



9.2 **FRIENDS OF SUAI/COVALIMA 2020-25 STRATEGIC PLAN
REVIEW AND UPDATE**

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: **ALLISON KENWOOD, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY
WELLBEING AND INCLUSION**

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SUAI/COVALIMA**

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present an update to the Friend of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) 2020-25 Strategic Plan (Attachment 1) which has been revised to reflect Council's decision in December 2021 to reduce funding for the FoSC program, and with insights from a review of the plan conducted by FoSC (Attachment 2).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The FoSC 2020-25 Strategic Plan was endorsed by Council in September 2020. The Strategic Plan has a fundamental goal to strengthen programs towards sustainability and to actively engage the Port Phillip and Covalima communities in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities.
- 2.2 In December 2021, Council endorsed a transition plan for the Friends of Suai that would gradually reduce all direct grant funding by 2025/26, whilst committing to provide in-kind support and ongoing assistance to the FoSC CRC. This decision will alter the capacity of FoSC to implement all planned strategies and the operation of the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) in Suai. The revised Strategic Plan aims to mitigate and minimise impacts.
- 2.3 A review of the Strategic Plan was conducted by FoSC in June 2022 and the review report details the work and the value of the Friendship relationship in both communities. The report also captures the value of the Covalima Community Centre to its community and program beneficiaries.
- 2.4 Insights from the review report, and Council's decision to implement a transition plan to reduce FoSC resourcing led to the FoSC Community Reference Committee's decision to revise the Strategic Plan.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Endorse the updated Friends of Suai/Covalima 2020-25 Strategic Plan (Attachment 1).
- 3.2 Note the FoSC Strategic Plan Review Report 2022 (Attachment 2) prepared by FoSC and acknowledge the work of the FoSC Community Reference Committee to revise and implement Strategic Plan

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 In September 2020, Council endorsed the Friends of Suai/Covalima 2020-25 Strategic Plan and committed to continuing the important work of supporting the relationship agreement between Port Phillip and Covalima district, Timor-Leste through renewal of the Friendship Agreement between the two communities for a further ten years.



- 4.2 The FoSC Strategic Plan 2020-25 has a fundamental goal to strengthen programs towards sustainability, and to actively engage both communities in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities.
- 4.3 An intention, outlined in the Strategic Plan, was to annually review the plan and prepare a review report. The first annual review was due to be conducted in 2021 but was delayed due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and the pending transition plan that would confirm parameters for any on-going Council funding and support for FoSC.
- 4.4 The inaugural review was conducted in June 2022 and the resulting report includes information from interviews with key stakeholders in Suai, Covalima.
- 4.5 The review report includes general findings about the effectiveness of the CCC and the programs implemented through the Friendship. It also includes specific findings related to the Strategic Plan's strategies. The report captures the value of the Friendship and the work of the Covalima Community Centre in Suai.
- 4.6 Insights from this Strategic Plan review informed the FoSC CRC's decision to revise and update their Strategic Plan.
- 4.7 The decision to revise the Strategic Plan was also prompted by Council's decision in December 2021 to endorse a transition plan to progressively reduce all direct grant funding to the CCC by 2025/26, whilst committing to continue to provide in-kind support and ongoing assistance to the FoSC CRC (including an 0.2 FTE staff resource).
- 4.8 Key changes to the Strategic Plan 2020-25 are as follows:
- A preamble to explain Council's decision in December 2021 will see a progressively reduction in grant funding for the FoSC, with Council to continue to provide in-kind support and assistance.
 - An addition to 'Our Approach' to note the importance of friendship relations given Australia's heightened interest in its neighbours, including Timor-Leste, from a climate and geopolitical viewpoint.
 - An amendment to Outcome 1 Strategy 3 – to actively work to assist the CCC to gain funding, support and resources in light of the reduced CoPP annual grant.
 - Minor amendments to the expression of Outcome 2 Strategies:
 - To increase engagement with CoPP schools, community organisations, businesses and residents with the support of Councillors.
 - To encourage reciprocal learning between the Port Phillip and Covalima municipal governments.
- 4.9 The intent of these changes is to:
- Assist the CCC to find alternative sources of funding to replace the CoPP grant so that their important community development work can continue.
 - Broaden engagement with the CoPP community, with support from Councillors.
 - Build linkages to support the emerging municipal government in Covalima district, as the Timor-Leste Government continues to progress towards decentralisation.
 - Acknowledge the support the FoSC CRC requires in order to ensure the sustainability of the friendship program and relationship as the 0.6 FTE Coordinator role is reduced.



5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 A pro-bono consultant provided advice on preparing the FoSC Strategic Plan Review Report, which included interviewing key stakeholders and program beneficiaries in Covalima district, Timor-Leste.
- 5.2 The FoSC CRC participated in meetings to review findings from the Strategic Plan Review Report and to revise the Strategic Plan 2020-25.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no known legal or risk implications to Council.
- 6.2 The revised Strategic Plan 2020-2025 seeks to minimise any impacts to the CCC and its programs resulting from the progressive reduction in Council direct funding.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 The budget allocation for the FoSC program for the 2022/23 financial year is \$45,000 (reduced from \$60,000 in 2021/22) and a 0.6 FTE position to coordinate the program and relationship between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities.
- 7.2 In December 2021, Council endorsed a transition plan to reduce funding to FoSC by 25% each year, with all direct funding to the CCC to cease by 2025/26 and the Coordinator position reduced to 0.2 FTE by 2024/25.
- 7.3 The Friendship Agreement 2020-30 remains in place and Council has committed to continuing to provide other in-kind support and ongoing assistance to the FoSC Community Reference Committee.
- 7.4 The Strategic Plan has been revised to reflect the impact of Council's decision on the capacity of the FoSC to implement all planned strategies and the operation of the Covalima Community Centre.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 FoSC is committed to sustainable practices and supports projects in Covalima district which have a positive environmental impact. Projects include establishing a reforestation project and the installation of solar panels in homes located in remote, off-grid villages.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 The Friendship is a community initiated, longstanding commitment that supports a two-way relationship that is enriching for both communities. Residents can engage in international relations with our near neighbour Timor-Leste; learning and development understanding from each other through engagement.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 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 club, churches and other organisations in Port Phillip to connect with and support friends in Timor-Leste.



9.4 A strategy in the revised Strategic Plan is to increase engagement with CoPP schools and youth, community organisations, businesses and residents, with the support of Councillors.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 Since 2000, the FoSC Friendship Agreement and program have been guided by and aligned with the strategic goals of each Council Plan.

10.2 This program aligns with two of the Strategic Directions in the 2021-31 Council Plan.

Strategic Direction 1 – Inclusive Port Phillip

Strategic Direction 5 – Well Governed Port Phillip

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 The revised FoSC 2020-25 Strategic Plan will be implemented immediately.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 If endorsed by Council, the FoSC Strategic Plan will be shared at the FoSC Annual Meeting in November 2022.

11.2.2 The revised Strategic Plan will be shared with the Board and Staff at the Covalima Community Centre in Suai, Timor-Leste.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

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

ATTACHMENTS

1. Friends of Suai Strategic Plan 2020-25 Revised 2022  
2. Friends of Suai Strategic Plan Review Report 2022  