

**Management Report to Council**

Agenda item 6.6

**Strengthening Melbourne's global reputation as the best city for student experience****6 September 2022**

**Presenter:** Mark Cochrane-Holley, Acting Director Economic Development and International

**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement for further advocacy aimed at facilitating international students' return and strengthening Melbourne's global reputation as the best city for student experience, as measured by the student voice indicator.
2. In 2022, Melbourne has again been recognised as Australia's best student city, the eighth consecutive time it has achieved this ranking. Melbourne is rated the fifth best student city in the world, up one place from last year and ranked third in the student voice indicator (behind Berlin and London), based on former students recommending the city to their peers.
3. Pre-COVID-19, more than 200,000 international students from 170 countries lived in Melbourne. There are currently 86,630 international students studying onshore in Victoria, a 27 per cent increase since 13 December. Chinese students are the largest visa holder group (at 23.6 per cent), followed by India (20.5 per cent), Nepal (6.5 per cent), Vietnam (6.1 per cent) and Malaysia (4.6 per cent).
4. A 2018 report by London Economics found that the Group of Eight (Go8), comprising University of Melbourne, the Australian National University, the University of Sydney, the University of Queensland, the University of Western Australia, the University of Adelaide, Monash University and UNSW Sydney, had an annual economic impact to the Australian economy of some \$66.4 billion each year. Independent Higher Education Australia has reported that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the value of the Australian international education industry to an estimated \$22 billion in 2022.
5. International students help to make Melbourne an exciting, vibrant and globally engaged city. They are employees, business operators, tenants, consumers, volunteers and neighbours, which is why the City of Melbourne has proactively advocated to facilitate and attract the return of international students.
6. City of Melbourne continues to develop and implement initiatives in line with State Government's longer-term international education recovery and growth plan, ensuring that students have fulfilling experiences by continuing to offer a range of innovative programs and opportunities; My Melbourne 2022-23, the Melbourne Ambassador Program, the EDGE Program, Lord Mayor's Student Welcome, and the Couch.

**Key issues**

7. To date, City of Melbourne has played a role in advocating to facilitate the return of international students, this includes, informing the establishment of a State Student Arrivals Plan in October 2021, seeking the reopening of borders to international students in December 2021, and federal election advocacy for clear pathways from students visas to citizenship.
8. As part of a renewed push to further advocate for the return for international students, the City of Melbourne initiated advocacy with the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) to be presented to the Commonwealth Government. This advocacy seeks to extend the Post-Study Work visas as a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship, which will enhance the value of an educational experience in Australia and enhance Australia's attractiveness as a study destination, along with addressing labour and skills shortages in Melbourne.
9. Extensions should be applied to each category, Bachelor, Masters and or PhD to reflect the skills, knowledge, and experience acquired. This is essential to attract high calibre and diverse students to Australia and allow international student graduates time to find employment in their chosen field.

- 9.1. Bachelors degree (including honours): extend from 2 years to 4 years
  - 9.2. Masters by research and masters by coursework: extend from 3 years to 4 years
  - 9.3. Doctoral degree: extend from 4 years to 5 years
10. CCCLM has recently partnered with the Go8 to further strengthen their advocacy to the Commonwealth Government. A condition of working together included also advocating for the introduction of a High Potential Visa adapted from the United Kingdom model to complement the proposed extended post study work rights.
  11. A delegation of CCCLM and Go8 representatives are attending the Parliament of Australia on 7 and 8 September 2022 to further prosecute advocacy to members of the government, opposition, minor parties, and independents.

### **Recommendations from management**

12. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
  - 12.1. Endorse the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) advocacy partnership with the Group of Eight (Go8) for extended post-study works visas for international students, the introduction of a High Potential Visa program, and incentives to partner with tertiary education providers to offer international students work experience.
  - 12.2. Note the CCCLM provided an advocacy priority paper regarding the international students to the Albanese Government's Jobs and Skills Summit.
  - 12.3. Note the CCCLM and Go8 will meet representatives from all available parties and independents regarding international education as part of a delegation on 7 and 8 September 2022.

### **Attachments:**

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 3)

## Supporting Attachment

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### Legal

1. There are no direct legal implications for council in the recommendation of this report.

### Finance

2. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation from management.

### Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

### Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, Health and Safety factors such as adherence to COVID-19 safety were taken into account.

### Stakeholder consultation

5. This proposal was shaped by Council's Economic Development Strategy 2031, which was developed with extensive stakeholder input.

### Relation to Council Policy

6. This proposal aligns with Major Initiative 3 in the *Council Plan 2021-25* – 'Drive economic growth and resilience by implementing the Economic Development Strategy'.
7. It also seeks to deliver on the *Economic Development Strategy 2031* priorities to support the recovery and resurgence of our international and domestic education sector, by rebuilding Melbourne's reputation among students and their peers, communities and visiting parents.

### Environmental sustainability

8. In developing this proposal, environmental sustainability issues have been considered and no direct issues were identified.