



ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL 6 NOVEMBER 2019

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FRIENDS OF SUAI/COVALIMA ANNUAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: **TONY KEENAN, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

PREPARED BY: **CARLENE HARLOCK, COORDINATOR FRIENDS OF SUAI/COVALIMA**

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Council on the 2018-19 achievements of the Friends of Suai/Covalima Community Reference Committee.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 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 this community's concern to 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 in 2000 and was renewed for a further ten years in 2010.
- 2.2 The Friendship is still delivering on our agreement and remains aligned to the guiding principle; to develop productive and sustainable relationships based in dialogue, trust and strategic vision. Through Friends of Suai/Covalima, City of Port Phillip continue to respond to needs and priorities expressed by the Covalima Community and to help to build a thriving, self-determining community through democratic processes.
- 2.3 Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) Community Reference Committee is an advisory group to Council and is resourced and supported by the FoSC Program Coordinator. Resourcing of activities and projects for the FoSC program is included in the Diversity and Inclusion budget, with a \$85,350 program budget for 2018-19.
- 2.4 FoSC work in partnership with the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) in Suai. The program budget amount above includes \$48,000 which provides core funding to the Centre, including staffing, communication, transport and administrative costs. This consistent funding has allowed the CCC to form partnerships with local and international development organisations.
- 2.5 The FoSC 2018-19 Annual Report is aligned to the FoSC Joint Strategic Plan (2010-2020) and details the many activities and achievements of the Friendship. These include fundraising and cultural events held in City of Port Phillip and successful community development initiatives implemented in Covalima district.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Endorses the 2018-19 Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) Annual Report (Attachment 1)
- 3.2 Acknowledge the contribution of the FoSC Community Reference Committee
- 3.3 Acknowledge the work of the Covalima Community Centre and the role it plays enhancing the lives of the Suai – Covalima community



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4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 The agreements governing the work of Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) are based on friendship and mutual respect.
- 4.2 A ten-year Friendship Agreement with the coastal town of Suai, Timor Leste was signed by Xanana Gusmao (former Prime Minister) and Council in 2000 in response to the violence following the independence vote in 1999.
- 4.3 Further Memorandums of Understanding with the Covalima District Administration were signed in 2005 and the Friendship was renewed for a further ten years at a celebration at St Kilda Town Hall in 2010. (Attachment 2)
- 4.4 In April 2016 the Mayor and CEO of City of Port Phillip signed a Municipal Cooperation Agreement with the Government of Timor Leste. The agreement provides a support framework for building local government in Timor Leste.
- 4.5 The work of FoSC, is guided by the FoSC Joint Strategic Plan 2010-2020. This plan has set a solid base for ongoing community development through 19 years of the community-to-community partnership.
- 4.6 In 2016 the CCC developed a four-year strategic plan to further articulate the priorities of the FoSC Joint Strategic Plan and consolidate the role of the CCC as a key education and development organisation for the community of Covalima.
- 4.7 The vision of the CCC Strategic Plan (2016-2020) is to 'build a community in which everyone has the opportunity to develop their capacities and contribute to the social and economic development of the district of Covalima'.
- 4.8 The CCC became a registered national NGO in 2013, and as a result has established partnerships over recent years with local and international development organisations. These partnerships assist the CCC to build upon the value achieved from the Port Phillip friendship while providing direct benefit to the Suai Covalima community.
- 4.9 In setting out the achievements of FoSC over the last 12 months, the Annual Report recognises the increasing capacity of the CCC in Suai and the contribution of the Director, Vice Director and leadership team.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 The 2018-19 Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) Annual Report has been prepared with FoSC Community Reference Committee Chairperson, Mews Alston; Treasurer Tony Phillips; Covalima Community Centre Director Alberto Barros; and Community Strengthening Team Coordinator Leo Kelly.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal and risk implications.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 Resourcing of activities and projects for the FoSC program is included in the Diversity and Inclusion budget, with a \$85,350 program budget for 2018-19.
- 7.2 The program's fundraising activities and community donors contributed over \$88,000 to support project outcomes. Donations provided funds for the scholarship program,



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resources for the Suai Secondary School library, solar lighting and the newly established With One Seed carbon reforestation project (See 8.1).

- 7.3 In addition, local traders and FoSC supporters provided \$6,700 in contributions of art, vouchers and merchandise as silent auction items and prizes at the Trivia night fundraiser in May 2019.
- 7.4 Program supporters provide goods and services voluntarily or at a reduced cost. The commercial value of these donations equals the City of Port Phillip budget allocation for the program.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 FoSC have committed to supporting the establishment of an exciting 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 social credits. The initial plan is to plant 7,000 trees in early 2020. FoSC have raised funds this year to employ four staff and establish the nursery for this project.
- 8.2 This year a second Village Lighting Scheme (VLS) was implemented, bringing solar-lighting to 39 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 kerosene; bringing social, economic and health benefits to families. There are now 79 households in Covalima district that have received solar lighting as part of the VLS project, supported by FoSC, Renew and the CCC.
- 8.3 The FoSC water, sanitation and hygiene project at Suai Secondary School is providing a sustainable water supply and toilets for 2000 students, and local families in nearby communities are now connected to the community water tank.
- 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 and reforestation.
- 8.5 Support for 58 science and mathematics teachers to receive training is equipping teachers and students in Covalima with valuable skills and understanding of the natural world.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 Since 2012, community donations have provided 155 scholarships to students from Covalima district to further their education at a senior secondary, vocational and tertiary level. Covalima district is one of the poorest in Timor Leste and the scholarship program is providing access to education and preparing students for future employment.
- 9.2 Over 60 students have now found employment after receiving a FoSC scholarship to undertake vocational or tertiary education in Timor Leste. This accounts for over 50% of scholarship graduates, which is significant given the constraints on employment in Timor Leste.
- 9.3 Donations of second-hand computers by City of Port Phillip ensure the continuing operation of the IT social enterprise at the CCC. Income is generated through the delivery of training programs and computers are sold at moderate prices to students



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and families. The provision of laptops has enabled the delivery of training in rural village centres.

- 9.4 The CCC has an excellent reputation for promoting gender equality and supporting women in leadership. The Rural Women's Development Program at the CCC supports income generating activities for 115 women and provides leadership and empowerment training for more than 50 women elected in village councils.
- 9.5 The FoSC Community Reference Committee (CRC) is an advisory group to Council and is supported and resourced by the FoSC Coordinator. Over 20 residents regularly attend meetings and organise events in City of Port Phillip. The CRC also assess project initiatives to ensure the Friendship pursues best practice in international development.
- 9.6 Fundraising, cultural events and public meetings have ensured participation and engagement in the community, attracting residents, City of Port Phillip Councillors and staff, and the Timor Leste network in Victoria.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 Since 2000, the Friends of Suai/Covalima Friendship Agreement and program have been guided by Council values and align with the strategic goals of relevant Council Plans. This report aligns with the 2017-2027 Council Plan and Strategic Direction 1: We embrace different and people belong.
- 10.2 The Suai Covalima Timor Leste partnership is an engagement and partnership priority that supports this direction.
- 10.3 The Friends of Suai Strategic Plan 2010-2020 is a planning instrument for this direction.
- 10.4 The annual contribution of \$48,000 to the CCC in Suai is a major financial investment by Council to support its Council Plan direction and the long-term friendship with Covalima district.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

- 11.1.1 The Annual Report will be presented at the FoSC Annual General Meeting on 19 November 2019.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 The Annual Report will be distributed to FoSC members, donors, partners and supporters.
- 11.2.2 The Annual Report will be accessible from the FoSC page of the City of Port Phillip website. An accessible format version will also be available from this page.

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.

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TRIM FILE NO: 10/08/02

ATTACHMENTS

1. Friends of Suai Covalima Annual Report 2018-2019
2. Memorandum of Understanding 2010 - 2020 between Suai Timor-Leste and City of Port Phillip