

ITEM 5. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SPONSORSHIP – SYDNEY AIRPORT WELCOME DESK**FILE NO: S126560****SUMMARY**

An application for a Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship has been received from StudyNSW, which is a dedicated unit within the Department of Industry responsible for delivering a 10 year international education strategy. It seeks support for the Sydney International Airport Welcome Desk to welcome international students.

New South Wales is Australia's most popular study destination, attracting 37.3 per cent of international student enrolments. International education is New South Wales' largest services export and second largest export overall, worth \$7.2 billion to the NSW economy in 2015/16 and supporting over 46,000 jobs. There were 268,513 international student enrolments in 2016. Since 2013, the number of international student enrolments in NSW has grown by 57.9 per cent.

The Sydney International Airport Welcome Desk was established in 2015 to greet and support international students arriving at Sydney Airport, the primary gateway for international students arriving in New South Wales. It is a partnership with the NSW international education sector and related stakeholders including universities, TAFE NSW, English Australia and is supported by the Council of International Students Australia (CISA).

Since opening, the desk has engaged with over 14,000 students and increased assistance interactions 210 per cent from 2015 to 2016. Rolling out an improved volunteer program is crucial for extending the effectiveness of the program and also for maximising the potential of the project to reach newly arriving international students.

The application was assessed against the aims of the City's Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship Program and was found to strongly align with the program's key outcomes to encourage the exchange of innovative ideas and knowledge, and the development of strong networks through which participants work collaboratively and acquire new knowledge and skills. The program has clear strategic alignment with the objectives of Sustainable Sydney 2030, the City's Economic Development Strategy as well as the City's Social Sustainability Action Plan.

It is recommended that Council approve \$10,000 cash (exclusive of GST) to support the delivery of the Sydney International Airport Welcome Desk in 2017/18 with an additional two years' funding of \$10,000 cash per year (exclusive of GST and CPI linked). Through the sponsorship, StudyNSW will offer promotion of the City's wellbeing and orientation resources, including the City funded International Student Guide to Sydney.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve \$10,000 (exclusive of GST and CPI linked) financial support per year for the next three years for StudyNSW to coordinate and deliver the Sydney International Airport Welcome Desk; and
- (B) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer a sponsorship agreement with StudyNSW.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

BACKGROUND

1. The City's Economic Development Strategy identifies the tertiary education sector as a key to sustaining a resilient economy and supporting Sydney's global linkages with international markets and competitiveness.
2. The Economic Development Strategy states that, 'A globally competitive Sydney will be a diverse city, with a community enriched by migration whether as permanent residents, students or as a result of international labour mobility. It will be an outwardly focused city.'
3. StudyNSW has requested cash sponsorship for participation in the Sydney International Airport Welcome Desk, which includes enabling both welcoming international students to Sydney and a capacity building Work Integrated Learning program for local and international student volunteer staff.
4. This request has been assessed against the aims of the Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship program and was found to strongly align with the program's key outcomes, in particular: encouraging the exchange of innovative ideas and knowledge; and the development of strong networks through which participants work collaboratively and acquire new knowledge and skills. The request for sponsorship has also been assessed against the evaluation and acquittal process and sponsorship is recommended.
5. Based on the assessment of the application against the criteria for the program, it is recommended that City approve cash sponsorship of \$10,000 (excluding GST and CPI linked) for three years.
6. The City's sponsorship would enable the continuation of the welcome desk and the expansion of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program. It increases the City's association with this successful initiative, and provides scope for greater City involvement in the program.
7. StudyNSW was established in 2014 by the NSW Government to increase the number of international students studying in Sydney and New South Wales or with our education providers overseas, and to improve the quality of their experience while in the state and recognise their contributions to our communities.
8. It is anticipated that international student numbers will increase in line with the Federal Government's International Education Strategy, which predicts 720,000 international students will be enrolled in Australia by 2025.
9. According to the NSW Department of Education and Training, there were 268,513 international students enrolled in New South Wales educational institutions in 2016. New South Wales had the most international student enrolments in Australia, with 37.3 per cent market share in 2016. Since 2013, the number of international student enrolments in NSW has grown by 57.9 per cent.
10. The NSW Government's International Education and Research Industry Action Plan, released in 2012, recommended the provision of a welcome desk, offering information on arrival as a benefit to both arriving students and the education sector.

11. At the City's international education roundtables held in 2013, the sector also recommended the establishment of a welcome desk at the airport as a key initiative to create a positive experience for any students arriving for the first time in Sydney. The City was involved in an advisory capacity in the initial stages of planning the welcome desk.
12. Both the City and StudyNSW recognise that enhancing the experience of newly arrived international students is key to ensuring Sydney remains competitive as a
13. The project is co-funded by a consortium including StudyNSW, Destination NSW, Australian Catholic University, Charles Sturt University, Macquarie University, University of Sydney, University of Newcastle, University of New South Wales, University of Technology Sydney, Western Sydney University, University of Wollongong, TAFE NSW, NSW Department of Education, and English Australia. It is supported by the Council of International Students Australia (CISA).
14. The consortium are contributing funding of \$264,660 in cash and value-in-kind contributions. The total expenditure expected is \$289,805.
15. In May 2017, StudyNSW and Sydney Airports Corporation Limited entered into a Memorandum of Understanding which provides the following benefits for the welcome desk:
 - (a) discount of 50 per cent on the rental space for the welcome desk;
 - (b) advertising including 22 double-sided banners located in the arrival halls A and B, during June-July valued at \$70,000 per month;
 - (c) directional advice on the airport's website and onsite e-kiosks;
 - (d) use of the Kingsford Smith Suite meeting room for training purposes;
 - (e) cleaning of the welcome desk; and
 - (f) relocation of the welcome desk to a more prominent position beside the Airport Ambassadors desk.
16. Commencing operations in July 2015, the welcome desk is located at Arrivals Hall A, Terminal 1. It is open morning and evening seven days a week during peak times of February and July and Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings at all other times.
17. The welcome desk at Sydney Airport is staffed by both domestic and international student volunteers who participate in a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program for 20 hours. Once the hours are reached, the volunteers have the option to complete a further 30 hours as a team leader. The volunteers greet students, offer orientation advice and distribute guides with maps and information about accommodation and transport.
18. The objectives of the welcome desk are to:
 - (a) provide a welcoming first point of contact for international students on arrival arrive in Sydney;
 - (b) equip the student with useful information to orientate themselves and contribute to positive first impressions during the crucial first 24 hours of arrival in Sydney;

- (c) distribute initial tourism/visitor based information on Sydney and NSW when required by international students; and
 - (d) enable work-integrated-learning experience for local and international student volunteers to increase employability.
19. Information distribution includes:
- (a) International Student Guide produced in collaboration with the City, StudyNSW and published by Insider Guides;
 - (b) official Sydney Guide produced by Sydney Tourism Information Partnership (STIP) which includes support from the City of Sydney;
 - (c) audio-visual presentation on continuous loop for arriving students when the desk is closed; and
 - (d) two iPads for information access during desk operations and a mobile phone for use by desk staff as required.
20. To measure engagement and assistance, team leaders and volunteers complete reports on the services. Since opening, the desk has engaged with over 14,000 students, and increased assistance interactions 210 per cent from 2015 to 2016.
21. Feedback from the student volunteers shows meeting new people, networks, and teamwork as the most valuable outcomes of the program. The volunteer experience and satisfaction gained from helping others was rated as the second most valuable aspect. The skills gained or improved during the program was also noted as a valuable outcome. Some examples of skills included customer service, communication, spoken English language, and problem solving.
22. Feedback from volunteers shows improvements in the Work Integrated Learning program would benefit the overall participation and effectiveness of the project. Therefore, the City is linking its funding to this area to improve the training provided and capacity building components of the initiative. In particular, the feedback seeks improvement in training with emphasis on communication skills, information provision and recognition of service.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

23. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This sponsorship is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City – the welcome desk showcases Sydney as a global and innovative city:
 - (i) 1.4 Develop innovative capacity and global competitiveness, in particular; and
 - (ii) 1.4.1 Support local economic development and continuous learning;

- (b) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies - with a focus on:
 - (i) 6.3 Provide a rich layer of accessible community-level social infrastructure, services and programs across the City, in particular; and
 - (ii) 6.4 Develop and support local economies and employment.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 24. International students enhance Sydney's vibrancy and liveability through contributing to our City's cultural diversity. The international student community also plays an important role to grow and strengthen Sydney's global connections.
- 25. The delivery of the project is in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders in the international education sector and representatives from culturally diverse communities. Ensuring participation in the delivery of initiatives generates capacity building opportunities, and furthers outcomes such as social cohesion.

Economic

- 26. International education is a fast-growing priority sector for our local area. The high quality and strength of the international education sector enhances Sydney's position globally as a leading education and research destination. The sector also delivers direct and indirect benefits to local economies, creating jobs, attracting talent, and supporting the retail and tourism sectors while strengthening our global connections.
- 27. In 2015, Destination NSW figures showed 177,900 international student visitors arrived in New South Wales. They stayed 22.5 million nights and spent almost \$2.8 billion.
- 28. On average, international student visitors spent \$15,500 per visitor and \$122 per night in New South Wales. In 2015, the youth market (15-29 years) accounted for 81.6 per cent of all international student visitors to New South Wales, an increase of 20.4 per cent since 2011.
- 29. Education travel accounted for 5.2 per cent of total international visitors to New South Wales, 26.3 per cent of total international nights and 32.6 per cent of total international expenditure in New South Wales. On a national level, this signifies a contribution of 35.4 per cent of international student visitors, 36.4 per cent of international student nights and 36 per cent of international student expenditure.
- 30. In the last five years, Chinese student visitor expenditure in New South Wales increased by 92.2 per cent. Their share of New South Wales student expenditure grew from 34 per cent in 2011 to 45.3 per cent in 2015. China also ranked first for student expenditure and spend per visitor (\$24,870).
- 31. In 2015, the top 10 source markets accounted for 74.5 per cent of international student expenditure in New South Wales. These markets are: China, Thailand, India, Nepal, South Korea, Brazil, Indonesia, Vietnam, Pakistan and Malaysia.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

32. Financial commitment of \$10,000 (exclusive of GST and CPI linked) cash is provided in the approved 2017/18 Grants Budget. Funding for years two and three will be budgeted in the following two years.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

33. Section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

34. The welcome desk is currently in place. However, the peak season for international student arrivals is January to March, when 34.3 per cent of international student visitors arrive. Rolling out an improved volunteer program is crucial for extending the effectiveness of the program and also for maximising the potential of the project to reach newly arriving international students.

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