Relations \(State and Territory Arrangements\) Act 2020 Guidance – Considerations for Negotiating and Entering Foreign Arrangements \(June 2025\)](#)).
- c) For a period of 30 days following notice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the proposed Sister City Relationship, no further steps will be taken to approve or formally adopt the Sister City Relationship.
- d) If approved by the CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor, the new Sister City Relationship must be formally adopted by way of Council resolution at a Council meeting.

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- e) With reference to the Council resolution, the CEO will direct Council staff to undertake activities to achieve the agreed purpose(s) of the Sister City Relationship.
- f) With reference to the Council resolution, the CEO will prepare and approve budget and expenses to achieve the agreed purpose(s) of the Sister City Relationship, including its motives, obligations, objectives, and outcomes.
- g) If a new Sister City Relationship is established with a local, municipal, or other government entity outside Australia, Council must provide notice of the new Sister City Relationship to the Minister for Foreign Affairs within 14 days, in accordance with the manner prescribed under section 38(2) of the Foreign Relations Act and section 5G of the Foreign Relations Rules.
- h) In accordance with sections 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, and 43 of the Foreign Relations Act, the establishment and continuation of Sister City Relationships with local, municipal, or other government entities outside Australia are "non-core foreign arrangements" made subject to the Minister for Foreign Affairs reserving the discretionary power to declare that:
 - i. Council must not start, or continue, to negotiate a Sister City Relationship;
 - ii. Council must not enter a proposed Sister City Relationship; or
 - iii. an existing Sister City Relationship is invalid and unenforceable, required to be varied or terminated, or not in operation.
- i) The Minister for Foreign Affairs may make such a declaration if they are satisfied that an existing or proposed Sister City Relationship and/or related negotiations:
 - i. adversely affects, or is likely to adversely affect, Australia's foreign relations; or
 - ii. is, or is likely to be, inconsistent with Australia's foreign policy.
- j) The Minister for Foreign Affairs may make such a declaration:
 - i. upon becoming aware that Council proposes to negotiate, or is negotiating, the establishment of a Sister City Relationship with a local, municipal, or other government entity outside Australia;

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- ii. upon being notified that Council proposes to establish a Sister City Relationship with a local, municipal, or other government entity outside Australia; or
- iii. with respect to an existing Sister City Relationship.

5.2 Management of Sister Cities Relationships

The Principles are central to a Sister City Relationship.

The Sister City Relationship will be managed in accordance with relevant Council policies, procedures, and guidelines, which include, but are not limited to, Council's:

- Codes of Conduct;
- Business Ethics Policy;
- Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy;
- Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy;
- Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy;
- Gifts and Benefits Guidelines;
- Information Security Management Policies;
- Lobbying Policy;
- Public Interest Disclosures Policy;
- Work Health and Safety Policy;
- Guidelines for managing gifts and benefits;
- Guidelines for declaring and managing conflicts of interest; and
- other policies, procedures, and/or guidelines, as applicable.

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A Sister City Relationship must:

- a) have Council support and acknowledge the role of the Lord Mayor as primary spokesperson for Council;
- b) be fully in accordance with Council's relevant policies, procedures, and guidelines (refer to clause 3.2 of this Policy);
- c) demonstrate measurable ongoing Council and Community activity, relevance, and benefits throughout the Sister City Relationship;
- d) be adaptable to meet changing Community needs;
- e) be reviewed at the end of its term, with the option of dissolution of the Sister City Relationship, if Council and Community outcomes have not been adequately demonstrated; and
- f) be established on a fixed term of five years or up to five years, with renewal dependent on successful evaluation.

Council representatives (e.g. the Lord Mayor, Councillors, CEO, and Council staff) travelling on behalf of Council or representing Council at Sister City Relationship-related activities are required to adhere to Council's policies, procedures, and guidelines, at all times. However, Council acknowledges that delegations and face-to-face contact are only one aspect of maintaining a Sister City Relationship.

5.3 Gifts and Benefits

Council acknowledges that there are diverse cultural beliefs and practices. This carries scope for accepting gifts or benefits with the intent of not causing undue offence or creating cultural disrespect towards the gift giver. Gifts and benefits offered and/or accepted in this manner must be declared according to Council's Gifts and Benefits Guidelines, including completion of the Gifts and Benefits Declaration Form, where appropriate.

Diverse cultural beliefs and practices may also lead to the perception of a person and/or people being misled about appropriate practices.

Further advice on these matters may be sought from Council's Governance team.

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5.4 Budget and Expenses

The budget and approved expenses associated with the formation, development, maintenance, and review of a Sister City Relationship are managed in accordance with this Policy and the Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy.

Probity principles will apply, and purchases and expenses will undergo appropriate scrutiny to align with Community expectations in the public interest.

5.5 Evaluation and Review of Sister Cities Relationships

The CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor, will undertake a comprehensive review at the end of the Sister City Relationship's term (as specified in the relevant memorandum of understanding). This review will evaluate the overall success of Sister City Relationship motives, obligations, objectives, and outcomes stated in accordance with clauses 3.1 and 5.2 of this Policy.

The outcomes of the review will be determining factors in whether the Sister City Relationship is renewed for another fixed term, or if the Sister City relationship is dissolved. The outcomes of the review, as assessed by the CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor, will be reported to the Council meeting as a Sister City Relationship review report, for Councillors' consideration.

Any renewal of a Sister City Relationship must be formally adopted by way of Council resolution at a Council Meeting, and the relevant provisions of the Foreign Relations Act and Foreign Relations Rules (referred to at clause 5.1 of this Policy), will apply equally to any such renewal.

A mid-term review of the Sister City Relationship may also occur if:

- a) the Sister City Relationship appears to have stalled or there are no demonstrable Community outcomes of the partnership; or
- b) the Principles are not met or are breached.

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6. Definitions

Term	Definition
Community	encompasses people who live, work, or invest in the Parramatta Local Government Area and/or the local government area associated with the Sister City Relationship. This includes individual groups (whether they be cultural, sporting, industry or other); residents; ratepayers; tourism operators; registered training organisations; business owners; sporting groups; not-for-profit organisations; schools; religious institutions; and State and Federal agencies.
Considerations	refers to the Considerations for Evaluation of Sister City Relationship Proposals and Review of Existing Sister City Relationships, set out at clause 3.2 of the Policy.
Council	means City of Parramatta Council.
Council Official	includes Councillors, Council staff, administrators of Council, Council Committee members, delegates of Council, and Council advisers.
Principles	refers to the Principles of Sister City Relationships – Criteria for Formation and Assessment, set out at clause 3.1 of the Policy.
Sister City	refers to the Australian or overseas local government, with which Council intends to enter a Sister City Relationship.
Sister City Relationship	means a formally recognised mutually beneficial partnership between City of Parramatta Council and another Australian or overseas local government, including but not limited to, another local government, municipality, city, town or regional shire.

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REFERENCES	<i>Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 (Cth)</i> <i>Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Rules 2020 (Cth)</i> <u>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 Fact Sheet 1 – Overview (September 2021)</u> <u>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 Fact Sheet 3 – Local Government (January 2021)</u> <u>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 Guidance – Considerations for Negotiating and Entering Foreign Arrangements) (June 2025)</u> <u>Independent Commission Against Corruption New South Wales, Guidance for councillors on corruption risks associated with overseas travel (June 2024)</u>
ASSOCIATED POLICIES	• Business Ethics Policy • Codes of Conduct • Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy • Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy • Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy • Gifts and Benefits Guidelines • Information Security Management Policies • Lobbying Policy • Public Interest Disclosures Policy • Guidelines for managing gifts and benefits;

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	- Guidelines for declaring and managing conflicts of interest; and - Work Health and Safety Policy
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