Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 7.3

2 June 2020

Notice of Motion: Cr Beverley Pinder, The Couch International Student Program

Motion

That the Future Melbourne Committee

1. Requests management to undertake an assessment of The Couch International Student Program (Program) and how the return of this Program could align with and enhance measures and initiatives introduced or supported by the City of Melbourne to help international students.

2. Recommends that following management's assessment, Council consider funding in the 2020-21 budget for the provision of the Program for a period of 12 months at the Salvation Army premises in Bourke Street, Melbourne.

Background

COVID-19 has decimated our ability to connect throwing most people into a lockdown of isolation and mental anguish. Least of which our international students.

While the City of Melbourne has undertaken several initiatives to help our 30,000+ students overcome the panic of the pandemic, there is still a lot to be done to help those who have been residents of Melbourne for several years as well as those who have just arrived for their first year of study and have been faced with emotional hardship of getting to know a city through its barren streets and its lacklustre vibe.

The Couch International Student Program that was a fixture on the Melbourne scene for several years was seen to be a place where students could meet, mingle, and accelerate their journey to becoming a part of Melbourne.

The Couch, was a safe and free lounge space in Melbourne; open in the evenings for International Students to socialise, relax, study, and seek assistance and was run at the Salvation Army headquarters in Bourke Street and also in Drummond Street, Carlton.

Both venues boasted an array of students from all parts of the world including Australia getting to know each other and connecting away from libraries and universities and immersing themselves in Melbourne's culture.

Moved by: Cr Beverley Pinder

Seconded by: Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood