

## Policy - Adoption - International Education Action Plan

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### Summary

The draft International Education Action 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 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.

The plan articulates how the City is best placed to support the international education sector, focusing on three over-arching themes of welcoming, wellbeing and work-integrated-learning and delivering actions in conjunction with strategic partners.

On 19 February 2018, Council resolved to place the draft International Education Action Plan on public exhibition.

The consultation included online engagement, surveys, public notices, printed materials and face-to-face opportunities at local events. Key business, organisational and government stakeholders were briefed and members of the public were also able to comment through 'Sydney Your Say'.

The 'Sydney Your Say' page attracted strong interest with 1,100 page visits, 430 downloads of the draft plan, 27 submissions and 20 survey responses. Overall, the community was supportive of the draft plan.

Stakeholder responses were received from state and federal government, support services, business, international student representative bodies and education providers. These included organisations such as Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, StudyNSW, Redfern Legal Centre, Fire and Rescue, Youth Hostels Association, Gradability, Cocoon Accommodation, University of Technology, Sydney, University of New South Wales, University of Sydney, Navitas, Council for International Students Australia (CISA) and the International Education Association of Australia.

The key findings of the consultation were strong endorsement for the approach taken to develop the draft plan, its themes and associated actions. The respondents were also in favour of future collaboration with the City of Sydney.

Analysis of the feedback identified sexual health as an issue that could be further emphasised in the actions within the plan. Following this, minor changes to the draft plan are recommended (refer Attachment A). These include the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health within the actions relating to health in the wellbeing section of the plan. Key economic figures and statistics have also been updated following the release of more current information.

## **Recommendation**

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note the response to the public exhibition of the draft International Education Action Plan, as shown at Attachment B to the subject report;
- (B) subject to (C) below, Council adopt the International Education Action Plan as shown at Attachment A to the subject report; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to correct any minor editorial errors to the International Education Action Plan as shown at Attachment A.

## **Attachments**

- Attachment A.** The City's International Education Action Plan
- Attachment B.** Public Exhibition Report – Findings and Response – Draft International Education Action Plan
- Attachment C.** Public Exhibition – Summary of Submissions – Draft International Education Action Plan

## Background

1. The International Education Action 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 for the City. This strategy delivers the City's vision for a dynamic, environmentally sustainable economy and a liveable city that works for residents, workers, visitors and students.

## Development of the Action Plan and Public Exhibition

2. The development of the draft plan followed the approach detailed below:
  - (a) examined economic, social and cultural issues, including factors affecting wellbeing and how the City is best placed to support the sector to enhance the student experience;
  - (b) took 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) sought to be innovative and exemplify leadership.
3. A staged collaborative approach was taken in the development of the draft plan, including:
  - (a) detailed program of research to 'set the context';
  - (b) significant community engagement, including roundtables with stakeholders to develop areas of focus; and
  - (c) development and testing of options, priorities and programs with partners.
4. The City commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to determine the economic contribution of international students at tertiary institutions within, or bordering on, our local government area.
5. The City 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.
6. The City recognised the need for a coordinated approach to initiatives for international students and prepared a draft plan which sets out a framework for supporting the international tertiary education sector over the next 10 years.
7. On 19 February 2018, Council resolved to place the draft International Education Action Plan on public exhibition for eight weeks from 28 February - 27 April 2018.
8. A range of approaches and activities were utilised to promote the public exhibition and invite feedback from stakeholders, including: events, surveys, media advertising, printed materials, media releases, social media and the [sydneyyoursay.com.au](http://sydneyyoursay.com.au) website. Key business, organisational and government stakeholders were briefed, either at an event hosted by the City or direct briefings of their organisations.

9. The City held a workshop with students from the City's International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program (ISLA). At the workshop, participating ISLA students were asked to help co-design a consultation for other international students about the action plan's three themes. Workshop results were used to design future consultation programs to ascertain the views and experiences of international students.
10. The purpose of the engagement during public consultation was to gather feedback from key stakeholders and determine their level of satisfaction with the draft plan. It is important that partners and key stakeholders are aligned with the suggestions to improve support and provide a harmonious experience for tertiary international students.
11. The consultation also sought to understand any further key challenges faced by international students and identify gaps in service provision. The consultation enabled the sector to provide advice on whether the listed actions will fulfil the overarching aim of the plan to maintain Sydney's position as a leading education destination in Australia and across the globe. It also raised awareness in the community about the importance of attracting international students to Sydney.
12. A project page on 'Sydney Your Say' included an electronic copy of the draft plan, a link to online surveys and other key information about the consultation. It received a high level of interest as follows:
  - (a) 1,100 visits by unique subscribers; and
  - (b) 430 downloads of the draft plan.
13. The 'Sydney Your Say' page received 27 submissions and 20 survey responses. Overall, feedback received during the exhibition period was positive and supportive and demonstrated strong endorsement for the approach taken to develop the plan, its themes and actions. Responses were received from various stakeholders.
14. The surveys on Sydney Your Say were set up to encourage feedback without the need for a formal submission:
  - (a) surveys were available in English and translated into Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese;
  - (b) one survey was tailored to students and alumni stakeholders; and
  - (c) one survey was tailored to education sector stakeholders and the community.
15. Stakeholders were also invited to participate in the consultation process as follows:
  - (a) 319 letters from the CEO were emailed to high level stakeholders across government, support services, business, education establishments, peak bodies, and consular corps;
  - (b) 302 unique subscribers within the international education sector were sent an Electronic Direct Mail to promote the opportunity to participate;
  - (c) LinkedIn posts received 13 likes, shares or comments and Twitter received 156 total engagements; and

- (d) 1,200 postcards were designed to promote participation in the consultation and these were distributed at several stakeholder events which took place.
16. Briefings and events involving the international education sector were leveraged to promote the consultation, including:
- (a) 20 March - Lord Mayor's Welcome for International Students;
  - (b) 20 March - Lord Mayor's Welcome International Education Sector Networking Function with approximately 100 key stakeholders in attendance;
  - (c) 3 April - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade briefing, 'Services to support international students in NSW' with the Consular Corps of NSW;
  - (d) 9 April - international education data gap identification workshop hosted by International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), with 12 education provider stakeholders;
  - (e) 11 April - International Schools of Sri Lanka familiarisation visit to Sydney, delegation consisted of 19 school principals, coordinated through Association of Independent Schools NSW;
  - (f) 12 April - Macquarie University briefing on the draft plan; and
  - (g) 13-22 April - several events during Youth Week celebrations.

### **Structure and Focus of the Plan**

17. The 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 increased cultural diversity, enhance the vibrancy of the city and promote its reputation internationally.
18. 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.
19. 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.

20. This approach is consistent with the approach taken by the NSW Government through the StudyNSW International Education Strategy. As part of this strategy, the NSW Government has a dedicated international education unit which has a focus to enhance the experience of international students.
21. In advance of an adopted action plan, the City has also undertaken activities to support the international education sector in addition to normal business as usual initiatives, including:
  - (a) participating on an inter-agency working group to raise awareness of international student rights in relation to sexual health, assault and harassment, which came about following the 2017 Education Provider Forum to produce resources tailored to international student needs on sexual assault and harassment;
  - (b) contributing to the International Student Health Promotion Project to raise awareness of health promotion initiatives for international students including reproductive and maternity services;
  - (c) the City's Health and Building Unit has two roles that focus on unauthorised accommodation (one building surveyor and one investigator) who work together on responding to reports of illegal use and unauthorised works to facilitate illegal use. Running parallel with case management of reports and enforcement work, a cross-unit collaboration takes place in the City and with external partners in a strategic approach to fixing the problem of substandard unauthorised accommodation; and
  - (d) over 30 international student internships have taken place through various programs including through the City's international student internship program, as well as the Global Scope internship program, and Sydney University's Jobsmart program.

## Key Implications

### Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

22. 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 plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
  - (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City - with a focus on:
    - (i) 1.1.2 Ensure the City of Sydney's economic development strategies strengthen the economic roles of the City centre precincts;
    - (ii) 1.2 Strengthen globally competitive clusters and networks and develop innovative capacity;
    - (iii) 1.4.1 Support local economic development and continuous learning, and
    - (iv) 1.4.2 Identify, develop and support the creation of innovation precincts across the city, for example at Ultimo-Pyrmont education and cultural precinct.

- (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, through 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

### **Organisational Impact**

- 23. 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 2018/19. It is not envisaged that the delivery of these early actions will require resources outside of usual budgeting processes.

### **Risks**

- 24. 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 commitment to addressing issues and identified gaps in partnership with the sector that will prove essential in building trust with key organisations and the community as well as ensuring the engagement of the sector.
- 25. 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.
- 26. 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**

- 27. 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.
- 28. During delivery of the initiatives identified the City will ensure all activity is progressed 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**

- 29. International education is a fast-growing priority sector for our local area. It delivers direct and indirect benefits to local economies, creates jobs, attracts talent, and supports the retail and tourism sectors while furthering our global connections.
- 30. 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.

31. 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.
32. In 2016-17, international students paid \$19.1 billion in direct tuition fees, and for goods and services. In addition, they spent \$5 billion indirectly. Their total spending represented 1 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product (GDP)
33. 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.
34. 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.
35. 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.
36. Education travel accounted for 5.2% of total international visitors to NSW, 26.3% of total international nights and 32.6% of total international expenditure in NSW. On a national level this signifies a contribution of 35.4% of international student visitors, 36.4% of international student nights and 36.0% of international student expenditure.
37. On average, in 2015-16, international students spent \$19,570, which was much higher than the average spending of \$4,261 per international visitor.
38. 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.
39. In 2017, there were 624,001 international students studying in Australia on student visas. Based on historic averages, this means that over 130,000 extra tertiary-educated people will be available to the Australian workforce in coming years.
40. 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**

41. All projects and initiatives in the International Education Action Plan are intended to be delivered in partnership with external organisations. This is a cost effective method of delivery and leverages the skills of specialist organisations. Provision of resources has been included within the 2018/19 budgets across a range of Council business units for the delivery of priority projects.

### **Relevant Legislation**

42. Local Government Act, 1993, sections 8, 8A and 8C

### **Critical Dates / Time Frames**

43. The International Education Action Plan will be reviewed at the end of the first five years of being implemented.

### **KIM WOODBURY**

Chief Operating Officer

Anouschka Inglis, Strategy Advisor - Economic