



Canberra Nara Sister City Relationship – ACT Government Protocol

Background

On 26 October 1993 the Chief Minister of the ACT and the Mayor of Nara agreed to establish a sister city affiliation for the promotion of a wide range of exchange activities in fields such as business, culture, sports, education, technology and tourism. The sister city affiliation was formalised by an agreement signed on 31 March 1994 which committed the cities to promote mutual exchanges of delegations from various sectors of the community; mutual receptions of visiting delegations; mutual exchange of arts, culture and sport; mutual cooperation in industry exchange and promotion of tourism; and exchange of information concerning history, culture, education and research.

Purpose

This Protocol is aimed at facilitating the smooth working of the sister city relationship between Canberra and Nara by setting out the manner in which the ACT Government will handle matters arising under the Agreement. The Protocol also sets out the extent and role of the Canberra Nara Sister City Committee.

Classification of sister city contacts

The classification of sister city contacts (including visits) will be guided in each case by discussions between Canberra and Nara and will generally fall into one of the following categories:

- ‘Official’ involves contact between the Chief Minister of the ACT and the Mayor of Nara, and may extend to contact between members of the ACT Legislative Assembly (apart from the Chief Minister) and the Deputy Mayor and members of the Nara municipal assembly. Other ‘Official’ visits would include community-based sister city visits requested and agreed by the Mayor of Nara and the ACT Chief Minister;
- ‘Unofficial’ involves contact between Nara and Canberra that, while not the subject of direct contact between the Chief Minister and Mayor, is motivated by the objectives of the Sister City Agreement eg school-to-school exchanges, whether of government or independent schools; trips or visits by sporting and professional associations; and other community-based activities;
- ‘Private’ involves contact between private citizens of the two cities without any explicit connection or reference to the Sister City Agreement.

Role of the ACT Government

The ACT Government highly values the sister city relationship and aims to promote the growth of contacts between Canberra and Nara. The ACT Government notes that many of these contacts will be at the citizen level rather than at the ‘official’ level. To the maximum extent possible, the ACT Government undertakes to assist such citizen-to-citizen contacts

between the people of our two cities. Where the contact is at an 'official' level, the Chief Minister's Department of the ACT Government – assisted where necessary by other parts of the ACT Public Service – will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place. This would normally involve liaison with the Nara Municipal Government.

Depending on the nature of the contact, the Chief Minister's Department may be able to organise a meeting with the Chief Minister, tree planting in Nara Grove, a tour of the ACT Legislative Assembly or other activities. For ACT citizens visiting Nara – whether as members of a school or sporting or professional or cultural association – it may be possible to arrange a letter of introduction from the Chief Minister.

Role of the Canberra Nara Sister City Committee

The Canberra Nara Sister City Committee provides assistance and advice to the ACT Government in regard to the implementation of the Sister City Agreement, especially by:

- Acting as a coordinator, catalyst of activities and point-of-contact for community groups and businesses;
- Encouraging community and business support and involvement in Nara-related activities; and
- Creating an environment in which individuals, community groups, educational and sporting bodies, other cultural organisations and businesses are encouraged and motivated to undertake projects of benefit to the Canberra Nara relationship.

Membership of the Committee is voluntary and comprises residents of Canberra who are appointed by the Chief Minister on the basis of their ability to contribute to the sister city objectives and their experience in dealing with Japanese culture. The Committee may choose to co-opt members. The Committee benefits from the participation of 'observers' from the Embassy of Japan. The Chief Minister's Department services the Committee.

For all 'official' and some 'unofficial' contacts, the Committee may be able to offer one or more of the following forms of assistance (noting that any assistance is provided on a voluntary basis):

- Meeting, greeting and farewelling visitors;
- Attending public events that visitors are involved in;
- Providing links to community organisations and the education sectors;
- Providing voluntary interpreting;
- Providing visitor guidelines and assistance through the Canberra Nara Sister City website.

For other contacts (and for activities involving Japanese cities other than Nara), the Committee may be able to provide appropriate links to relevant organisations.

Communication

The ACT Chief Minister's Department and the International section of the Nara Municipal Government regularly consult on matters affecting the two cities. The Chief Minister's Department's website includes a special section devoted to the sister city relationship: http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/nara_sister_city/html/canberra_nara.html

For further information

Information about Canberra, the ACT Government and the Canberra Nara Sister City relationship can be obtained from CanberraConnect@act.gov.au (phone 132281).