

ITEM 3. DRAFT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ACTION PLAN - PUBLIC EXHIBITION**FILE NO: S126553.001****SUMMARY**

This report seeks Council endorsement for the public exhibition of the City's draft International Education Action Plan. The draft plan is the City's first economic action plan to focus on supporting the international education sector.

The City's Economic Development Strategy (adopted December 2013) identifies International Education as a key priority sector for the City. This strategy delivers our vision for a dynamic, environmentally sustainable economy and a liveable city that works for residents, workers, visitors and students.

First and foremost, the international education sector attracts young people to Sydney, many of whom are living away from home for the first time. During their stay their families and communities rely on us, as the host city, to provide a safe and rewarding experience, just as we expect when our children spend time abroad to enrich their education and life experience.

By partnering with the education sector and its key stakeholders to provide a harmonious experience, we enable international students and their families to form a lifelong connection with Sydney that strengthens our global ties. Following graduation, the students will forge careers and become leaders contributing to local and global communities. As such, they will be best-placed to play a vital role in promoting Sydney as an education destination, a place to do business, and a place to enjoy visiting and revisiting for years to come.

The international education sector is one of the fastest-growing industries worldwide. The number of students studying in a different country has more than doubled in the period 2001-2015 to more than 4.5 million and is projected to reach eight million students by 2025.

Presently, international students make up around 21 per cent of the higher education population in Australia, which is second only to the UK. The sector is Australia's largest service-based export industry, and overall the country's third largest export earner.

Sydney has traditionally attracted the largest share of these students in the country, however, other Australian and global destinations are aggressively competing to increase their share of the market.

Our local area is the epicentre of the international student market in Sydney and NSW. Currently, we have over 150 education providers including universities, TAFEs, intensive English language colleges and vocation education and training providers. Over 35,000 international students are studying here and making a significant contribution to our economy, culture and communities. More than 10,000 international students also live in the local area.

The sector is a key component of our local economy – its high quality and reputation, and its potential for growth both in economic contribution and job creation, make it a priority now and into the future.

For example, over 7 per cent of Australia's total international visitor and related income is derived from international students attending university in our local area. The sector contributes over \$1.6 billion to the economy within our boundaries and generated demand for 10,000 (FTE) jobs in 2010.

The live-learned study experience in our local area marks the start of a lifelong connection with our city. The international student community also plays a key role in growing and strengthening Sydney's global connections. The students enhance Sydney's vibrancy and liveability through contributing to our cultural diversity, adding to Sydney's global talent hub and international connectedness, whether they are taking advantage of the opportunities to work and volunteer during their studies or stay on to work after graduation.

Through the incubation of knowledge and ideas, the students make significant contributions to our knowledge-based economy, as well as to trade and business connections. The academic connections forged open doors for future research collaboration, with significant potential for innovation and productivity gains through early access to technological advances. The cohort also highlights Sydney's creative and intellectual assets, enhancing our reputation internationally as a centre of learning, research and innovation, which in the long-term, attracts global talent.

This draft plan, developed in consultation with the sector, including students, the NSW government, educational institutions and other stakeholders, sets out a framework for how the City will approach support for the international education sector over the next ten years. It identifies three key themes:

- welcoming;
- wellbeing, and
- work-integrated-learning.

It details commitments and priority actions across these themes based on the findings of extensive research, as well as consultation with key partners from the international education sector.

The overarching focus of this action plan is to promote the sustainable growth and development of Sydney's international education sector and to ensure that Sydney remains the leading destination in Australia for international education, while nurturing the range of benefits the sector offers City of Sydney communities and businesses.

The exhibition of the draft International Education Action Plan will provide an opportunity for communities, organisations and businesses to comment on the City's proposed role. Feedback received during the exhibition period will be incorporated into the final action plan, which will be presented to Council for adoption.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the draft International Education Action Plan, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for public exhibition for a minimum of eight weeks; and
- (B) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to undertake minor editorial amendments prior to the exhibition of the draft International Education Action Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft International Education Action Plan

BACKGROUND

International Education

1. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is the City's vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It provides the direction for the City's actions over the next 17 years. Direction 1 identifies that keeping Sydney globally competitive is central to Sydney's and Australia's future and that the City must focus on the global economy and sustained innovation to ensure continuing prosperity.
2. A key action to address this was the development of the City's Economic Development Strategy (adopted by Council, December 2013), which aims to strengthen the City's economy and support business. The strategy provides an overarching framework to inform the City's economic development initiatives and articulates the City's role, priorities and approach. The strategy centres on further improving the solid foundations for success that exist within the City's economy, as well as creating opportunities for individuals, businesses and the community.
3. Within this strategy, a number of priority sectors and cross-cutting themes were identified for specific action plans. To date, four action plans have been considered by Council on priority sectors: retail, tourism and tech start-ups, and one on the cross-cutting theme of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic development and enterprise.
4. To deliver on the priority sector of international education, the City has developed the draft International Education Action Plan. This Plan sets out a framework for the City to engage with the international education sector over the next 10 years. It builds on Sustainable Sydney 2030, as well as the Economic Development Strategy and Social Sustainability Plan.
5. Globally, transnational student education (studying in a different country) is one of the fastest-growing industries. It more than doubled in the period 2001-2015 to more than 4.5 million and this is projected to reach 8 million by 2025.
6. The need for greater communication to enhance a positive live-learned study experience, especially in the face of intensifying competition, was clearly articulated by the sector including students, organisations and providers.
7. The vision of the Plan is to work with partners to deliver a range of initiatives that over time create the conditions to sustain a thriving sector, with Sydney as a globally favoured education destination that fosters future trade and business connections.
8. Presently, international students make up around 21 per cent of the higher education population in Australia, which is second only to the UK. Sydney has traditionally attracted the largest share of these students in the country, however, other Australian and global destinations are aggressively competing to increase their share of the market.
9. In national terms, over seven per cent of Australia's total international visitor and related income is derived from international students attending university in our local area, who contribute over \$1.6 billion to the economy within our boundaries and generated demand for 10,000 (FTE) jobs in 2010.

10. Within our boundaries there are over 150 smaller education providers offering vocational, education training and English language courses. English language courses particularly are a recognised pathway to higher education institutions. Approximately 50 per cent of international students use such a pathway to gain entry to higher education institutions – this pathway between sectors is a strong point of the international Australian education structure, as is the ability to work while studying and after graduation.
11. The live-learned study experience in Sydney marks the start of a lifelong connection with our city. International students make significant contributions to Sydney's prosperity, and play a crucial role in enhancing our cultural diversity and furthering Sydney's reputation globally as a centre for learning, research and innovation. Through the incubation of knowledge and ideas, they also make significant contributions to Sydney's knowledge-based economy, and contribute to crucial business and trade connections.
12. The City has played a leadership role in developing innovative concepts and programs, which have gone on to be modelled and exemplified within state and national contexts.
13. A significant number of major education institutions are based within or adjacent to our local area, including University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney, University of NSW and TAFE Sydney Institute. As major landholders, these institutions are important stakeholders in the urban development and long-term structure of Sydney. They also have a key role in planning for the future of Sydney's transport, sustainability and urban design.
14. By collaborating with major education institutions and aligning corporate planning and organisational activities, the City will not only engage important corporate and community stakeholders but will also be able to deliver Sustainable Sydney 2030 outcomes for the wider resident, business and visitor populations.

Strategic Alignment

15. The development of the draft International Education Action Plan (the Plan) is aligned with the following *Sustainable Sydney 2030* strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 1 – A globally competitive and engaging city - with a focus on:
 - (i) 1.1 Plan for growth in the City centre - in particular, 1.1.2. Ensure the City of Sydney's economic development strategies strengthen the economic roles of the City centre precincts; and
 - (ii) 1.2 Strengthen globally competitive clusters and networks and develop innovative capacity - in particular, 1.2.1. Investigate the establishment of the 'Sydney Partnership' with the private sector, research and educational institutions; 1.2.2. Develop the City's economic development and research capabilities; 1.2.3. Foster economic collaboration and knowledge exchange with other national and global cities; 1.2.4. Foster industry networks in a selected group of high growth globally competitive industries; and

- (iii) 1.4 Develop innovative capacity and global competitiveness - in particular, 1.4.1. Support local economic development and continuous learning, and 1.4.2. Identify, develop and support the creation of innovation precincts across the city, for example at Ultimo-Pyrmont education and cultural precinct; and
- (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, 6.3.1. Prepare city-wide integrated communities strategy to ensure services meet local community needs, and 6.3.2. Establish partnerships and programs to improved social conditions and outcomes among particular communities; and
 - (ii) 6.4 Develop and support local economies and employment – in particular, 6.4.2. Include initiatives for work and training for local unemployed and disadvantaged people in activity hub plans, and 6.4.3. Investigate the establishment of a Sydney Employment Mentoring Program.

Developing the International Education Action Plan

16. The development of the Plan has followed the approach detailed below:
 - (a) examination of economic, social and cultural issues, including factors affecting wellbeing and how the City was best placed to support the sector to enhance the student experience;
 - (b) taking into account the actions of other levels of government, the not for profit and private sector, the education sector and the aspirations of the community; and
 - (c) seeking to be innovative and exemplify leadership.
17. A staged approach was taken in the development of the Plan, including i) a detailed program of research to 'set the context', ii) a significant community engagement process, including roundtables with stakeholders to develop areas of focus, and iii) development and testing of options, priorities and programs with partners.
18. The City commissioned Access Economics to determine the economic contribution of international students studying at tertiary institutions within, or bordering on, our local area.
19. We engaged the Institute of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) to investigate how international students living in the local area perceive their wellbeing and the factors contributing to their wellbeing.
20. Key issues and initial City areas of focus were developed following the research and engagement through roundtables.

Structure and Focus of the Plan

21. The draft Plan recognises the crucial importance of the direct and indirect benefits of the sector to local economies, creating jobs, and contributing to the community. International students increase cultural diversity, enhance the vibrancy of the city and promote its reputation internationally.
22. Analysis from the research and engagement revealed a number of thematic areas that require further action by the City and partners to provide over-arching support to the sector by tackling challenges and promoting opportunities identified during research and consultation. These themes are:
 - (a) **Welcoming:** Embrace newly-arrived international students into the Sydney community and promote Sydney's strengths as a leading education destination.
 - (b) **Wellbeing:** Encourage connection between local and international student communities, build capacity of students to fully participate in the community and enjoy a safe and rewarding live learned study experience.
 - (c) **Work-integrated-learning (WIL):** Enable opportunities to deliver projects that increase knowledge exchange, innovation and productivity and opportunities for professional experience and graduate employability to support Sydney's global talent hub and strengthen our global connections.
23. The City's approach to delivering change in these important areas is detailed in the Plan. It recognises that it is vital to work with industry and government partners to create an investment climate that allows the international education sector to grow and diversify. It also recognises the significant efforts of a wide-range of partners to leverage our efforts in working towards enhancing the student experience and supporting the sector.
24. The Plan is consistent with the approach taken by the NSW Government through the StudyNSW International Education Strategy. As part of this strategy, NSW Government has a dedicated international education unit, which has a focus on enhancing the experience of international students.

Key Commitments and Projects

25. Under each theme, the draft International Education Action Plan includes actions to be delivered by the City or in partnership with other levels of government and industry.
26. The actions within the Plan provide commitments for how the City will undertake activity. Specific projects will be scoped and implemented in partnership on a year by year basis with a wide range of organisations and businesses to deliver against these actions over the life of the Plan.
27. The City has begun pilot projects to address priority actions within the Plan. These are delivered as business as usual priorities to support international education. They include:

- (a) **Official Welcome for International Students** – this initiative strengthens engagement with the sector, and extends our role in welcoming newly arrived international students to Sydney. It aims to strengthen Sydney’s position as an education destination of choice. It is an annual event with over 1000 students attending to be welcomed by the Lord Mayor and the local Aboriginal community, as well as showcasing service providers with useful resources to enhance the student experience and stay in Sydney.
- (b) **International Student Guide to Sydney** – the guide contains information to assist students with their transition to life in Sydney including information relating to broad cultural norms, city orientation, cultural events, dining, leisure activities, safety and wellbeing. The guide is written by students for students. It is available at the Airport Welcome Desk, Lord Mayor’s Welcome and through education providers in our area.
- (c) **Graduate and Alumni Celebration** – to sustain our relationship with international graduates in Sydney and welcome those who choose to remain on post study visas and contribute to our global talent hub, farewell events are being piloted to further strengthen our ongoing connections with graduates.
- (d) **Education Provider ‘Wellbeing and Safety’ Forums** - the international education provider forum is an initiative by City of Sydney, StudyNSW and NSW Police. The forum was established to leverage communication between active international education partners and build their capacity to provide access to resources to promote a positive stay for students. It is open to any stakeholder interested in approaches and initiatives to improve the international student experience of Sydney.
- (e) **International Student Wellbeing Research Project** - this first of its kind research project was undertaken by University of Technology Sydney in 2016 and focused on international students who live or work in our local area. It focused on the key aspects of international students’ wellbeing: housing and housing exploitation, safety and security, financial resources and exploitation in the workplace, discrimination, and social integration. The results found a number of wellbeing and health challenges in the early stages of arriving in Sydney, and the findings support and inform the areas prioritised in the Plan.
- (f) **International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program (ISLA)** – this award winning program provides training, mentoring and practical experience to leaders in the international student community with the intention of increasing and improving engagement between the City and the sector, and building the capacity of international student organisations to deliver community events. In addition to encouraging social cohesion, the program provides opportunities for international students to obtain practical and meaningful professional work experience and opens networks for future employment.
- (g) **International Student Internships** – these provide opportunities to gain professional remunerated work experience at the City of Sydney and gain the crucial practice of applying academic knowledge in a professional real life environment. We are leading by example by offering international students this work experience. The program has been running since 2011 and enables four international students per year to gain remunerated work experience with the City of Sydney, one day a week, for twelve consecutive weeks.

- (h) **Volunteering Programs** – these programs provide opportunities for international students to contribute to their local communities while at the same time meeting new people, practicing English conversation, building and strengthening skills and, in some instances, providing a stepping-stone to employment. We also collaborate with key partners to offer opportunities for international students to engage with large-scale sporting events such as the 2015 Cricket World Cup and Asian Cup, and participate in the Destination Ambassador program.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Organisational Impact

28. The actions within the International Education Action Plan will be delivered by relevant existing business units over a ten-year period. Project activity has been incorporated into business unit Plans for 2017/18 and reviewed on a year by year basis. It is not envisaged that the delivery of these early actions will require resources outside of usual budgeting processes.

Risks

29. Building trust and demonstrating successful delivery against stated goals will be essential in positioning the City as a reliable partner. Through the development and delivery of initiatives identified as actions within the International Education Action Plan the City is demonstrating a commitment to addressing issues and identified gaps in partnership with the sector that will prove essential in building trust with key organisations and community as well as ensuring the engagement of the sector.
30. Sydney has traditionally attracted the largest share of international students in the country, however, other Australian and global destinations are aggressively competing to increase their share of the market. This means that we must encourage international students to not only choose Australia, but also to choose Sydney.
31. Sydney cannot afford to be complacent if it wishes to maximise its advantages, given the prospective growth of the transnational education market.

Social / Cultural / Community

32. The development and implementation of the International Education Action Plan will provide significant benefits to the international education community. Through working to increase opportunities for social participation, the Plan will result in greater prominence of the community and its activities throughout the city area.
33. During delivery of the initiatives identified, the City will ensure all activity is taken forward in partnership with the international education sector. Ensuring participation in the delivery of initiatives generates capacity building opportunities, as well as furthering less tangible outcomes such as social cohesion.

Economic

34. International Education is a fast-growing priority sector for our local area. The sector delivers direct and indirect benefits to local economies, creates jobs, attracts talent, and supports the retail and tourism sectors while furthering our global connections.

35. The development and implementation of the International Education Action Plan is intended to provide significant economic benefits to our local community and businesses by sustaining the sector as a globally-favoured education destination offering a positive live-learned study experience, and fostering future trade and business connections.
36. The outcomes seek to support talent attraction, enhance economic prosperity and further Sydney's global reputation. It is envisaged that this will be achieved through providing a proven safe and rewarding study experience where students have access to a wide range of wellbeing resources, as well as increased opportunities to participate in city life, and gain meaningful professional experience both during and post-study to enhance employability and connections with local community.
37. In 2014–15, international students paid \$12.1 billion in direct tuition fees, and for goods and services. In addition, they spent \$5 billion indirectly. Their total spending represented one per cent of Australia's gross domestic product (GDP).
38. In 2014–15, it is estimated that international education contributed to 130,744 FTE jobs in Australia. This amounts to one FTE job for every four students.
39. Our local area was a major beneficiary, with international students contributing more than \$1.6 billion to our local economy and supporting around 10,000 FTE jobs.
40. In addition, nationally, international students and their families and friends spend huge sums on travel. Students also pay about \$3 billion in direct taxes and through goods and services taxes.
41. Education travel accounted for 5.2 per cent of total international visitors to NSW, 26.3 per cent of total international nights and 32.6 per cent of total international expenditure in NSW. 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 36.0 per cent of international student expenditure.
42. On average, in 2015–16, international students spent \$19,570, which was much higher than the average spending of \$4,261 per international visitor.
43. The sector also assists with attracting global talent as it strengthens national and international recognition of Sydney as a great place to visit, live, work, invest and study. Between 2006 and 2011, 290,000 (just under one third) of the international graduates who studied under a student visa were granted a permanent or provisional visa, allowing them to live and work in Australia, adding to our global talent pool.
44. Around 440,000 international students are studying in Australia currently on student visas. Based on historic averages, this means that around 130,000 extra tertiary-educated people will be available to the Australian workforce over the coming years.
45. Ultimately, these international academic connections can help attract investment and make Sydney's economy more competitive internationally, leading to greater resilience. This will support structural adjustment of the economy towards the valuable knowledge sector, which can help secure the living standards of Sydney residents well into the 21st century.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

46. For the delivery of projects identified within the Plan, provision of resources has been included within the 2017/18 budgets for the delivery of priority projects across a range of Council business units.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

47. Local Government Act, 1993.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

48. The exhibition period will commence for a minimum of eight weeks following Council endorsement for the public exhibition of the draft Plan. Activities to occur during the public exhibition period include a briefing for key partners (including representatives of businesses, peak body student organisations, community organisations, and government), online engagement and social media, and individual briefings of key stakeholders.
49. Monitoring of feedback will occur throughout the public exhibition period, and key themes raised during the public exhibition period and engagement with stakeholders will be captured and provided to Council as part of the report proposing the adoption of the International Education Action Plan.
50. Following amendment, the draft Plan will be reported to Council for adoption of a final action plan in early 2018.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

51. Structured consultation with a wide range of representatives from key organisational, business, government and academic stakeholders has been undertaken to inform the development of the International Education Action Plan.
52. It is proposed that the draft International Education Action Plan be placed on public exhibition for a minimum period of eight weeks. During this time, key business, organisational and government stakeholders will be briefed, either at an event hosted by the City or direct briefings of their organisations. Members of the public will also be able to comment through Sydney Your Say.
53. The City will analyse the feedback during the exhibition period and incorporate it, where appropriate, into the International Education Action Plan. It will then be submitted for adoption by Council.

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