

Sister City Proposal with Athens, Greece

Strategic Alignment - Dynamic City Culture

Tuesday, 16 May 2023

City Finance and Governance
Committee

Program Contact:

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Public

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Adelaide has received a proposal to enter into a Sister City agreement with Athens, Greece. This proposal was initiated by members of State Parliament the Hon. Minister Andrea Michaels MP, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, the Hon. Frank Pangelo MLC, and the Hon. Connie Bonaros MLC.

The policy position of the former term of Council was that any new international partnerships would first take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

An international engagement assessment framework will be prepared for Council consideration aligned with the development of this Council's new Strategic Plan.

A relationship with Athens would seek to leverage the existing strong links between the two countries and focus on potential economic and cultural synergies.

The proposal for a Sister City relationship has the support of the Mayor of Athens and other senior Greek political and cultural leaders.

The Hellenic Australia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HACCI) SA Chapter has provided a letter in support of a Sister City relationship, and which outlines their commitment to collaboration within the business and professional community.

Establishing an international relationship, regardless of type, will require approval under the Commonwealth Government's Foreign Arrangement Scheme prior to formalising any agreement.

Formalising an MoU, or undertaking to enter into such an agreement on the City's behalf, could occur either when the Mayor of Athens visits Adelaide, or sooner if a member of Council is in Europe privately.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 23 May 2023 for consideration

THAT THE CITY FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL:

That Council:

1. Notes the keen interest expressed by the South Australian business community and members of the South Australian Parliament, Attachments A, B and C to Item 4.6 on the Agenda for the meeting of the City Finance and Governance Committee held on 16 May 2023, in developing a Sister City relationship with Athens, Greece.
2. Authorises the Administration to enter discussions with Athens, Greece to determine the nature and themes of a proposed Memorandum of Understanding.
3. Notes that before a relationship can be entered into, intent to do so must be registered with the Foreign Arrangements Scheme and approval given.

IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2020-2024 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Dynamic City Culture Global connections and collaborations
Policy	The policy position of the former term of Council was that any new international partnerships would first take the form of an MoU, and would need to be individually assessed in detail, including against key success metrics. Registration through the Commonwealth Government’s Foreign Arrangement Scheme is also a requirement prior to entering into any international arrangements. An international engagement assessment framework will be prepared for Council consideration aligned with the development of this Council’s new Strategic Plan.
Consultation	Not as a result of this report
Resource	Not as a result of this report
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Council’s intent to enter an international relationship must be registered with the Commonwealth Government’s Foreign Arrangements Scheme, and Ministerial approval given, before a relationship can be formalised. This is a requirement of the <i>Australia’s Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020</i> .
Opportunities	International relationships present opportunities for knowledge sharing between two cities, leveraging existing community relationships, and encouraging collaboration and exchange in a variety of areas specific to each. The relationship with Athens, Greece is proposed to focus on potential economic synergy around trade (especially tourism and education); scientific exchange; inbound and outbound investment; and migration to meet skills demands in South Australia industries. South Australian expertise in green energy innovation, waste management developments, low emission transportation, innovation and startup ecosystems, and planning initiatives for high-density living and social housing could be leveraged in this relationship.
22/23 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Proposed 23/24 Budget Allocation	A 2023/24 budget reconsideration will be required to support the development and signing of an agreement with Athens, Greece. The International Relations budget covers Civic celebration events and is not envisaged to cover the resourcing and development on an MoU.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	An MoU would typically have a timeframe of three years. The exact length of time could be raised with Athens during discussions determining the nature of the relationship.
22/23 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Each international relationship has ongoing cost consideration for milestone events and internal resourcing to service the relationship. Current internal resourcing is approximately 0.3 FTE. This resourcing responsibility is shared within the Office of the Lord Mayor, and relevant teams from within the Administration.
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

DISCUSSION

Context

1. On 16 March 2023 the Lord Mayor met with The Hon. Minister Andrea Michaels MP, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs, the Hon. Frank Pangello MLC, and the Hon. Connie Bonaros MLC, to discuss the possibility of establishing a Sister City relationship with Athens, Greece, which could deliver significant economic, business, and cultural benefits.
 - 1.1. At this meeting the Lord Mayor explained that in the current economic climate there would be little scope for delegations funded by the City of Adelaide but the opportunity to support visits to South Australia and inbound trade delegations would occur.
 - 1.2. This was followed on 2 May 2023 by two letters from those members of parliament formally proposing the City of Adelaide investigate a Sister City relationship with Athens, Greece (**Attachments 1 and 2**).
2. The parliamentarians report keen interest in the proposal from the Mayor of Athens, Kosta Bakoyiannis, who intends to visit Adelaide in the coming months, as well as the Deputy Minister for Development and Investments, Dr Christos Dimas, and the Director General of the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Professor Nikolaos Stampolidis.
3. Hellenic Australia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HACCI) SA Chapter have provided a letter of support highlighting their commitment to support a Sister City relationship through collaboration within the business and professional community (**Attachment 3**).
4. The relationship would seek to leverage existing strong links between the two countries and focus on potential economic synergy around trade (especially tourism and education), scientific exchange, in and outbound investment, and migration to meet skills demands in South Australia industries. South Australian expertise in green energy innovation, waste management developments, low emission transportation, innovation and startup ecosystem, and planning initiatives for high-density living and social housing could be leveraged in this relationship.
5. Current connections include:
 - 5.1. Regular visits to South Australia by the Greek Government via Ministerial delegation, and the Presidential Guard (Evzones).
 - 5.2. Bi-Annual World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association event attended by State and Federal MPs of Greek origin.
 - 5.3. Recent opening of the Hellenic Australia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HACCI) SA Chapter of over 200 members, which continues to grow.
 - 5.4. HACCI are committed to supporting a Sister City relationship through greater collaboration between businesses and professionals and facilitating trade opportunities between local businesses and partners in Greece and Cyprus.
 - 5.5. Adelaide is host to the Glendi Greek Festival, "...arguably one of the original 'food and wine' festivals in South Australia" (Link 1 view [here](#)).
6. Australia and the European Union are currently negotiating a free trade agreement (A-EUFTA) (Link 2 view [here](#)).
7. Athens has many established relationships with cities around the world (Link 3 view [here](#)). The most recent are:
 - 7.1. Sister City relationship with New York City, United States (2022) which is focused on cooperation in tourism, environment, arts and commit to fighting anti-Semitism.
 - 7.2. April 2022 announcement to enter a Sister City relationship with Boston, United States, which will include promoting Athens as an ideal tourist destination for Boston residents, a direct air connection, exchange of good practices to combat the climate crisis, cooperation on digitalisation and startup ecosystems. Boston has been called the 'Athens of America'.
8. Athens is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the Acropolis of Athens and the medieval Daphni Monastery.

Next Steps

9. If Council confirms its intent to enter into a relationship, it must be registered with the Commonwealth Government's Foreign Arrangements Scheme for Ministerial approval (Link 4 view [here](#)).
 - 9.1. The Minister must make a decision within 30 days, or the Minister is taken to have given approval.
10. Once the Minister approves the City of Adelaide's intent to enter into a Sister City relationship with Athens, Greece, discussions will take place between Athens and Adelaide to determine the nature and focus of the agreement.

Greek Connection in the Community

11. South Australia's first Greek settler was from Athens (Link 5 view [here](#)).
12. The bond between Adelaide and Greece strengthened in the 1950s and 1960s when thousands of Greek migrants sailed to Australia, many settling in Adelaide.
13. Adelaide has been called the 'Athens of the South' since foundation, with colonists' and visitors' alike revelling in the potential of the free and planned city.
 - 13.1. The long-lasting use of the phrase "the Athens of the South" had its direct origins in a speech in 1899 by Hallam Tennyson, the new governor of South Australia, and again rose to prominence during the premiership of Don Dunstan. His proclaimed vision was to release Adelaide from the puritanical restrictions of the Playfordian era and re-establish Adelaide as the Athens of the South.
14. Two percent of the total 25,026 residents of the City of Adelaide identify as having Greek ancestry.
15. Greek is the 7th most common language used at home within the City of Adelaide.

Council Strategy and Policy

16. International relationships provide diplomatic, social, cultural, and economic benefits to the City, and support strategic plan outcomes in a number of areas.
17. The previous term of Council noted the following as part of the decision of Item 10.6 at its meeting 10 May 2022 (Link 6 view [here](#)).
 - 17.1. *"...that any new international partnerships would take the form of an MoU, and would need to be individually assessed in detail, including key success metrics, and prior to entering into any such arrangements, and then registered through the Commonwealth Government's Foreign Arrangement Scheme."*
 - 17.2. A review of the framework for assessing international engagement opportunities is being brought to Council, with the timing to align with the upcoming City of Adelaide Strategic Plan planning process.
18. At the meeting 10 May 2022, Council also resolved Motions on Notice to investigate the potential for a relationship with Vinnytsia, Ukraine, once the assessment framework was in place.
19. Information on the City of Adelaide's Sister Cities can be found on the City of Adelaide website [Link 7 view [here](#)]

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 - Glendi Greek Festival

Link 2 - A-EUFTA

Link 3 - List of Athens Sister Cities

Link 4 - Foreign Arrangements Scheme

Link 5 - SA History Hub: Greeks in SA

Link 6 - City of Adelaide Sister Cities

Link 7 - City of Adelaide Council Meeting Minutes 10 May 2022

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Letter from the Hon. Frank Pangelo MLC and the Hon. Connie Bonaros MLC

Attachment B – Letter from the Hon. Andrea Michaels MP, Minister for Consumer and Business Affairs

Attachment C – Letter from Hellenic Australia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HACCI) SA Chapter

- END OF REPORT -