

Draft Sister City and International Arrangements Policy

Strategic Alignment - Our Community

Public

Tuesday, 2 June 2026
City Community Services and Culture Committee

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Approving Officer:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to present the new draft Sister City and International Arrangements Policy (the Policy) (**Attachment A**) for approval, to undertake public consultation.

Engaging in international relationships based on respect and understanding can provide cultural, social and economic benefits to cities and local communities. The City of Adelaide holds arrangements with international entities including cities, networks and forums, which enable mutually beneficial exchange through knowledge sharing, cross-cultural collaboration and storytelling.

This new Policy will provide clarity on the governance of formal arrangements and optimise these long-standing relationships between the City of Adelaide's international counterparts.

The Sister City Policy and program review, including research, internal engagement and targeted consultation with key stakeholders, was conducted with support from Adelaide University. The Adelaide University report can be found in **Attachment B**.

It is proposed that public consultation on the draft Policy will be conducted in June 2026.

The final draft Policy is proposed to be presented to Council for approval in August 2026 following public consultation through Our Adelaide and further targeted engagement with key stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 9 June 2026 for consideration

THAT THE CITY COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CULTURE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL THAT COUNCIL

1. Approves the draft Sister City and International Arrangements Policy as contained in Attachment A to Item 7.3 on the Agenda for the meeting of the City Community Services and Culture Committee held on 2 June 2026, for the purposes of public consultation.
 2. Notes the *Sister Cities Policy and Program Review: Research report for the City of Adelaide*, conducted by Adelaide University, as contained in Attachment B to Item 7.3 on the Agenda for the meeting of the City Community Services and Culture Committee held on 2 June 2026.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Our Community
Policy	This policy will replace the City of Adelaide (CoA) International Partnership Strategy – an internationally connected City (2012) which can be found at Link 1 .
Consultation	Adelaide University conducted independent stakeholder interviews and focus groups as part of developing a new policy. Consultation occurred with Panpapanpalya on 11 February 2026. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Diplomatic Relations Unit) have been consulted in the development of this new draft policy. Public consultation will be undertaken through Our Adelaide for a period of three weeks commencing in June 2026.
Resource	Not as a result of this report.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	The draft Policy will support the CoA to comply with the Australian Government Foreign Arrangements Scheme and associated Act.
Opportunities	The endorsement of a Sister City and International Arrangements Policy provides an opportunity to clarify Council's commitment and vision for this work and direct resources to beneficial activity with annual reporting. This Policy clarifies Council's intention to regularly review relationships and enable meaningful and clear engagement.
25/26 Budget Allocation	The Sister City program has an annual operating budget in 2025/2026 of \$97,850.
Proposed 26/27 Budget Allocation	The Sister City program will have an operating budget in 2026/2027 of \$99,295, subject to the final business plan and budget.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	This Policy is proposed for review every four years.
25/26 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report.
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report.
Other Funding Sources	There are Australian Government funding opportunities for international work such as the First Nations International Fellowships and Partnerships Grants Program and the Australia-Japan Foundation Grants, which could be explored.

DISCUSSION

Background

1. The City of Adelaide (CoA) holds arrangements with international entities including cities, or as part of forums and networks which enable mutually beneficial relationships through knowledge sharing and networking, cross-cultural exchange and collaboration.
2. These arrangements attract international interest in Adelaide that can lead to local benefit and deliver on the City of Adelaide's Strategic Plan (2024-2028).

Sister City Arrangements

3. The global Sister City movement originated through the United Nations, with early adopters Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom after the Second World War. The movement aimed to foster cultural understanding and peace through building people to people relationships.
 - 3.1. Over ten of 68 South Australian local governments have registered formal Sister City arrangements with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).
 - 3.2. The State Government of South Australia currently holds eight whole-of-organisation formal international arrangements. They are in the process of developing review and expiry dates for arrangements that are suitable.
4. CoA currently holds five whole-of-organisation Sister City arrangements:
 - 4.1. Christchurch (Ōtautahi), New Zealand/Aotearoa (established 1972)
 - 4.2. Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia (established 1973)
 - 4.3. Himeji, Japan (established 1982)
 - 4.4. Austin, Texas (established 1983)
 - 4.5. Qingdao, Shandong Province, China (established in 2014 when they progressed from a 'Friendly City' in 2001). Note: There is a State-to-State relationship between Shandong Province and South Australia.
 - 4.6. Two Friendly City arrangements were also established with Chengdu and Dalian, China in 2001 and these remain in place. A Friendly City is a less formal arrangement than a Sister City, they are historic arrangements and no new Friendly City arrangements have been entered into since 2001.
5. These Sister City and Friendly City arrangements are not time-limited, have no review dates in place or options for expiry.
6. The CoA had volunteer Sister City Committees until 2002 when Administration became the primary contact and conduit for international relationships. The City of Christchurch uniquely supports an Adelaide-based membership Adelaide-Christchurch Sister City Committee.
7. The CoA and the City of Athens signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 2 November 2025.
 - 7.1. The MOU includes the following aligned themes:
 - 7.1.1. Cultural cooperation
 - 7.1.2. Tourism cooperation
 - 7.1.3. City Resilience and Smart City Solutions
 - 7.1.4. Cooperation in the field of environmental protection.
8. Expired MOU based international arrangements, entered into by the CoA since 2014 include Jaipur, India (2016-2020) and Edinburgh, Scotland (2020-2023).
9. The delivery of the Sister City Program from 2020 to 2025 has included the following activities:
 - 9.1. Celebration of significant anniversaries in 2022 (Christchurch 50 years and Himeji 40 years), 2023 (Austin 40 years and Georgetown 50 years which included an anniversary logo competition led by Georgetown) and 2024 (Qingdao 10 years).
 - 9.2. Relationship building through regular meetings with Austin and Christchurch and communications with Dalian, Chengdu and Qingdao.

- 9.3. Civic welcoming of inbound delegations (such as the 2025 delegation of Himeji High students with Adelaide Botanic High School and a scholar visit from Georgetown/Penang) and outbound delegation to Georgetown by the Lord Mayor in 2024.
 - 9.4. Sharing of knowledge with Christchurch regarding river management.
 - 9.5. Promotion of the new direct flights between Adelaide and Christchurch from October 2025.
 - 9.6. Development of the MOU and relationship with the City of Athens.
 - 9.7. Building new working relationships with State and Federal government entities responsible for international arrangements.
10. The broader Adelaide community delivers activity with Sister Cities such as the collaboration between Oz Asia Festival and the Georgetown Literary Festival. There is a plan to improve the communication opportunities for community members to share Sister City activity and stories with Council, as part of the review of the program in 2026. City of Adelaide can play a greater role in sharing opportunities and stories more broadly with CoA communities.

New Policy

11. A review of the Sister City program and policy framework commenced in late 2025 through the City Culture Program, and Adelaide University were commissioned in December 2025 to conduct research and independent stakeholder consultation to inform the new Policy. This report can be found in **Attachment B**.
12. The draft Sister City and International Arrangements Policy (**Attachment A**) provides the following benefits:
 - 12.1. Defines purpose, clarifies types of arrangements and sets out principles for the delivery of the Sister City Program.
 - 12.2. Supports compliance with Australian Government legislation and processes for foreign arrangements.
 - 12.3. Recommends outcome-led activity and a coordinated approach to both whole-of-organisation and program-led international arrangements.
 - 12.4. Includes a formal statement to enable and guide new opportunities for engagement of Kurna leadership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples between Adelaide and our Sister City partners.
13. Adelaide University conducted a series of interviews and focus groups which have included members from State Government departments, creative and arts organisations, education, tourism, trade and community. The responses and feedback obtained through this process have informed the new policy.
14. The draft Policy includes four Principles:
 - 14.1. Principle 1: International arrangements will be strategic, purposeful and mutually beneficial.
 - 14.2. Principle 2: International arrangements will endeavour to connect people to people.
 - 14.3. Principle 3: International arrangements can raise the profile of Adelaide internationally to maximise opportunities for trade and investment.
 - 14.4. Principle 4: International arrangements will align with the City of Adelaide cultural principles of reconciliation and truth-telling.

Research

15. A range of CoA programs engaged in strategic projects and international relationships have provided input to this draft Policy. Information was also presented to Panpapanpalya on 11 February 2026.
16. Research findings highlight the following recommendations for the CoA Sister City Program:
 - 16.1. Adelaide's Sister City relationships are valued by the community as a mechanism for cross-cultural connection, knowledge sharing and professional development.
 - 16.2. Adelaide's Sister City relationships offer a great deal of untapped potential. They would benefit from greater strategic clarity, community awareness and tangible outcomes.
 - 16.3. Resourcing the Sister City Program can assist to realise these benefits including internal capacity, governance structures including community networks, and adequately funding activities.
 - 16.4. Council should liaise with State Government to ensure policy alignment, access funding, manage program scope and maximise the benefits of international arrangements. When assessing future Sister City relationships City of Adelaide should consider shared purpose, level of commitment,

strategic fit including cultural, social or economic links, compatibility with Adelaide's identity and business connections, and identified, viable opportunities for community members to benefit.

Next Steps

17. Public consultation on the draft Policy is proposed to run for three weeks commencing in June 2026.
18. The final draft policy is proposed to be presented to Council for approval in August 2026.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 - City of Adelaide International Partnership Strategy – an internationally connected City (2012)

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Draft Sister City and International Arrangements Policy

Attachment B – Adelaide University Sister City Policy and Program Review Report March 2026

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