

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS POLICY

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<b>Policy Type:</b>	Council
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<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Manager Governance
<b>Owner:</b>	Governance
<b>Responsible Director:</b>	Corporate Performance
<b>Relevant Legislation/Authority:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)</i> <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)</i> <i>Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020</i>
<b>DOCSETID:</b>	3151145

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1. provide greater clarity to guide the City's overall approach to formal International Relationships;
- 1.2. improve targeting of formal International Relationships to ensure that the City receives clear benefits and value for money, and;
- 1.3. provide greater consistency in approach to future decision making on formal International Relationships primarily through a set of core principles.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. International Relationships, connections and partnerships are now part of the everyday business of most communities whether at governmental, organisational, business, community or personal level, and Greater Bendigo is no exception. Since the previous International Relations Policy was approved in December 2014, significant changes have occurred in Greater Bendigo. Increased connections, demands and opportunities in relation to a globalising world mean the City of Greater Bendigo needs to be strategic in what it supports, promotes and responds to.
- 2.2. Many of Greater Bendigo businesses seek out international markets: Greater Bendigo's tourism profile is increasingly looking to international visitors; institutions like the Bendigo Art Gallery have formed strong international partnerships; our advanced manufacturers export to

over 50 countries; and every year more than 500 persons from overseas migrate to Greater Bendigo. Overseas organisations including local governments seek out contacts with the City of Greater Bendigo; and technology links people, businesses and communities around the globe. These trends and forces are increasing in their impact and reach. Whereas once approaches were formal and highly structured, increasingly approaches and contacts are almost random, they are now dynamic, and approaches are made, and responses sought often with little notice or information.

- 2.3. The City is currently involved in a diverse range of international activities including Art Gallery collaborations, the UNESCO City of Gastronomy and the Bendigo Maubisse Friendship Committee. In 2017, the City became the first city in Australia to be recognised as a Child Friendly City by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and in 2020 became the first local government in Australia to be accredited as a Welcoming City by the Welcoming Cities Network. Previously, the City was involved in Sister City relationships with Los Altos, California (USA), Penzance/St Just (United Kingdom), and Haimen, Jiangsu Province (China). The City does not have any current active Sister City relationships.
- 2.4. The Victorian State Government has driven the development of formalised municipal partnerships between local governments in Victoria and in Timor-Leste, with the aim of supporting decentralisation of government services in Timor-Leste and strengthening public sector skills. The Bendigo Maubisse Friendship Committee (BMFC) was formed in late 2006 to assist in the implementation of this partnership and in 2016 the City formalised its relationship with Timor-Leste through the signing of a Municipal Cooperation Agreement with the District of Ainaro, of which Maubisse is a subdistrict. Both the municipal partnership and the friendship relationship contribute to improved living standards, access to basic services, training, capacity building and social programs in Timor-Leste, and engage both the Maubisse and Greater Bendigo communities in its programs. The BMFC supports and helps maintain the friendship relationship between Greater Bendigo and Maubisse, providing the foundation for the municipal partnership. In response to changes in Local Government Act 2020, the BMFC is transitioning its model of governance to an incorporated association.
- 2.5. In this globalised changing context, the City is not able to respond to all opportunities that are presented because of the resource demands of doing so. The City has to vet all approaches to ascertain whether or not it is a priority or opportunity worth responding to. Yet in an increasingly globalised world the City cannot afford to stand by and ignore the range of potential opportunities that are presented. Increasingly we can observe other similar Cities that have forged strong International Relationships and have reaped important benefits. Indeed, the City has already done this – some by conscious effort and some by circumstance. The Bendigo Art Gallery is a stand out example, but so too are the Chinese Golden Dragon Museum, the Great Stupa, the designation of Bendigo as a UNESCO Creative City in Gastronomy and the export efforts of several advanced manufacturers are also examples.
- 2.6. In response to this changing context this policy provides a framework and set of principles to guide the City's involvement in formal International Relationships for the next four years.

### **3. SCOPE**

#### ***In-scope***

This policy applies to:

- 3.1. All Councillors, employees, volunteers and contractors engaged by the City who are involved in International Relationships on behalf of the City;
- 3.2. All International Relationships between the City and other overseas cities, organisations and countries;

- 3.3. All communication, strategy development, marketing, community engagement or consultation activities that are relevant to International Relationships;
- 3.4. The City's engagements with any external party that is a partner with the City in an International Relationship;
- 3.5. Any group or organisation that is funded by the City for an International Relationship; or
- 3.6. International Relationships to which the City is a partner and/or a participant under Commonwealth Government or Victorian Government arrangements.

### ***Out of scope***

This policy does not apply to:

- 3.7. International Relationships that private organisations undertake on their own as part of their normal business; and
- 3.8. International Relationships that are part of business as usual for the Commonwealth Government or Victorian Government and are beyond the scope of Local Government jurisdiction.

## **4. DEFINITIONS**

In this policy:

**Act** means *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic);

**City** means the Greater Bendigo City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic);

**Council** means all of the Councillors collectively;

**Councillor** means a person who holds the office of member of the Greater Bendigo City Council;

**Council Plan** means City of Greater Bendigo Community Plan (2017-2021) and subsequent Council Plans;

**Enter into International Relationships** means establishing a formal agreement to start or engage in International Relationships;

**Foreign Country** means any country that is outside Australia and the external Territories, whether or not it is an independent sovereign state.

**International Relationships** means formal political, economic, environmental, social and cultural relationships that exist between the City of Greater Bendigo and cities or organisations of a foreign country.

## 5. PRINCIPLES

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- 5.1 **Mutual benefit and goodwill** - The City's International Relationships where possible should be able to demonstrate either mutual benefit or goodwill to parties less fortunate. The City's International Relationships will be based on improving cooperation and mutual understanding, and social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits through goodwill and engagement.
- 5.1. **Alignment and relevance** – Only International Relationships that align with the Council Plan, policies and values, and which are in accordance with State and Commonwealth legislative requirements will be established. Only International Relationships that reflect the interests of the City and that are responsive to the economic, social, cultural and environmental needs and aspirations of primary stakeholders will be established.
- 5.2. **Leverage** – The City will, where relevant, utilise existing relationships to strengthen existing partnerships and build new partnerships to promote the City's social, cultural, environmental and economic development objectives. Innovative ways of increasing the City's international recognition will be adopted and best practice innovations shared among stakeholders to maximise opportunities available to the City's residents and businesses.
- 5.3. **Promotion** – The City will, where appropriate, promote investment opportunities for Greater Bendigo's businesses, manufacturers, education institutions and tourism industry with overseas cities and organisations.
- 5.4. **Sustainability** – The City's capacity to resource International Relationships and the likelihood for long-term success will need to be demonstrated with an implementation and funding plan. A sunset clause or exit strategy will be developed for each International Relationship where collaboration or partners' involvement is no longer feasible or is time limited.
- 5.5. **Accountability and transparency** - The City will adhere to value for money principles within existing resources and ensure accountability and transparency in use of public resources for International Relationships. The City will ensure regular information sharing and feedback to the community for continuous improvement and honest dialogue about International Relationships.
- 5.6. **Community participation** - The City's International Relationships must maximise community participation, support for humanitarianism and be supported by appropriate community engagement. Partnerships with local and international stakeholders will be undertaken to facilitate community connectivity based on mutual benefit and cultural diplomacy.
- 5.7. **Human Rights** - The City's International Relationships must reflect the City's commitment to human rights and be in accordance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic), the City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter 2014, and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The City will engage in International Relationships which are in accordance with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure dignity, peace and prosperity for people and the planet, and ensure proactive community development.

- 5.8. **Respect for cultural diversity** - The City's International Relationships must reflect the City's commitment to cultural diversity and demonstrate respect for cultural differences. The City will engage in International Relationships that ethically recognise, respect, promote and celebrate cultural differences.
- 5.9. **Capacity building** - The City's International Relationships must reflect the City's commitment to building and retaining skills and sharing knowledge and learning within International Relationships.
- 5.10. **Evidence-based** – The City's International Relationships must be evidence-based to demonstrate the community need. Decisions on which International Relationships to pursue will be based on the best available evidence.
- 5.11. **Evaluation and review** - The City will ensure systematic evaluation of effectiveness of the policy and International Relationships to assess whether the policy purpose has been achieved and whether the City's formal International Relationships are in accordance with the Council Plan. Regular review of the policy will be undertaken every four years or following the introduction of a new or revised Council Plan.

## **6. POLICY**

The following will be considered by Council when determining which International Relationship arrangement or activity to undertake:

### ***New International Relationships***

- 6.1. The City will only enter into formal International Relationships that align with the intent of the Council Plan.
- 6.2. The City will only enter into International Relationships that demonstrate adherence to all principles in this policy and create mutual benefit for the Greater Bendigo local community in at least one of the following categories:
- a) Economic - includes tourism, trade (import and export), aviation, investment, and attracting skilled migrants.
  - b) Social and cultural - includes cultural exchange, sports and recreation, arts and creative industries, and festivals.
  - c) Environmental – includes climate change action, biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems.
  - d) Educational and other professional services - includes student exchange, student placements, study tours, educational and industrial conferences, training, and professional services communities of practice.
  - e) Technical and scientific - includes research and innovation collaboration, environmental, technological, and fact-finding-tours.
  - f) Humanitarian - includes aid, volunteering, and community development.
- 6.3. Any new International Relationships must build on the existing strengths that lie within the Greater Bendigo local community.
- 6.4. Any International Relationships activity must result in positive promotion and strengthening of the reputation of the City and Greater Bendigo community and businesses.

- 6.5. Any new formal International Relationships must be approved by Council.
- 6.6. Any new proposal for International Relationships must demonstrate due consideration to human rights in accordance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic), the City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter 2014, and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 6.7. Any International Relationships will only be undertaken after careful consideration of the City's resource constraints and resource implications in the short- and long-term.

#### ***Existing International Relationships***

- 6.8. The City will review all International Relationships biennially to ensure the relationships are continuing to align with the Council Plan.
- 6.9. The outcomes from any International Relationships must be periodically presented to Council and made publicly available.
- 6.10. The City will consider other partnerships, capabilities and capacity to sustain International Relationships.

#### ***Withdrawal from International Relationships***

- 6.11. The City will consider concluding any International Relationships that are considered no longer relevant or that no longer align with the Council Plan.
- 6.12. Any International Relationships that contravene State or Commonwealth law, the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be concluded.
- 6.13. The City will evaluate all International Relationships whose tenure comes to an end to determine if they can be renewed or concluded in accordance with this policy.
- 6.14. Any International Relationship that no longer satisfies the requirements of this policy may be concluded by Council.

## **7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the responsibility of Council to consider and approve formal International Relationships. It is the responsibility of all City employees, volunteers and contractors engaged by the City who are involved in International Relationships on behalf of the City as outlined in section 3 of this policy, to plan and deliver formal International Relationships consistent with the policy.

## **8. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Readers are encouraged to access relevant documents and/or resources which are available as per the below.

These include:

- *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020*
- *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*



- *City of Greater Bendigo Community Plan*
- *City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter 2014*
- *Charter of the United Nations*
- *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to the responsible work unit.

## 9. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

## 10. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of EMT or where required, resolution of Council.

## 11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Change Type</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>
<i>December 2014</i>	<i>PG</i>	<i>Community Wellbeing</i>	<i>Development of International Relations Policy</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>December 2016</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>AW</i>	<i>Community Partnerships</i>	<i>Review</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>June 2025</i>
<i>August 2021</i>	<i>RM</i>	<i>Legal Services</i>	<i>Admin – allocate to Governance</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>June 2025</i>