

19 November 2013

**Notice of motion, Cr Oke: St Petersburg Relationship****Motion**

That the Future Melbourne Committee:

1. requests a report to the Council meeting of 17 December 2013 describing at a high level the various ways in which the Cities of Melbourne and St Petersburg formally relate;
2. recommends to the Council at its meeting of 17 December 2013 that it either:
  - 2.1 resolve to more actively use any influence the City of Melbourne has in the Sister City relationship to advocate for the revocation of St Petersburg's regional anti-gay legislation; or
  - 2.2 resolve to suspend the City of Melbourne's sister city relationship with St Petersburg until such time as St Petersburg's regional anti-gay laws are revoked, as other Sister Cities of St Petersburg have done; and
3. requests management to draft appropriate resolutions for both scenarios outlined in section 2 for consideration at the Council meeting on 17 December 2013.

**Background**

An online petition carrying 8,760 signatures was tabled by Cr Oke at the 26 March 2013 Council meeting, calling on the City of Melbourne to terminate its Sister City relationship with St Petersburg due to its so called 'gay propaganda' laws, as many other Sister Cities have already done. The laws 'threaten fines for anyone found making public action among minors for the propaganda of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality or transgenderism.'

Council agreed to a motion moved by Cr Oke on 25 June to note Melbourne residents' condemnation of the 'gay propaganda' laws enacted by Melbourne's Sister City St Petersburg, and residents' calls to suspend the Sister City relationship. The resolution also requested the Lord Mayor to write to the Governor of St Petersburg to formally convey Council's concerns on the matter.

The Lord Mayor received a reply from the Governor of St Petersburg in October 2013. The Governor expresses interest in strengthening the Sister City relationship whilst providing a justification for the anti-gay laws on the basis of the protection of the family and the child.

Interest from Melbourne residents on the City of Melbourne's position on St Petersburg's anti-gay laws remains high, and some eight months have passed since the tabling of the original petition. During that time, hate-motivated violence in St Petersburg has been a frequent and internationally exposed occurrence.

This motion seeks to commission a public report from management outlining the various ways in which the Cities of Melbourne and St Petersburg currently formally relate. This will provide for an opportunity in December to debate the options that might be available to use the Sister City relationship to advocate for a reduction in hate-motivated violence and discrimination. Should it be apparent that there are no meaningful options available, the Council should consider doing as other Sister Cities of St Petersburg have done, and suspend the Sister City relationship until such time as the anti-gay laws are revoked.

This motion prepares, but does not pre-empt, the December debate. However, it does request management to draft two alternative resolutions so that the Council can pursue one of two alternative courses of action should it choose to do so in December after considering the report from management describing the current relationship.

**Moved:** Cr Oke