



9.1 FRIENDS OF SUAI/COVALIMA FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: TONY KEENAN, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND INCLUSION

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the Friends of Suai/Covalima 2020-25 Strategic Plan (see Attachment 1) for endorsement and request on behalf of Friends of Suai/Covalima Community Reference Committee that Council reaffirm its Friendship with Covalima district, Timor-Leste through a third ten-year Friendship Agreement (see Attachment 2).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The 20-year friendship with Covalima district, Timor-Leste is an international program for the City of Port Phillip. The program is community development focused with an emphasis on strengthening the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) in Suai and engaging Port Phillip and Covalima communities in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities.
- 2.2 This Friendship has been formally recognised through two ten-year Friendship Agreements, signed in 2000 and 2010.
- 2.3 The Friendship Agreement is due for renewal in 2020 and stands outside all financial commitments made by Council. The financial commitment is reviewed as part of Council's budgetary process.
- 2.4 The Friendship Agreement is complemented by a Municipal Cooperation Agreement of which the City of Port Phillip is a signatory, along with 14 other local councils in Victoria, to support the decentralisation of government in Timor-Leste
- 2.5 Through Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC), the City of Port Phillip respond to priorities expressed by the Covalima community in order to build a thriving, self-determining community through democratic processes. The Friendship delivers on Council's agreement and remains aligned to the guiding principle; to develop productive and sustainable relationships based in dialogue, trust and strategic vision.
- 2.6 The first ten years of Friendship was foundational in its intent, setting a solid basis for the community to community partnership. This period achieved the establishment of the Community Centre in Suai.
- 2.7 In 2010 the renewed agreement focused on community development, accountability and partnerships.
- 2.8 In 2020 the FoSC propose A further Friendship Agreement and Strategic Plan based on a sustainability phase to ensure transparency in decision making and open up opportunities for funding and partnership consolidation.
- 2.9 FoSC has now developed a further five-year Strategic Plan 2020-25 and is seeking endorsement of this Strategic Plan by Council.
- 2.10 The proposed 2020-25 Strategic Plan is a strengthening plan that complements and consolidates the preceding foundational and community development focused plans.



The new plan has a fundamental goal to strengthen programs towards sustainability and to actively engage both communities

- 2.11 The establishment and growth of the CCC in Suai is one of the greatest legacies of the Friendship. The centre now employs 30 people and offers services throughout the district of 70,000 people. The programs at the Centre are based on a community development model through which FoSC provide support for organisational development for democratic structures and good governance.
- 2.12 The FoSC 2020-25 Strategic Plan has a strong focus on strengthening capacity at the CCC. This includes support for future financial independence through diversification of funding and partnerships.
- 2.13 The CCC has grown in capacity with the support of the City of Port Phillip. The FoSC seek Council's formal renewal of the friendship to assist the CCC to move towards sustainability and independence therefore mitigating the risk of destabilising 20 years of community development efforts and successes.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Commit to continue in its important work of supporting the relationship agreement between Port Phillip and Covalima district, Timor-Leste through renewal of the Friendship Agreement for a further ten years (Attachment 2).
- 3.2 Endorse the Friends of Suai/Covalima 2020-25 Strategic Plan (Attachment 1).

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 City of Port Phillip has a longstanding relationship with the coastal town of Suai in Covalima district, Timor-Leste. This relationship was formed in response to the Port Phillip community's concern around the mass destruction and killings that occurred after the vote for independence in 1999. In response to this concern, a ten-year Friendship Agreement was signed by Council in 2000 and renewed for a further ten years in 2010. A celebration was held at St Kilda Town Hall in 2010 to mark the importance of this occasion. In 2019 a flag raising ceremony was held at St Kilda Town Hall to commemorate the Suai massacre which was a catalyst for Council's ongoing commitment.
- 4.2 In 2016, the Mayor and CEO for the City of Port Phillip, together with 15 Councils in Victoria, signed a Municipal Co-operation Agreement with the Government of Timor-Leste. This agreement formalised the desire to develop and strengthen co-operation between Timorese and Victorian municipalities and their populations by offering support for building local government in Timor-Leste. These agreements focus on sharing professional experience, advice and mentoring and underpin the intent of the friendship agreement between our two municipalities.
- 4.3 The Statement of Friendship signed in 2000 was a forerunner to the establishment of 50 other local Council relationships operating across Australia and Timor-Leste. The Port Phillip friendship has a focus on grassroots capacity building achieved through working directly with community through the establishment of the CCC in Suai.
- 4.4 The Friendship delivers on Council's agreement and remains aligned to the guiding principle; to develop productive and sustainable relationships based in dialogue, trust and strategic vision. Through FoSC, the City of Port Phillip respond to priorities



expressed by the Covalima community with a focus on generating a thriving, self-determining community through democratic processes.

- 4.5 The Friendship Agreement, which comprises a Statement of Friendship and Memorandum of Understanding, is due for renewal in 2020. The Statement of Friendship outlines the nature and intent of the friendship to utilise the skills and knowledge in both communities and in doing so, empower both to manage their shared future. The supporting MOU maintains proper and formal arrangements for Council's relationship with the government representatives in Suai.
- 4.6 Advancing the friendship between our two communities in the next ten years relies very much on a concentrated effort to maintain and strengthen the structures and relationships developed over the last 20 years.
- 4.7 The first ten years of Friendship was foundational in its intent setting a solid foundation for the community to community partnership which saw the establishment of the Community Centre in Suai.
- 4.8 In 2010, a further ten-year agreement was signed and focused upon community development, accountability and partnerships. This work has been guided by the FoSC Joint Strategic Plan 2010-2020 to deliver Council's commitment as identified in Strategic Direction 1. This was a period of growth for the friendship and has set a strong base for ongoing community development.
- 4.9 The proposed 2020-25 Strategic Plan is a strengthening plan to complement and consolidate the preceding strategies. The new strategic plan has a fundamental goal to strengthen programs towards sustainability and to actively engage both communities. It will provide future direction for the program and include success indicators and evaluation framework to support good governance and transparent decision-making in the friendship.
- 4.10 The Strategic Plan will seek to support the CCC to be self-sustaining and less reliant on Council core funding.
- 4.11 The establishment and growth of the CCC in Suai is one of the greatest legacies of the Friendship. The centre now employs 30 people and offer services throughout the district of 70,000 people. The programs at the Centre are based on a community development model through which FoSC provide support for organisational development for democratic structures and good governance.
- 4.12 The CCC is growing in capacity and, with the support of the City of Port Phillip, is now a registered Non-Government Organisation, an Accredited Training Organisation and has formal partnerships with international NGO's. In the coming years, FoSC will continue to play a vital role in supporting CCC programs, capacity strengthening and supporting diversification of funding sources for the Centre. This is reflected in the new Strategic Plan.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 A pro-bono consultant was engaged to oversee the development of a new Strategic Plan for FoSC. This process involved interviewing key stakeholders including Council, members, partner organisations, donors and colleagues in Timor-Leste.
- 5.2 The FoSC Community Reference Committee participated in a series of workshops to develop the Strategic Plan, in consultation with the Director of the CCC.



6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Friendship Agreement is important for planning and for partners in Timor-Leste and it is the FoSC's intention that the renewed agreement must be accompanied by a Strategic Plan to provide guidance around intent and accountability.
- 6.2 It is important for Council to introduce a strengthening phase of the Friendship and Strategic Plan for the future of the CCC. This will assist the Centre to move towards greater independence, ensure its long-term sustainability and mitigate the risk of destabilising 20 years of community development efforts and successes.
- 6.3 The City of Port Phillip Friendship model provides leadership to the Friendship movement throughout Victoria and Australia, and is highly regarded nationally and internationally, with recognition from the Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia, the Honorary Consul of Timor-Leste and former Prime Ministers of Timor-Leste.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 The Friendship Agreement stands outside all financial commitments made by Council. The financial commitment is reviewed as part of Council's budgetary process.
- 7.2 The FoSC 2020-25 Strategic Plan has a strong focus on strengthening capacity at the CCC. This includes support for future financial independence through diversification of funding and partnerships.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 FoSC are committed to sustainable practices. This includes supporting the establishment and expansion of a new reforestation initiative called With One Seed, which involves working with subsistence farming communities to plant thousands of trees on deforested land over the coming years. Farmers are receiving education and training on planting and maintaining the trees. With One Seed is the first internationally certified carbon program in Timor-Leste and income will be generated for farmers through the sale of carbon credits. FoSC has raised funds to establish a nursery, employ four staff and distribute 10,000 trees in 2020.
- 8.2 In 2019 a third Village Lighting Scheme was implemented, bringing solar lighting to 48 homes in a remote off-grid village in Covalima. The installation of solar panels provides lighting in the evening and removes the need to purchase and use kerosene, bringing social, economic and health benefits to families. There are now 127 households in Covalima that have received solar lighting as part of this project supported by FoSC, Renew and the CCC.
- 8.3 The FoSC funded water, sanitation and hygiene project at Suai Secondary School is providing a sustainable water supply and toilets for 2,000 students, and local families in nearby communities are now connected to the community water tank providing fresh water.
- 8.4 The CCC are working with rural communities to increase food security and to develop resilience to the changing climate by encouraging land conservation, risk assessment and reforestation.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 The friendship is a community initiated, longstanding commitment that supports a two-way relationship and enriching for both communities. Residents can engage in international relations with our near neighbour Timor-Leste, learning and developing



understanding from each other through engagement; acting locally and thinking globally.

- 9.2 A Friendship Agreement and a Strategic Plan based on a sustainability phase will generate education, public health, climate adaptation, livelihoods, social enterprise and advocacy opportunities for funding and partnership consolidation.
- 9.3 The CCC staff and Commission members are demonstrating increased confidence and a clearer understanding of their capacity and the role of the Centre in their community. They are working strategically to develop programs and activities to meet basic community needs, promote training opportunities and sustainable development. This has been demonstrated with the CCC response to engage with communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and has strengthened its standing in the municipality.
- 9.4 Impact for the Covalima community will be evident through an increased capacity to generate engagement in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities. As well as the increased capacity to develop and manage a sustainable service to the local community.
- 9.5 The FoSC program provides rich opportunity for understanding good governance, community participation and sharing of good practice in civil administration, both in Timor-Leste and in the Port Phillip community.
- 9.6 Port Phillip residents are providing time, skills, money and friendship ensuring the relationship is based on community-to-community links. The Friendship engages residents, service clubs, churches and educational institutions in Port Phillip to connect with and support friends in Timor-Leste.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 Since 2000, the FoSC Agreement and program have been guided by the social, economic, cultural and environmental principles and values set by Council.
- 10.2 Within the 2017-27 Council Plan, the FoSC Agreement and program supports Strategic Direction 1: We Embrace Difference and People Belong.
- 10.3 The FoSC Strategic Plans 2010-20 was developed in consultation with both communities and endorsed by Council in September 2010.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

- 11.1.1 The endorsed FoSC 2020-25 Strategic Plan will be implemented immediately.
- 11.1.2 FoSC will organise the signing of the Friendship Agreement (see Attachment 2) before 21 September. The Agreement is to be signed by City of Port Phillip Mayor, Chair of FoSC Committee, the Municipal Administrator of Covalima and the Director of the Covalima Community Centre in Suai.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 The FoSC 2020-25 Strategic Plan will be shared with members and key stakeholders at the next Committee meeting on 17 September and at the AGM to be held in November.
- 11.2.2 FoSC will organise an online event to celebrate the signing of the agreement, including a local celebration and signing ceremony in Suai.



MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 2 SEPTEMBER 2020

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

TRIM FILE NO: 10/08/02

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft FoSC Strategic Plan 2020-2025
2. Draft Friendship Agreement 2020-30