

Attachment A to Xi'an Report

Summary of Professional Development Trip to Xi'an by Alderman Thomas

Context of the professional development aspect of the Trip

- Alderman Thomas' visit to Xi'an was for the purpose of Aldermanic Professional Development. As outlined in the Council policy (**Attachment D** to the main report) 'Aldermanic Professional Development' involves the undertaking of training and development activities which increase an Alderman's capacity to perform their role as elected representatives of the community, and to maintain and improve their skills and stay in touch with issues relevant to the Council.
- Alderman Thomas professional development was approved by the Council on July 3, 2017. See **Attachment C** to the main report for the full proposal.
- The area of professional development for Alderman Thomas is centred around deepening the City's understanding of how the value of formal sister / friendship city relationships are captured globally and applying this to the City's current framework (International Relations Action Plan – IRAP). This plan is **Attachment B** to the main report. Hobart as a member of the Council of Capital Cities group has together with a significant number of Australian cities entered into a number of sister city relationships which, in common with their international counterparts have at their heart broad social, cultural and economic drivers.
- As the concept of friendship cities has developed since the initiative of Dwight D Eisenhower in the 1950, what began as primarily friendship relationship building programs has led to a new focus on the primacy of community to community exchange, through educational promotion, the exchange of skilled personnel, the sharing of intellectual property and cultural performance
- While sister cities have traditionally been developed for diplomatic, cultural and educational purposes there is a growing requirement for global cities to leverage their sister city partnerships for economic development and to solve mutual issues such as improvement of social services, essential services and sustainability. This move brings with it a call for increased accountability and transparency for resources expended.
- It is a given that there exists a strong correlation between the quality of a city's institutions and its overall competitiveness. Hence, it is important that careful market analysis is linked with city-specific information when identifying potential city partnerships to ensure the correct synergies between each city's institutions/assets, be they business-to-business, university-to-university, port-to-port, or cultural enhancement. This test of the very *appropriateness* of the sister city relationship is also something that requires periodic testing for currency. If we take a global perspective as the leadership group it is paramount that we have a contemporary understanding of how global economic factors can affect the competitiveness of our city and how its unique assets can strengthen overall competitiveness in order that the city benefits through trade (including education), investment, job creation and innovation. A strong sister cities network fulfils that purpose.

- o It is paramount that city leaders understand how global economic factors can affect the competitiveness of their city and how their unique assets can strengthen their overall competitiveness in order that the city benefits through trade (including education), investment, job creation and innovation.
- o Alderman Thomas's desk top research reveals that internationally the need to provide a justification for international activities linked to a subsisting sister city relationship is acutely recognised, whilst the US and New Zealand have been the two countries which have made the greatest academic contribution to the subject.
- o Alderman Thomas's interest in developing stronger , more relevant ties is supported by the carrying out of earlier modelling in NZ, primarily in the mid to late 2000s :The two most comprehensive are:
 - 1) '[The Economic Benefits of Sister City Relationships](#)' – Report to Sister Cities New Zealand, March 2003 by the NZ Institute of Economic Research.
 - 2) '[Sister Cities and Economic Development: A New Zealand Perspective](#)' by Brian Cross, Former Executive Officer of Sister Cities (2009)
- o Alderman Thomas's professional interest is centred on the ways in which value is measured in formal international relationships *once* a rigorous analysis has been undertaken of the very appropriateness of the twinning in the initial assessment.
- o His interest is supported by the reality that international travel has an environmental impact. To minimise this impact and maximise the value created for the City from this travel, it is paramount that the International Relations Action Plan (IRAP) is well considered and that activities engaged upon during travel are in line with a structured and supportable annual plan.
- o The City of Hobart and a number of other organisations with funding derived from the community such as State and Federal Government are under increasing scrutiny in relation to expenses.
- o Because the issue of the relevance of international activity deserves and attracts public scrutiny Ald Thomas believes that a properly thought through strategy measuring the *current day value* of twinned /friendship or sister cities is needed to justify the significant direct and indirect program costs. Alderman Thomas believes that to continue to successfully manage and operate an international Sister cities program, an annual or periodic set of agreed outcomes mirrored by a programme reflecting those outcomes and measuring them is mandatory. For whilst clearly we might say' hand on heart' a visit by Hobart or to Hobart was valuable even in pure visitor nights spent [say by a delegation] in Hobart, public accountability requires much more.
- o International travel for a number of reasons including the development or maintenance of formal friendships such as sister cities is widely criticised. Equally

many people in Hobart are not appropriately aware of the City's international relationships. By way of example, during a recent visit to Yaizu as part of 40th anniversary celebrations, a community member commented that everyone in Yaizu knew about Hobart but the same was not true in Hobart.

- o Media coverage such as the following is not unusual, indeed it appears more difficult to find positive media coverage of local government supported international relationships.

['How your rates pay for unjustifiable overseas excursions'](#)

['NSW councils to disclose full cost of sister city trips in travel junket crackdown'](#)

['Hobart City Council's \\$60k travel expenses since July'](#)

- o In the face of such headlines, it is important that if the City of Hobart and other cities believe their international relationships to be of value on an economic and social level, that this is professionally demonstrated to the community.
- o The issue of the measurement of the value, in both qualitative and quantitative terms or economic, social, political and community value is an issue in no way restricted to the City of Hobart.
- o Alderman Thomas' original proposal was to conduct interviews with Xi'an personnel to 'establish current thinking ... in terms of how we might better operationalize the connection...' This work would then form the basis of a framework to assist with the evaluation of qualitative and quantitative value of international relationships.
- o The visit to Xi'an was useful in this regard because it allowed the establishing of a personal connection with Mr Shen Pengxiang of the Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. Mr Shen is the new officer responsible for managing the relationship with Hobart.
- o Initial face to face discussions were had with Mr Shen about the nature of the Hobart -Xi'an relationship and the outcomes that Xi'an would like to see. Mr Shen was keen to continue this dialogue.
- o Mr Shen also confirmed that he was happy for Alderman Thomas to approach other cities present at the economic forum to discuss the project.
- o This project was discussed at the forum in Xi'an and the following cities expressed a desire to be involved

-Xi'an, China

-Kragujevac Serbia

-Pompeii, Italy

-Kansas City, USA

-Umea, Sweden

- o The project does not seek to argue a best or worst sister city relationship, rather a structured process of determining why an activity such as a visit is made and what definable outcomes were achieved. The more refined the system can become the more beneficial and justifiable the outcome. Some activities will only be capable of qualitative measurement whilst others can be potentially reported against in both a quantitative and qualitative sense.
- o The world wide body of sister cities associations have tackled the issue largely from an economic justification point, illustrating the value of relationships through educational exchange, trade promotion and at the most basic tenant, bed nights resulting from international travel. Such measurement, whilst valuable is not captured in a strategic sense and is rarely referenced against a yearly or longer overall strategy. No work has been done to our knowledge on evaluating the program for the overall impact of increased diversity, notwithstanding the reality that a greater proportion of all activities have a strong focus on cross cultural awareness.
- o The most significant body of work in this area has been produced by New Zealand, either at a local government association or government economic development level.
- o The City of Hobart's relationship with the University of Tasmania and the shared interest in promoting Hobart as an international education destination is considered an ideal basis to propose a collaboration on the measurement of the city's efforts to engage on a meaningful basis with its sister cities.
- o The issue of relevancy of this activity can best be gauged through a partnership approach and for this reason the timing of the Xian visit to coincide with the Euro – Asia economic Forum where a number of Xi'an's sister cities were participating was chosen.
- o It is submitted that to do nothing is not an option and provided that the proposed study is considered to have a reasonable chance of arriving at valuable outcomes and can be conducted at a reasonable cost of resources then the city of Hobart can provide municipal leadership and be recognised for such.

Project Proposal

- o For the reasons advanced above, the completion of a City of Hobart project resulting from Alderman Thomas's professional development visit to Xi'an and consistent with the decision of Council of 6 March 2017 to measure and evaluate the City of Hobart's international program is proposed. Given increased public scrutiny around the costs of international travel and the questioning of the real benefits flowing back to the community, it is considered that now is an appropriate juncture in Hobart's international sister city activity to undertake the proposed project.
- o The project would have as its intended outcome the generation of a robust framework measuring the value (qualitative / quantitative) of international

relationships, derived from an extensive survey of international cities. As a by-product, the city's international relations action plan will be capable of regular measurement of reward against the resources expended and importantly it will enable more strategic planning in advance of any intended international travel.

- It is proposed that a number of international cities are targeted with a survey aiming at capturing, comparing and sharing how they measure the value of their international relationships and how they plan their activities.
- It is proposed that a project is developed in a similar way to the [2003 study](#) referenced previously. This would be to reach out to a number of cities with a survey of how they measure both the qualitative and quantitative value of their sister / friendship city relationships. The preferred approach, apart from approaching cities with which Hobart has a history of association (including all Australian capital cities) is to seek the engagement of 'gatekeeper associations' of the likes of Sister Cities Australia, Sister Cities International [USA] and the respective associations of New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Sister Cities Australia has given in principal support for the project, noting that the issue whilst being one which is most topical has not been able to be advanced because of resourcing constraints.
- Sister Cities Australia has invited Alderman Thomas to speak about the proposed project at their AGM on December 8 and the main report seeks Council authorisation to be able to do so. Communication seeking in principal support from Sister Cities International [USA] is awaited.
- Other networks and City of Hobart links that could produce further participating cities are:
 - CCCLM (Council of Capital City Lord Mayors) – 8 cities.
 - Sister Cities Australia - approx. 60 member cities.
 - Sister Cities New Zealand – approx. 50 member cities.
 - Sister Cities International – approx. 495 U.S. member cities.
- Marseilles (France) has separately indicated an interest to participate.
- The City of Hobart has a dialogue with Portland (Oregon) in the US, Cambridge in the UK and Freiberg (Germany) on a number of topics and it is thought likely that they would also participate.
- It is possible that the University of Tasmania could add academic credibility by providing expertise relating to the development of the survey and analysis of results.
- The Council endorsed a comprehensive 'International Relations Action Plan' in May 2016 that guides and evaluates Hobart's four formal relationships, this is reported against and reviewed annually. It is thought that the proposed project would be an alternative way in which the

annual review of the IRAP could be conducted. Insights from this research can be fed into the annual review of the City of Hobart's own IRAP and shared with other cities to assist them in making informed decisions about their international relationships.

- o Endorsement of the project would mean endorsement of the following draft project plan:

Date	Actions
4 December	Seek Council endorsement
8 December	Attend Sister Cities Australia AGM and promote project
All December	Develop survey with possible input from creators of earlier efforts
All December	Promote project through networks including Sister Cities International and Sister Cities New Zealand
January 2018	Send out questionnaire
February	Receive returned questionnaires
March	Analyse results and draw conclusions
April	Consider project findings against existing IRAP
May	Take report to Economic Development and Communications Committee and Council with suggested amendments to IRAP.

- o Each sister city in Xi'an was briefed on the project, including Xi'an. Universal agreement was received to participate in a survey of intentions, activities, methodology and recorded outcomes. This activity is designated as the 'study component' whilst the relationships made during the visit are referred as the 'economic and educational outcomes'

- o It is not anticipated that additional overseas travel will be in any way required although Alderman Thomas may still complete an approved planned visit to Portland if circumstances allow (subject to keeping within the Council approved study amount left unspent). Portland (USA) has a seemingly novel way of evaluating an international relationship before it is formed. In order for a relationship to be established, a community group must gather together and raise \$10,000 to fund the administrative costs associated with the maintenance of the relationship.
- o It is acknowledged that the proposed project is potentially resource heavy. The delivery of this project would either require additional resource or for the Economic Development Unit to pause some of their current activities. However with the potential collaboration of UTAS as a clear benefactor and the reality that Alderman Thomas is committed to delivering a positive outcome for the city, the resource required from the EDU may be able to be managed.

Other Activities in Xi'an

- o A meeting with the Xi'an KDGX University International Education College.
- o A meeting with ARC (Accountants Resource Centre).
- o Meetings with the Xi'an University of Science and Technology.
- o Meeting with the founder of the Ju-Yun Shaanxi Information Technology. Professor Xinbo is globally recognised for his work in computational intelligence and visual information processing.
- o Meeting with the head of ZTE Corporation, which is a Chinese multinational telecommunications equipment and Systems Company headquartered in Shenzhen, Guangdong. ZTE operates in three business units: carrier networks, terminals and telecommunications.

Side observations by Alderman Thomas on post compulsory education opportunities for Tasmania and Xi'an

- o Xi'an and its region is now the third largest centre in China for higher education and post-compulsory study.
- o It has 60 colleges and is at the forefront of China's attempt to provide its population, particularly its rapidly growing middle class with opportunity to participate in learning opportunities.
- o In the last decade countries, including Australia have sought to increase enrolments from overseas.
- o There is also a moving trend in China to centralise post-compulsory education and training and Xi'an is at the centre of these efforts.

- o In some instances, due to the difficulties of providing work placements for international students in countries like the United Kingdom, international universities have set up in China operating China specific international programs.
- o Despite the apparent move to centralise intra country post-compulsory education, the central government in countries like China, Korea, India and Vietnam have recognised the need to require their colleges to have a program of global outreach to increase the diversity of their student cohort.
- o In this way study vacations abroad are a mandatory part of many courses, taking the form either of combined agreed partnerships or study vacation international for varying periods of one through to nine months.
- o Discussions at a number of levels indicate the strong likelihood that Hobart could capture a valuable share of this market through arrangements not only with the University of Tasmania but with the schools system and the vocational sector. Significant economic and social advantage are offered.