

ITEM 3. CONTINUATION OF COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WATER SENSITIVE CITIES MEMBERSHIP**FILE NO: S087958.014****SUMMARY**

The City of Sydney is seeking approval to continue its membership of the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities (CRC WSC) as part of the Sydney Metropolitan Consortium (The Consortium) for a further three year term commencing 1 January 2015 and ending 31 December 2017.

The Consortium members include the City of Sydney, Blacktown City Council, Fairfield City Council, Hornsby Shire Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, Newcastle City Council, Strathfield Municipal Council, Warringah Council, NSW Department of Planning & Environment, Metropolitan Water Directorate and Greater Sydney Local Land Services.

The CRC WSC brings together the inter-disciplinary research expertise and thought-leadership to undertake research that will revolutionise water management in Australia and overseas. In collaboration with over 80 research, industry and government partners, it delivers the socio-technical urban water management solutions, education and training programs, and industry engagement required to make towns and cities water sensitive.

The Consortium membership of the CRC WSC aligns with Sustainable Sydney 2030 Direction 2: To Become a Leading Environmental Performer; and its objective to reduce potable water consumption and stormwater gross pollutant loads to the catchment within the local government area. Membership provides access to the latest research into social and technical water urban management, education and training resources that are essential in achieving the City's vision of becoming a water sensitive city and meeting targets set out in Sustainable Sydney 2030 and the Decentralised Water Master Plan.

Sufficient funds for membership at \$13,500 (excl. GST) per year are included in the 2014/15 operating budget and future years' forward estimates.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) the City of Sydney continue its consortium membership of the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities (CRC WSC) as part of the Sydney Metropolitan Consortium (The Consortium), which comprises eight councils and three state government agencies;
- (B) Council approve the allocation of \$13,500 (excluding GST) per year for three years to be paid to the Lead Agency of The Consortium, consisting of \$10,000 (excluding GST) per year for the Research Program of the CRC WSC and \$3,500 (excluding GST) per year as an administration fee to the Lead Agency of The Consortium; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to enter into an agreement to continue membership of The Consortium until 31 December 2017.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

BACKGROUND

1. In 2009, the City of Sydney committed to support the Cities as Water Supply Catchments research program as part of the Sydney Metropolitan Consortium (The Consortium) to a maximum of \$65,000 over five years. This was in line with the City's vision to become a water sensitive city, with goals to reduce potable water consumption through water efficiency and recycling and to reduce pollutants discharged to waterways via stormwater run-off. The research outcomes would influence the City's development and implementation of the Decentralised Water Master Plan.
2. The Consortium members include the City of Sydney, Blacktown City Council, Fairfield City Council, Hornsby Shire Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, Newcastle City Council, Strathfield Municipal Council, Warringah Council, NSW Department of Planning & Environment, Metropolitan Water Directorate and Greater Sydney Local Land Services
3. The Greater Sydney Local Land Services (formerly the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority) is a signatory to the CRC WSC and is the Lead Agency to facilitate The Consortium. The Lead Agency acts as a principal point of contact between the researchers and The Consortium members, including communicating information needs, disseminating research outcomes and facilitating capacity initiatives to assist where possible the embedding of research findings within The Consortium members' policies, practices and operations.
4. The Cities as Water Supply Catchments was three years into its five-year research program before it was expanded to form the CRC WSC on 1 July 2012. The research programs and The Consortium membership continued through the transition from Cities as Water Supply Catchments to the CRC WSC.
5. The City of Sydney is seeking approval to continue its membership of the CRC WSC as part of The Consortium for a further three year term commencing 1 January 2015 and ending 31 December 2017. Sufficient funds for membership at \$13,500 per year are included in 2014/15 operating budget and future years' forward estimates.
6. The Consortium Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out the agreed working arrangements of members in relation to The Consortium membership of the CRC WSC, and has been revised to reflect the new term.

About the CRC WSC

7. The CRC WSC is funded through the Australian Government's CRC Program and by cash and in-kind contributions from its partners. Established on 1 July 2012, it has funding for nine years until 30 June 2021.
8. The CRC WSC brings together the inter-disciplinary research expertise and thought-leadership to undertake research that will revolutionise water management in Australia and overseas. In collaboration with over 80 research, industry and government partners, it delivers the socio-technical urban water management solutions, education and training programs, and industry engagement required to make towns and cities water sensitive. With a research budget in excess of AUD \$100 million, its research will guide capital investments of more than AUD \$100 billion by the Australian water sector and more than AUD \$550 billion of private sector investment in urban development over the next 13 years.

The CRC WSC Research Program

9. The Research Program is divided into four programs:

(a) Program A – Society

This program will focus on understanding and delivering the social transformations needed to support water sensitive cities, including community attitude and behavioural change, governance and economic assessment practices, management systems and technological innovation.

(b) Program B – Water Sensitive Urbanism

This program will focus on the influence of urban configurations on resource flows across a range of scales. It will apply green infrastructure and climate responsive design principles to water security, flood protection and the ecological health of terrestrial and aquatic landscapes from whole-of-catchment to street level.

(c) Program C – Future Technologies

This program will develop integrated and multi-functional urban water systems that manage and/or use multiple water sources at a range of scales. It will deliver innovative technologies for: integrative management of the urban water systems; fit-for-purpose production of water; the recovery of energy, nutrients and other valuable materials embedded in urban water; minimising the carbon footprint and ecological impacts of water systems; and maximising the potential multiple beneficial values of urban water services.

(d) Program D – Adoption Pathways

This program will deliver a suite of capacity building projects and socio-technical modelling tools that will provide a focus for participants and stakeholders at a national, regional and community level to interact, experiment, and learn from each other. This in turn will: improve community engagement; enrich educational and training programs at the professional and sub-professional levels; and support the development of robust science-policy partnerships.

Governance of the CRC WSC

10. The CRC WSC is governed by a Board, with management activities undertaken by the CRC WSC Executive. The Board collaborates with the Essential Participants Reference Group, comprised of a member of each of the nine Essential Participants, to ensure Participant expectations are met.

11. The CRC WSC Executive is comprised of the CEO, the Program Leaders, Hub Coordinators and the COO, and is responsible for the research and operational management of the CRC WSC. It is supported by the CRC WSC Advisory Committee, which comprises the Chairs of the eight Program-based Research Advisory Sub-Committees and Stakeholder Advisory Sub-Committees. All projects have Project Leaders who report progress to their respective Program Leaders to ensure project activities are meeting milestones on time and within budget.

Knowledge Sharing

12. The dissemination and application of CRC WSC research is facilitated through a number of knowledge sharing and capacity building activities including biannual Industry Partner Workshops, state-based water sensitive urban design capacity building programs, formal education opportunities (PhD scholarships and Masters programs) and developing a National 'Alliance' for transitioning to water sensitive cities and towns.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

13. *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. The City of Sydney's membership of the CRC WSC as part of The Consortium is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 2 - A Leading Environmental Performer – Objective 2.3: Reduce potable water consumption and stormwater gross pollutant loads to the catchment within the local government area.
14. In 2013, Council endorsed the City's Decentralised Water Master Plan, which sets out how these Sustainable Sydney 2030 targets may be achieved through water efficiency, recycling and water sensitive urban design initiatives. It further defines additional targets in these key areas to ensure the City's vision of a water sensitive city is realised: a city that is resilient, liveable, productive and sustainable; a city that is green and cool as population rises and climate warms.
15. Keeping abreast of the latest research and industry developments has been critical in developing the Decentralised Water Master Plan and continues to be integral to ongoing implementation planning and delivery.
16. The Consortium membership of the CRC WSC is considered extremely valuable to the City of Sydney as it provides access to the latest research into social and technical water urban management, education and training resources that are essential in achieving its vision of becoming a water sensitive city. It also allows the City to collaborate with researchers, provide practical insight into the challenges of implementation and to influence research discussion and future direction.

Organisational Impact

17. Membership provides the opportunity for up to four City of Sydney staff members to attend biannual CRC WSC Industry Partners Workshops free of charge. Travel costs are subsidised by The Consortium. During these two-day workshops, both researchers and industry partners can present updates of the latest innovations and breakthroughs in their projects. The workshops provide a forum for researchers and industry to identify knowledge gaps and inform the future direction of the research topics. Networking and knowledge sharing are additional invaluable outcomes the workshops. Additional seminars and formal educational opportunities are also available to members. It is intended that the Industry Partners Workshops will be attended by the City's Manager Water Strategy or delegate and others as appropriate.

18. Membership of The Consortium also involves attendance by the City's Manager Water Strategy or delegate to quarterly Technical Working Committee (The Committee) meetings. The Committee comprises representatives from The Consortium member organisations and is facilitated by the Lead Agency. The Committee provides strategic, policy and high level advice essential for the delivery of The Consortium's objectives and attainment of CRC WSC outcomes and deliverables.
19. The Committee will also play a key role in the development, co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and review of CRC WSC outcomes for the express purpose of facilitating their incorporation into The Consortium member policies, protocols, procedures and operations. The process of incorporation itself, however, is the responsibility of individual member organisations of The Consortium.
20. A member may terminate its membership of The Consortium by giving three month's written notice to the Lead Agency.

Risks

21. The key risk with not continuing membership of the CRC WSC is the knowledge gap that will result. This will jeopardise the City's ability to successfully implement the Decentralised Water Master Plan to realise Direction 2 of Sustainable Sydney 2030.

Social / Cultural / Community

22. Ultimately, the community will benefit from living in a water sensitive city that is greener and cooler despite projected increases in population and a changing climate.

Environmental

23. Membership of the CRC as part of The Consortium will assist the City in achieving its targets to reduce potable water consumption through water efficiency and recycling and reduce pollution to waterways via stormwater run-off. It will assist the City in achieving its vision of a water sensitive city that can provide the water security essential for economic prosperity through efficient use of the diversity of water resources available; enhance and protect the health of watercourses and wetlands; mitigate flood risk and damage; and create public spaces that harvest, clean and recycle water. A water sensitive city's strategies and systems for water management contribute to biodiversity and reduction of urban heat island effects.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

24. Membership involves the payment of \$13,500 (excluding GST) per year for three years to the Lead Agency of The Consortium, consisting of \$10,000 (excluding GST) per year for the Research Program of the CRC WSC and \$3,500 (excluding GST) per year as an administration fee to the Lead Agency of The Consortium.

25. Sufficient funds for membership of The Consortium are included in the 2014/15 operating budget and future years' forward estimates:
- (a) Year 1 – 2014/15 \$13,500 (excluding GST);
 - (b) Year 2 – 2015/16 \$13,500 (excluding GST); and
 - (c) Year 3 – 2016/17 \$13,500 (excluding GST).

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

26. The Consortium MOU term is from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2017.

OPTIONS

27. The City could become an independent member of the CRC WSC at the cost of \$50,000 per year. Membership of The Consortium provides similar benefits with a reduced financial burden. The CRC WSC recognises the contribution of local government partners and other agencies as essential to providing practical insight and relevance to research topics.
28. Not continuing membership of the CRC WSC through The Consortium will result in the City not directly contributing to or benefiting from the latest research in water sensitive urbanism. This will threaten the City's ability to realise Sustainable Sydney 2030 Direction 2 and Objective 2.3 and its Decentralised Water Master Plan targets.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

29. No consultation has been undertaken nor is any planned.

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Chief Operations Officer

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