

# STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION:

## International engagement framework refresh

### Background

The City of Melbourne is seeking stakeholder input into the development of its future international engagement framework. Over many years, we have established a wide range of international relationships. However, both the global landscape and Council priorities have changed considerably over time. It is opportune to develop a refreshed international engagement approach to ensure that the opportunities and benefits for the City of Melbourne are maximised and Council's objectives are met.

The opportunities and benefits the City of Melbourne is seeking include:

- Economic benefits (the Economic Development Strategy 2031 outlines a plan for building the economy of the future, with a focus on the knowledge economy, international education, visitor economy sectors and facilitating foreign investment).
- Knowledge exchange and development benefits (learning, sharing and adopting international best practices).
- Civic benefits (community, cultural and people-to-people connections).
- Peace, sustainability, aid and development outcomes.

The objective of the consultations is to obtain input into the development of a framework for the City of Melbourne's future international engagement, which sets out guiding principles / pillars against which existing and potential new international relationships and activities can be evaluated and prioritised. The principles/pillars should consider Council objectives and priorities to ensure that the City of Melbourne's international activity is purposeful and contributes to Major Initiatives in the Council Plan, supported by the delivery of actions identified in the Economic Development Strategy. In developing a new framework, it will be necessary to consider the City of Melbourne's role in international engagement across four key areas:

Theme	Intended outcomes
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Melbourne's knowledge-intensive industries and innovation ecosystems to become globally competitive, to enable long-term recovery and prosperity.</li> <li>• Support international focused actions in the Economic Development Strategy, with recommendations on how and why.</li> </ul>
Knowledge acquisition and sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase exchanges and facilitate learning between Melbourne and international best practice cities in City of Melbourne's priority areas and support the delivery of Major Initiatives in the Council plan.</li> </ul>
Community, cultural, people to people links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Melbourne's brand and enhance cross-cultural understanding.</li> <li>• Leveraging our multicultural background.</li> </ul>
Peace, sustainability, aid and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impart learning to (and learn from) countries in the region, within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal framework.</li> <li>• Address the challenges of inequality that exist in an urban environment.</li> <li>• Use city diplomacy to work together to solve problems around homelessness, housing, infrastructure, and education.</li> </ul>

The framework should also consider how the City of Melbourne's role in international engagement capitalises on, complements and leverages what other levels of government are doing. These include Global Victoria, Invest Victoria and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) at the State level, and the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) at the federal level. Numerous international chambers of commerce and universities also play an active role in international engagement. City diplomacy has been growing in importance for many years, with cities able to form networks, engage in dialogue with counterparts, facilitate public diplomacy, share best practices, and encourage collaboration between international private and public entities.

Consideration should be given to what role the City of Melbourne plays in city diplomacy. The City of Melbourne's (pre-pandemic) economic growth has been at least partially underpinned by both international education and the international visitor economy. It will be appropriate for the review to consider how the impacts of a renewed framework will support sustainable growth of these sectors in the city's economy. Given the changing nature of the international environment and the longer-term outlook required to foster international relationships, the review does not seek to identify a defined list of cities/partners with whom the City of Melbourne should engage, except by way of example. Rather, it aims to outline a set of principles/pillars against which opportunities for international relationships could be assessed to help the City of Melbourne determine which relationships it will allocate its resources and efforts towards.

## What are we currently doing and what benefits have accrued?

The City of Melbourne's last International Engagement Strategy, *Melbourne Doing Business Globally*, was endorsed by Council in 2010. Under this strategy, Council's international activities have focused on promoting the city's prosperity and increasing opportunities for businesses within the municipality. The majority (70 per cent) of Council resources allocated for international relations have been focused on business development activities to promote Melbourne's industry capabilities, with the remaining (30 per cent) put towards facilitating shared learning, civic, and cultural links.

Council's focus has also been on leveraging its current and emerging international city-to-city connections, including robust relationships with sister cities Osaka and Tianjin, and strategic partner cities Nanjing, Suzhou, Chengdu in China and Bandung in Indonesia. The City of Melbourne has also been exploring emerging opportunities across India. Melbourne's other sister cities include Milan, Boston and Thessaloniki. International engagement programs have been developed in collaboration with a wide range of domestic and international partners including other levels of government, industry associations, bilateral trade organisations, universities and innovation hubs; as well as community, cultural and educational groups. Key activities undertaken in the past have included:

- A bi-annual outbound trade mission to China and Japan, led by the Lord Mayor. These missions have leveraged the City of Melbourne's unique civic role and status and have typically focused on the sectors of urban design and liveability, along with health startups and innovation. The missions have facilitated trade connections, including commissioning several large-scale architecture projects in China.
- Programs focused on startups and innovation (e.g. Nexus Innovation Summit, Nexstar program, Melbourne-Bandung Innovation Series, Start in Melbourne, Scale to Southeast Asia program). These programs have fostered connections with startup and innovation ecosystems in partner cities and supported Melbourne startups to become Asia-ready.
- Activities focused on knowledge exchange and sharing of international best practices in Council priority areas, such as liveability and sustainability; smart cities and innovation; retail and creative economy; and most recently economic recovery strategies and initiatives.
- Supporting the Melbourne visitor economy through the WeChat visitor program and the City of Melbourne WeChat account to promote the City of Melbourne events and activities to Chinese diaspora and visitors.
- Facilitating civic visits by Mayors, Councillors, and delegations from international partner cities.

In addition to its formal partners, The City of Melbourne is party to other important international alliances and cooperative agreements (e.g. Business Partner Cities Network and the C40 network). While under the Melbourne-Tianjin sister city relationship, the City of Melbourne also has a representative office in Tianjin with three staff. The office facilitates trade, investment and knowledge exchange between Melbourne organisations and their counterparts in select regions of China. Further background on the City of Melbourne's recent international engagement – [find out more](#).

## Key questions

1. How should the City of Melbourne prioritise four areas of international engagement? (1. Economic Development; 2. Knowledge acquisition and sharing; 3. Community, cultural, people to people links; 4. Peace, sustainability, aid and development).
2. Who should we collaborate with in Australia? How and why?
3. Who should we collaborate with overseas? How and why?
4. What should the city of Melbourne – Stop; Start; and Continue doing?

## Current economic development actions of the City of Melbourne

Priority	Actions	Role	Time Frame
<b>1. A business friendly city</b>	<b>Action 2.</b> Facilitate major new investment proposals – especially global headquarters and research and development centres – through the establishment of Invest Melbourne, which will offer assistance to identify suitable locations and streamlined planning and permitting.	Deliver and partner	Immediate
	<b>Action 3.</b> Provide coordinated support for Melbourne's innovation, entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem, including international enterprises, to encourage business development and capacity building. This includes supporting and fostering business and industry innovation events.	Deliver and partner	Immediate
	<b>Action 6.</b> Facilitate startups and entrepreneurs in Melbourne to connect with international investment and commercialisation opportunities, particularly in Asia, North America and Europe.	Deliver and partner	Medium
<b>4. Beyond the office</b>	<b>Action 22.</b> Support the growth of technology sectors that have the capacity to be globally competitive, including biotech, medtech, advanced manufacturing and engineering.	Partner	Medium
	<b>Action 25.</b> Partner with industry and the Victorian and Australian Governments to develop our innovation ecosystems, through international engagement, emerging technology trials, digital infrastructure delivery and more.	Partner	Medium
<b>5. Unlock climate capital</b>	<b>Action 30.</b> Support small businesses and startups that demonstrate positive social and environmental impacts, through incubators and investment programs.	Deliver	Medium
<b>6. Diverse City</b>	<b>Action 32.</b> Support the recovery and resurgence of our international and domestic education sector, by rebuilding Melbourne's reputation among students and their peers, communities and visiting parents through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting the Study Melbourne website as the 'One-Stop Digital Community'.</li> <li>Developing a special way to welcome and support returning, new and continuing students, graduates and alumni.</li> <li>Advocating for access to transport concessions.</li> <li>Advocating for a standardised accommodation accreditation system.</li> <li>Connecting students with distinct elements of our local culture and history.</li> <li>Advocating for the full return of international students in 2022.</li> </ul>	Deliver, partner and advocate	Medium
<b>6. Diverse City</b>	<b>Action 33.</b> Leverage diaspora and alumni communities to strengthen international relationships and facilitate foreign investment.	Partner	Medium
	<b>Action 34.</b> Partner with industry and government to support the entrepreneurial efforts of people of diverse ages, backgrounds and identities with a focus on international students, new migrants and female entrepreneurs.	Partner	Medium
	<b>Action 35.</b> Review Melbourne's International Engagement Strategy to ensure that future partnerships enable mutual growth and opportunity.	Deliver	Medium

## Optional pre-reading

- [Council Plan 2021-25.](#)
- Economic Development Strategy - [Economic Development Strategy 2031 - City of Melbourne](#)
- The [Edinburgh International Activity Report](#).

## Project Manager

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