

Officer responsible Community Relations Manager	Author Julie Battersby, City Promotion Coordinator
Corporate Plan Output: Sister Cities	

The purpose of this report is to provide information requested by Councillor Pat Harrow relating to the possibility of developing a Sister City relationship with a city in East Timor. Councillor Harrow requested this information during the December 1999 Strategy and Resources Committee meeting.

BACKGROUND

In November the East Timor/Taiwan Assistance Subcommittee organised a fundraising campaign to raise funds to assist both earthquake-ravaged Taiwan, and war-torn East Timor. At that time a report was received from the United Nations outlining the severity of the situation in East Timor and the need for resources and initial humanitarian assistance. The East Timor/Taiwan Assistance Committee was developed by Council to consider ways in which we could assist these two nations. Funds raised during a fundraising campaign were distributed to each of these nations.

GOVERNANCE IN EAST TIMOR

Contact has been made with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) East Timor Programme Manager, Richard Graves. Mr Graves has explained that East Timor is presently under the control of United Nations. There is no central or local government in existence and it is likely to be sometime before central government will be established and a minimum of three years before local government will exist. The first step for the United Nations will be to hold elections to establish a central government.

Richard Graves' comment relating to the absence of local government in East Timor raises the appropriateness of entering into a Sister City agreement at this stage. In the absence of a formal authority, any discussions relating to such a relationship would fall back into the hands of United Nations, assuming they would want to be involved. Given the responsibilities they have in developing the government for East Timor, it is likely that they would consider it inappropriate at this stage. Further discussions with Richard Graves indicated that, assuming Christchurch City Council wanted to consider a future relationship with East Timor, then working with a non-governmental organisation focussed on East Timor would be an appropriate starting point.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGO) INVOLVED IN EAST TIMOR

Nationally, World Vision, CARITAS, Oxfam, TEAR Fund, Red Cross and CORSO have been actively involved in East Timor. Each aid agency seeks support from individuals, organisations and groups to support their efforts to provide assistance in times of need. Each agency also has a specific area of interest that they support in such times and it would be appropriate to determine such areas prior to considering selecting an NGO with which to work.

It is likely that NGOs will seek assistance from RedR NZ, a New Zealand-based organisation that maintains a register of specialist personnel available to travel to disaster areas and provide assistance. The process under which RedR NZ operates was reported to the November meeting of Council.

At the November 1999 meeting of Council, Councillors adopted a recommendation to contribute \$5,000 toward assistance for East Timor. Council also adopted a recommendation to arrange for the canvassing of technical personnel within the city with the objective of establishing individual registration with RedR NZ. This would allow Christchurch City Council to contribute toward rebuilding of East Timor in an indirect way.

SUMMARY

The lack of a local government organisation in East Timor makes the development of a Sister City relationship at this stage very difficult. It is likely to be three years before it would be opportune to discuss such a relationship.

Christchurch City Council has worked with NGOs and continues to do so through the possible individual registration with RedR NZ. It is logical to continue assisting East Timor through this process and, when appropriate in the future, take a further step forward to assessing the opportunity to develop a Sister City relationship with a redeveloping city in East Timor.

- Recommendation:**
1. That Christchurch not pursue a Sister City relationship with East Timor at this time.
 2. That City Council support the redevelopment of East Timor through the previously agreed strategy incorporating RedR NZ.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.