

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
REPORT**

Agenda Item 5.1

9 October 2007

**THE NEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CITY OF
MELBOURNE**

Division Community & Culture

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Purpose

1. To report on an assessment of current issues related to international students and outline the City of Melbourne's response to areas of identified need including consideration for budget allocation.

Recommendation from Management

2. That the Community Services Committee:
 - 2.1 refer for consideration as part of the 2008/09 budget process staffing and program resources to address the identified needs of international students, such as:
 - 2.1.1 establishment of an International Student Network;
 - 2.1.2 bi-annual online research into needs of international students;
 - 2.1.3 research into information needs and pathways of international students including a website or information portal that provides a range of information targeted at international students' pre-entry and duration of stay in Melbourne; and
 - 2.1.4 development and delivery of a range of activities and events that engages international students and provide them with opportunities to participate in the social and cultural life of the city in partnership with student organisations, groups and services.

Key Issues

3. The Melbourne Vice-Chancellors Forum comprising eight Melbourne universities and the City of Melbourne released the report, 'Melbourne – Australia's Knowledge Capital' in August 2007 outlining the role of the higher education sector in positioning Melbourne as Australia's knowledge capital. International students were recognised in terms of the economic, social and cultural contribution they make to the city and the report highlighted that it was important to ensure that the needs of international students were met during their stay in Melbourne.

4. In August 2007, the Committee for Melbourne Higher Education Taskforce released findings from their research into the higher education sector in Victoria highlighting the key challenges and opportunities for the higher education sector in Melbourne. Eight priority recommendations were made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector and to enhance Melbourne's reputation. Two of these recommendations directly relate to the needs of international students and these include:
 - 4.1. to recognise the need of students in relation to public transport planning and pricing; and
 - 4.2. to support international students for their large financial contributions to the higher education sector as well as their value as ambassadors.
5. An internal working group comprising branch representatives from across Council was established in November 2006 to ensure a strategic and coordinated response to the delivery of organisational initiatives and supports for international student's pre, during and post their stay in Melbourne. The group meets bi-monthly to discuss current City of Melbourne initiatives, and identify emerging needs for international students. A number of programs have been suggested by this group to meet identified need, however to date there has been no specific budget allocation.
6. The City of Melbourne 'Altitude Learning to Lead Group' undertook research in 2006 that examined the experiences of international students studying in Melbourne and ways that City of Melbourne could respond to their social support needs more effectively. The report highlighted that although there were a number of programs being undertaken across Council in relation to international students, much of this work was hampered by a lack of direction and coordination.
7. As highlighted by the Altitude Leadership Group, there are currently a number of initiatives across council being undertaken in relation to international students. However, there is currently no specific project position or lead branch area that has direct responsibility for this work and there is no allocated budget allocation. Currently, the International Student Working Group is facilitated by the Families, Children and Youth branch to ensure that programs and initiatives related to international students are strategic and coordinated.
8. Similarly, there is currently no opportunity for international student groups, organisations, private providers and student services to network, share information and identify emerging trends in relation to the needs of international students. The City of Melbourne currently facilitates a number of networks and forums that are issue-based or target particular age groups such as the Drugs & Alcohol Advisory Group, the Melbourne Youth Services Forum, the Melbourne School Welfare Network and the Melbourne Vice-Chancellors Forum. This type of network/forum could be facilitated by the City of Melbourne in relation to international student issues.

Time Frame

9. Dependant upon budget allocation, the introduction and development of comprehensive initiatives to address the needs of international students will occur during the 2008/09 and 2009/10 financial years.

Relation to Council Policy

10. *City Plan 2010* and the new report '*Melbourne – Australia's Knowledge Capital*' acknowledges the importance of the tertiary education sector to the future of Melbourne as a *knowledge* city and recognises the significant contribution that international and domestic students make to the social and cultural life of the city.
11. Other Council policies that also support international students include: *A City of Young People 2005 – 2009* and the *Multicultural Policy 2005 – 2009*. Both of these policies outline Council's vision to improve health and well-being outcomes for this population group, as well as opportunities for international students to participate and engage in the life of the city.

Consultation

12. In 2006/07, a study was undertaken into the needs of international students as part of the City of Melbourne's inaugural 'Altitude Learning to Lead' Program (refer Attachment 1). The study involved consultations with Victorian Government agencies, universities, accommodation providers, Victoria Police, alumni, current international students and Council Officers who have contact with international students as part of their role.
13. In October 2006, the Continuous Improvement branch undertook a major online survey with over 1,400 international students from a wide range of tertiary institutions, with the majority studying at the University of Melbourne. The online research examined factors that impacted on decisions to study in Melbourne and their experiences during the duration of their stay.

Government Relations

14. The Lord Mayor chairs the Melbourne Vice Chancellors' Forum and Council is working in partnership with the Vice-Chancellors of eight universities to strengthen the synergies between these universities and the city, and to ensure the city's future growth and sustainability in terms of higher education.
15. The City of Melbourne is represented on the International Student Welfare Reference Group facilitated by Department of Immigration and Citizenship to discuss current and emerging needs and issues of international students.
16. The City of Melbourne is represented on the Victorian International Education Consultative Group facilitated by the Higher Education division of the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development.
17. There are many opportunities presented by the *Young People's Policy*, the *Multicultural Policy* and *City Plan 2010* to work with State and federal Governments in relation to the needs of international students. Council will continue to respond to and influence Federal and State guidelines in relation to international students.

Finance

18. There are no immediate financial implications for Council arising from this report, with all recommendations being referred for consideration as part of the 2008/09 budget process.
19. There is no budget for a further needs analysis to be conducted within the 2007/08 financial year.

Legal

20. The recommendation made in this report is consistent with the powers and function of Council.

Sustainability

21. Programs and services for international students support the City of Melbourne's ongoing commitment to sustainability. This includes:
 - 21.1. Inclusive and Engaging City by helping to build social capital, skills and civic engagement, and foster international students' access to social support services, and opportunities to participate and engage in the life of the city;
 - 21.2. Connected and Accessible City through international partnerships including Sister Cities;

- 21.3. Innovative and Vital City by fostering international students capacity to engage in democratic, decision-making and processes in ways that enhance skills and knowledge of local government and increase participation; and
- 21.4. Economic City by ensuring social equity, sustainable communities and international students to have opportunities to contribute and benefit from the economic prosperity of the city.

Comments

- 22. *A City of Young People – Young People’s Policy: 2005 – 2009* was endorsed by Council in June 2005 and provides a platform over a four year period to enhance the status and wellbeing of young people in the City of Melbourne. The policy focuses on achieving this vision by working according to four key themes: participation, leadership, support and celebration. These four themes enable the development of synergies across Council strategies for different youth population groups within the City of Melbourne.
- 23. The increasing presence of international students in the city has contributed to a resurgence of city living and creates new markets that offer a range of revenue and marketing opportunities. However, it is crucial that there is a coordinated state and local government response to the delivery of social and community services to ensure that the health and well-being needs of international students are met and that their experience of Melbourne is positive.
- 24. In October 2006, Council undertook a major online survey with over 1,400 international students from a wide range of tertiary institutions, with the majority studying at the University of Melbourne. The overall findings from the survey were positive, with 84% of international students describing Melbourne as excellent/good as a place to study and live. International students were asked about their experiences of living and studying in Melbourne and the aspects of Melbourne that were ranked lowest included:
 - 24.1. cost of public transport
 - 24.2. ability to connect to the job market;
 - 24.3. affordability of accommodation;
 - 24.4. affordability of living; and
 - 24.5. ability to get to know Australian students.
- 25. Over the past five years there has been a number of studies undertaken by universities and student bodies that examine the needs of international students and research suggests that there are key issues for international students that include:
 - 25.1. cultural barriers;
 - 25.2. social isolation and loneliness;
 - 25.3. safety;
 - 25.4. understanding and accessing Australia’s health, welfare and legal systems;
 - 25.5. accessing safe and affordable housing, and employment;
 - 25.6. accessing public transport concession;

25.7. problem gambling; and

25.8. access to information regarding services and supports.

Background

26. On 14 August 2007, the Community Services Committee considered a Report on the progress of Council's Young People's Policy and resolved in part:

"That a report on International Students in the City be presented to the CSC meeting in October, to include a needs assessment and the City of Melbourne's response".

27. Although no formal needs analysis was conducted due to time constraints, a subsequent review of existing Australian literature and current research undertaken by the Altitude Leadership Group in 2006/07 and the findings from the online research conducted in October 2006 by the Continuous Improvement Branch was undertaken in September 2007. The report outlines the key needs of international students as identified in current research and by peak international student bodies and organisations, and the City of Melbourne's response in relation to the development of future programs and supports to meet identified need.
28. According to the 'Global University City Index' produced by RMIT University, Melbourne is the fifth best "university city" in the world, behind London (first), Boston, Paris and Tokyo. The Index ranks university cities on their scale and liveability, the number of world-class universities with an internationally diverse population, and their investment and performance in education and research.
29. Melbourne has the highest proportion of international students of any municipal area in the world. Four Melbourne universities are among the London Times Top 200 Higher Educational Institutions, and the University of Melbourne was one of two Australian universities to be rated in the top 100 Shanghai Jaiao Tong University's Academic Rankings of World Universities.
30. The City of Melbourne recognises that international students make an important contribution to the culture and lifestyle of Melbourne as well as to Victorian regional centres. Victoria's eight universities within the city are seen as an integral part of the urban economy and community and make a substantial contribution to Victoria as a whole.
31. In 2005, there were 73,427 students in total who had enrolled in higher education institutions in the City of Melbourne. 54,734 (75%) were domestic students (ie. defined as Australian citizens, New Zealand Citizens and those that hold permanent resident visas) and 18,693 (25%) were international students. Of these, 23,133 higher education students were living in the City of Melbourne and made up 35% of the total City of Melbourne resident population.
32. There were 11,829 international students living in the City of Melbourne, compared to 11,304 domestic students. Of the 11,829 international students residing in the City of Melbourne, 8,600 (72%) were also enrolled in a tertiary institution in the City.
33. Among international students who enrolled, the most common countries of birth were China (21%), India (15%), Malaysia (14%), Indonesia (8%) and Singapore (8%)(See Table 7). Interestingly, reports from the Department of Education in 2006 have suggested that despite China being the biggest market for international students in Australia, the number of students coming from China is starting to slow down. In comparison, the number of enrolments from India was increasing and in 2006, Indian students accounted for nearly 1 in 5 of international students in the state.

Attachment:

1. 'International Students in the City of Melbourne Report' – September 2007

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

SEPTEMBER 2007

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Executive Summary

The City of Melbourne is a city of young people. Melbourne City Research estimates that the number of higher education students who enrol in campuses within the City of Melbourne has nearly doubled from over 40,000 in 2001 to over 75,000 in 2006. The increasing presence of students in the city has contributed to a resurgence in city living.

The growing international student population significantly contributes to Melbourne's economy with international students bringing more than \$2 billion dollars into Melbourne each year. In 2005/06 international education was Victoria's largest service export industry generating more than transport (\$2.1 billion) and international tourism (\$2.8 billion). However, although there has been a significant growth in the international student population over the few years there has been growing concern by student bodies and organisations over the potential exploitation of international students. The National Liaison Committee (NLC) of international students and other peak bodies have raised concerns that despite the growing population, additional support services are not being provided and the social support needs of international students are not being met.

Over the past five years there have been a number of studies undertaken by universities and student bodies that examine the needs of international students and research suggests that there are key issues for international students that include:

- cultural barriers;
- social isolation;
- understanding and accessing Australia's health, welfare and legal systems;
- accessing safe and affordable housing, and employment;
- accessing public transport concession;
- gambling; and
- access to information regarding services and supports.

In order to ensure that Melbourne is indeed positioned as a "university city" or "knowledge capital" as highlighted in the latest *Melbourne – Australia's Knowledge Capital Report*, the City of Melbourne needs to ensure that international students have access to services and supports that promote their health and welfare. Further, opportunities need to be provided that enable international students to actively participate and contribute to the social and cultural life of the city. A number of recommendations have been outlined in this report that includes:

1. the coordination of international student work across council
2. the establishment of an International Student Network;
3. undertake bi-annual online research into needs of international students;
4. undertake research into information needs and pathways of international student and develop a specific website to cater for these needs;
5. the provision of range of activities and events that engage international students; and
6. the establishment of an International Student Ambassador Program.

1. Introduction

The City of Melbourne recognises that international students make an important contribution to the culture and lifestyle of Melbourne as well as to Victorian regional centres. Victoria's eight universities within the city are seen as an integral part of the urban economy and community and make a substantial contribution to Victoria as a whole.

City Plan 2010 and the new report '*Melbourne – Australia's Knowledge Capital*' acknowledge the importance of the tertiary education sector to the future of Melbourne as a *knowledge city*

and recognise the significant contribution that international and domestic students make to the social and cultural life of the city. Other council policies that also support international students include: *A City of Young People 2005 – 2009* and the *Multicultural Policy 2005 – 2009*. Both of these policies outline Council's vision to improve health and well-being outcomes for this population group, as well as opportunities for international students to participate and engage in the life of the city.

The purpose of this report is to document the current needs and issues facing international students in the City of Melbourne and to consider future strategies that address areas of need.

1.1 Methodology and Data

This report is based on secondary data from:

- the selected international student 2006 data from the Australian Education International (AEI);
- the selected Higher Education Student Statistics data for 2005 from the Department of Education Science and Technology (DEST); and
- the City of Melbourne's Census of Land Use and Employment (CLUE) 2006 data on student apartments and accommodation rooms.

2005 higher education student data has been used for this report as the 2006 data for City of Melbourne has not yet been released by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). Further, the DEST data used in this report refers only to higher education students and this does not include international students studying at secondary schools, English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses. This data is currently being sourced by City Research.

The 2006 census data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) does not contain an indicator identifying international students. The ABS, therefore, does not directly report data on the number of international student's resident or studying in the city during the census. The profiles outlined in this report are intended to be illustrative and are not an exhaustive analysis of international student data.

2. The International Student Population

2.1 National Statistics

Australia is the third largest English-speaking destination for international students in higher education, behind the United States and the United Kingdom. China and India continue to be important source markets for English speaking destination countries¹.

In 2006, there were 317,909 students on a student visa studying in Australia – an increase of 10.5% over 2005. Of these, nearly half (46%) of all students studied in the higher education sector, 21% in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector and 20% in the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sector. Students from China constituted nearly one-quarter of all international students and more than half

¹ 'International Students in Higher Education – Comparison of Main English Speaking Destination Countries', Research Snapshot; Australian Education International, Number 26, July 2007.

(57%) were aged 20 to 24 years, with a further 19% aged 15 to 19 years. The next largest group was from India (11%) and then Korea (8%)².

Over half of higher education enrolments in Australia were in Bachelor Degrees (57.3%) and one-third (34%) were in masters by coursework. Nearly 53% of higher education enrolments were in 'Business Administration, Management', with the next largest field of study being 'Computer Science, Information Systems'. Enrolments are increasing however in the health services area of Medicine, Nursing and Health Services combined (21.5%). The main health services source markets were China and Malaysia³.

In 2006, enrolments in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) were higher than ever before, with 77,468 enrolments. The largest markets for these courses were China, the Republic of Korea, and Japan. Just under three-quarters of ELICOS enrolments were with non-government providers⁴.

2.2 Victorian Statistics

There were 106,000⁵ international student enrolments in Victoria (28%) in 2006. Just over half were enrolled in higher education courses, followed by VET courses and then secondary schools. In 2006, there were students from 161 countries studying in Victoria and China was by far the main source country (24%), followed by India (18%), Malaysia (7%) and Hong Kong (6%).

Table 1: Main Nationalities of International Students in Victoria, 2006

Nationality	Nos	%
China	25775	24%
India	19440	18%
Malaysia	7462	7%
Hong Kong	5992	6%
Indonesia	5815	5%
South Korea	4929	5%
Thailand	4056	4%
Sri Lanka	3515	3%
Japan	3187	3%
Singapore	2954	3%
Vietnam	2864	3%
Others	20376	19%
Total	106365	100%

2.3 Profile of Higher Education International Students in the City of Melbourne

2.3.1 Enrolled and Resident Higher Education Student Population

In 2005, there were 73,427 students in total that had enrolled in higher education institutions in the City of Melbourne. 54,734 (75%) were domestic students (ie. defined as Australian citizens, New Zealand Citizens and those that hold permanent resident visas) and 18,693 (25%) were international students.

² 'International Student Numbers', Research Snapshot, Australian Education International, Number 25, July 2007.

³ 'International Enrolments in Higher Education in 2006', Research Snapshot; Australian Education International, Number 23, April 2007.

⁴ 'International Student Enrolments in ELICOS in 2006', Research Snapshot, Australian Education International, Number 21, March 2007.

⁵ These figures are based on cumulative enrolments over the year, whether they are still here or have completed their course. In an average month there are 220,00 international enrolments nationally and 65,000 in Victoria.

The mean age of the enrolled students in the City of Melbourne was 25.3 years (See Table 2)

Table 2: Domestic and International Student Residents and Enrolments in City of Melbourne, 2005

	International		Domestic		Total	
	Number	Mean Age	Number	Mean Age	Number	Mean Age
Resident students	11,829	22.0	11,304	25.9	23,133	23.9
Enrolled students	18,693	23.2	54,734	26.0	73,427	25.3

In 2005, there were 23,133 higher education students were living in the City of Melbourne and made up 35% of the total City of Melbourne resident population. There were 11,829 international students living in the City of Melbourne, compared to 11,304 domestic students (See Table 2).

Of the 11,829 international students residing in the City of Melbourne, 8,600 (72%) were also enrolled in a tertiary institution in the City⁶.

2.3.2 Estimating the Size of the International Student Community

In terms of understanding the overall higher education international student community in the City of Melbourne, it is important to consider that there are resident and non-resident student groups that access services and supports from the City of Melbourne.

In 2005, the City of Melbourne's higher education international student community is estimated to comprise of some 21,939 students which include:

- those who reside in City of Melbourne, but study outside of the municipality;
- those that reside and study in the City of Melbourne; and
- those that reside outside of the municipality but come into the city to study.

Figure 1 below explains diagrammatically the groupings of the City of Melbourne's higher education international student community.

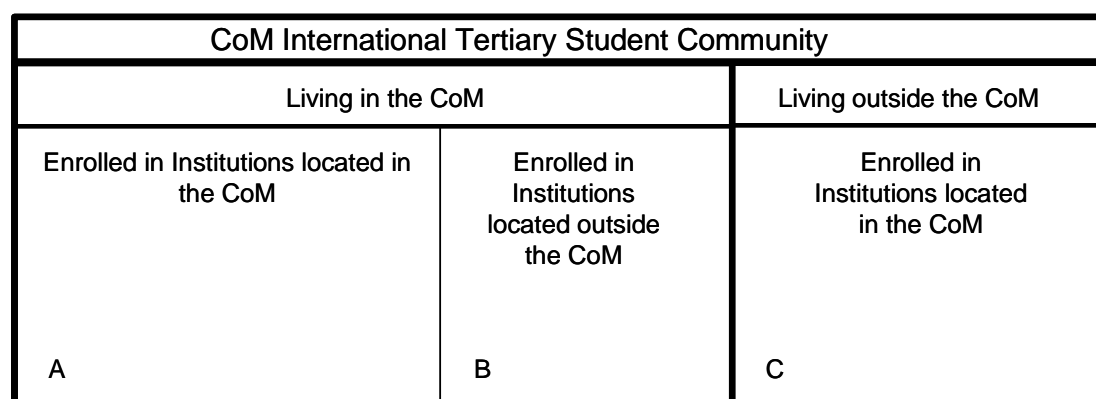


Figure1: City of Melbourne Higher Education International Student Community.

2.3.3 Age and Gender of International Students

Over 80% of the international student residents were aged less than 25 years and nearly two-thirds of the enrolled students at City of Melbourne campuses were aged less than 25 years (See Table 3).

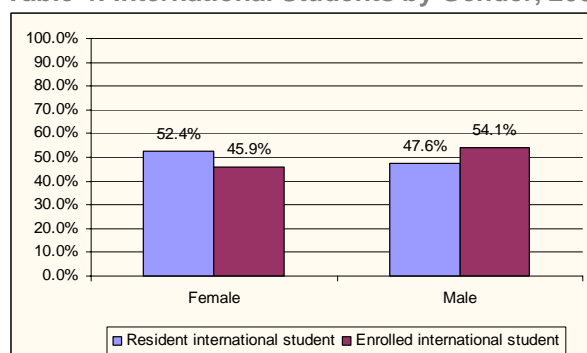
⁶ 'Profile of International Students in the City of Melbourne', Melbourne City Research, August 2007.

Table 3: International Students by Age Group, 2005

	Student residents (N)	Student residents (%)	Enrolled students (N)	Enrolled students (%)
Less than 20 years	1,833	15.5%	2,164	11.6%
20 - 24	7,757	65.6%	11,099	59.4%
25 - 29	1,682	14.2%	3,664	19.6%
30 - 34	369	3.1%	1,046	5.6%
35 - 39	106	0.9%	379	2.0%
40 - 44	49	0.4%	204	1.1%
45 - 49	22	0.2%	75	0.4%
50 - 54	6	0.1%	38	0.2%
55 - 59	4	0.0%	21	0.1%
60+	1	0.0%	3	0.0%
Total	11,829	100.0%	18,693	100.0%

52% of international student residents were male and 46% female, as compared to enrolled international students where there were more female than male students (See Table 4).

Table 4: International Students by Gender, 2005



2.3.4 Location of International Student Residents

International higher education students reside in all suburbs within the City of Melbourne. However, as highlighted in Table 5, over a third of international students reside in the CBD (33%), followed by Carlton (25%), Southbank (11%) and North Melbourne (8%). In 2005, there was also a small number of international students who lived in Docklands (n= 164). However, this figure would have increased in 2006/07 due to numbers of residential buildings that have been developed in the area over the last eighteen months.

Similarly, there were only 5.5% (n=651) of students living in Parkville in 2005. However, given the developments at the new Parkville Gardens site, it is anticipated that this figure will increase in 2007/08.

Table 5: International Students by Suburb in City of Melbourne, 2005

Suburb	Residing	Residing	resident and enrolled		Share of Residing	Enrolled	Enrolled
Carlton	2,982	25.2%	2,688	31.3%	90.1%	1	0.0%
CBD	3,939	33.3%	2,629	30.6%	66.7%	9,418	50.4%
Docklands	164	1.4%	93	1.1%	56.7%	0	0.0%
East Melbourne	75	0.6%	50	0.6%	66.7%	0	0.0%
Kensington	626	5.3%	352	4.1%	56.2%	0	0.0%
North Melbourne	946	8.0%	835	9.7%	88.3%	0	0.0%
Parkville	651	5.5%	603	7.0%	92.6%	8,979	48.0%
Port Melbourne	47	0.4%	30	0.3%	63.8%	0	0.0%
South Yarra-St Kilda Rd	808	6.8%	364	4.2%	45.0%	1	0.0%
Southbank	1,327	11.2%	747	8.7%	56.3%	294	1.6%
West Melbourne	264	2.2%	192	2.2%	72.7%	0	0.0%
Total	11,829	100.0%	8,583	100.0%	72.6%	18,693	100.0%

2.3.5 International Students By Country of Birth

Among international students who enrolled, the most common countries of birth were China (21%), India (15%), Malaysia (14%), Indonesia (8%) and Singapore (8%)(See Table 6). Interestingly, reports from the Department of Education in 2006 have suggested that despite China being the biggest market for international students in Australia, the number of students coming from China is starting to slow down. In comparison, the number of enrolments from India was increasing and in 2006, Indian students accounted for nearly 1 in 5 of international students in the state.

Table 6: International students by Top 20 Countries of Birth Enrolled in City of Melbourne, 2005

Country	No.	%
China exc SARs and Taiwan	4,014	21.5%
India	2,790	14.9%
Malaysia	2,699	14.4%
Indonesia	1,508	8.1%
Singapore	1,469	7.9%
Hong Kong SAR	1,175	6.3%
Thailand	487	2.6%
Bangladesh	337	1.8%
Vietnam	314	1.7%
USA	304	1.6%
Korea South	279	1.5%
Taiwan	277	1.5%
Japan	232	1.2%
Sri Lanka	190	1.0%
Mauritius	160	0.9%
Pakistan	145	0.8%
Germany	144	0.8%
Canada	132	0.7%
Norway	119	0.6%
Botswana	95	0.5%
Remainder	1,823	9.8%
Total	18,693	100.0%

In comparison, in terms of international student residents in the City of Melbourne, the majority of students were from Malaysia (22%), Indonesia (15%), China (14%) and Singapore (11%) (See Table 7).

Table 7: International students by Top 20 Countries of Birth Residing in City of Melbourne, 2005

Country	No	%
Malaysia	2,622	22.2%
Indonesia	1,818	15.4%
China exc SARs and Taiwan	1,669	14.1%
Singapore	1,351	11.4%
Hong Kong SAR	1,049	8.9%
India	495	4.2%
Thailand	416	3.5%
Korea South	223	1.9%
USA	203	1.7%
Japan	193	1.6%
Taiwan	191	1.6%
Vietnam	136	1.1%
Germany	125	1.1%
Norway	94	0.8%
Brunei Darussalam	85	0.7%
Mexico	76	0.6%
Mauritius	75	0.6%
Canada	68	0.6%
United Arab Emirates	67	0.6%

Sri Lanka	56	0.5%
Remainder	817	6.9%
Total	11,829	100.0%

3. Melbourne – Australia’s Knowledge Capital

The recent report ‘*Melbourne – Australia’s Knowledge Capital*’⁷ highlights how universities and the City of Melbourne have the potential to become valuable partners, and through this partnership develop and promote Melbourne as a knowledge capital. This report provides information and data on the important role universities play in the city, and the significance of knowledge development to the future prosperity and success of Melbourne as an internationally competitive city.

As the report highlights the social and community contributions of Melbourne’s universities are multifaceted and complex. Victoria’s eight universities with a Melbourne metropolitan presence include:

- Australian Catholic University
- Deakin University
- La Trobe University
- The University of Melbourne
- Monash University
- Swinburne University
- RMIT University
- Victoria University.

These universities not only play a key role in the economic and industrial development of Victoria, but also a much wider role in terms of the development of human capital and community development. As this report highlights in 2005:

- Victorian universities had a population of 243,000 students;
- 69,700 students were from overseas and 48,600 students were attending Melbourne campuses at the eight universities;
- \$4 billion dollars was generated in revenue;
- higher education research and development (R&D) represents 16 per cent of identified global R&D (US \$139 billion);
- universities played a major role in providing services for and behalf of government, industry and the community; and invested \$1.6 billion in infrastructure annually.

3.1 Melbourne Universities and Private Education Providers

According to the ‘Global University City Index’ produced by RMIT University, Melbourne is the fifth best “university city” in the world, behind London (first), Boston, Paris and Tokyo⁸. The Index ranks university cities on their scale and liveability, the number of world-class universities with an internationally diverse population, and their investment and performance in education and research.

Melbourne has the highest proportion of international students of any municipal area in the world.⁹ Four Melbourne universities are among the London Times Top 200 Higher Educational Institutions, and the University of Melbourne was one of two Australian

⁷ ‘*Melbourne – Australia’s Knowledge Capital Report*’, Melbourne Vice-Chancellor’s Forum, May 2007.

⁸ ‘*Melbourne Risks Status as Uni City*’, The Age, Monday 20 August.

⁹ City of Melbourne CLUE Study ????

universities to be rated in the top 100 Shanghai Jaiao Tong University's Academic Rankings of World Universities¹⁰.

As well as universities, there are in addition a number of private higher education providers in the City of Melbourne who deliver English language courses and/or degree or vocational courses to international students.

While the tertiary sector in the city is much larger and more diverse than just the University institutions, these are the most prominent. The City's higher education sector covers over 1.4 million m² of space, and has a theoretical capacity for 121,926 students (CLUE 2006). As Table 8 highlights below in 2006 there were 41 higher education institutions located in the CBD and 36 in Carlton.

Table 8: City of Melbourne – Higher Education Sector Institutions, 2006

Suburb	No. of establishments
North Melbourne	2
Parkville	7
Carlton	36
East Melbourne	3
CBD	41
Southbank	2
Port Melbourne	1
Total	92

3.2 Student Accommodation in the City of Melbourne

The higher education sector is also serviced by a student accommodation sector. The key features of this sector in the City of Melbourne are 3,190 student apartments throughout the city, but mainly focussed in Carlton and the CBD and 2,659 units of student accommodation, or rooms, primarily located in the Parkville area (See Table 9).

Table 9: City of Melbourne – Student Accommodation, 2006

Suburb	Residential Accommodation dwellings	Serviced Apartment dwellings	Student Accommodation rooms	Student Apartment dwellings
Carlton	3,942	91	198	1,642
CBD	8,556	2,503	28	1,283
Docklands	3,089	296	-	-
East Melbourne	2,208	421	9	-
Kensington	1,078	38	-	-
North Melbourne	2,420	18	-	185
Parkville	1,158	18	2,264	80
Port Melbourne	-	-	-	-
South Yarra-St Kilda Rd	2,713	94	118	-
Southbank	6,125	375	-	-
West Melbourne	847	-	42	-
West Melbourne (Ind.)	-	-	-	-
Total	32,136	3,854	2,659	3,190

¹⁰ 'Higher Education at Tipping Point', Report by Higher Education Taskforce Group, Committee for Melbourne, 20 August 2007.

The City of Melbourne is an industry partner with the State Government Department for Victorian Communities, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the University of Melbourne on an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant Project. This three-year project is currently examining the urban experiences of students living in the city and how the type of student housing impacts on their student experience. Interim findings from this research suggest that levels of social interaction differ between housing options for students.

For example, many of the student housing close to main city campuses are attractive to international students because of their proximity to the university. However, because this housing is constructed on the most expensive real estate in Melbourne, this is often high density housing with little common, public or recreational space thus limiting students ability to interact and engage. This study is currently looking at the new building stock in the city that houses a large proportion international students. Interim findings suggest that these new types of housing actually show little understanding of what “twenty first century student life might be or mean other than through very small rooms with internet connections”¹¹. Given that in later years this type of housing could be reproduced for other demographic groups ie. seniors, this raises the issue of the impact of high density living on social connection and community engagement.

4. Life-cycle of International Students

The life-cycle of an international student is a continuum of three stages which includes:

1. pre-entry,
2. during stay; and
3. post-departure.

It is important in considering the needs of international students to take into account the three life-stages. At each stage, international students require different types of information and support, and access this differently. For example, at the pre-entry stage, international students require information about academic institutions, courses and programs, dates and costs of enrolment, student support services, accommodation options, cost of living and information about the country/city in order to make a decision regarding their destination of study. This information may be accessed via word-of-mouth, the internet and/or government or private education agencies.

The type of information and access to services may differ at arrival, and for example this may include needing information about how to navigate around the country/city, orientation to their academic institution, public transport, accommodation options, the law and regulations, health and welfare, and employment opportunities. This information may be accessed via other students, student services, State and local government, tourism and university websites, word-of-mouth, community agencies and private providers.

Various branches across council play a significant role in delivering information, services and supports to international students across this continuum (See Figure 2).

¹¹ ‘Transnational and Temporary: Students, Community and Place-Making in Central Melbourne’, Mid-Project Report 2007, pg.30.

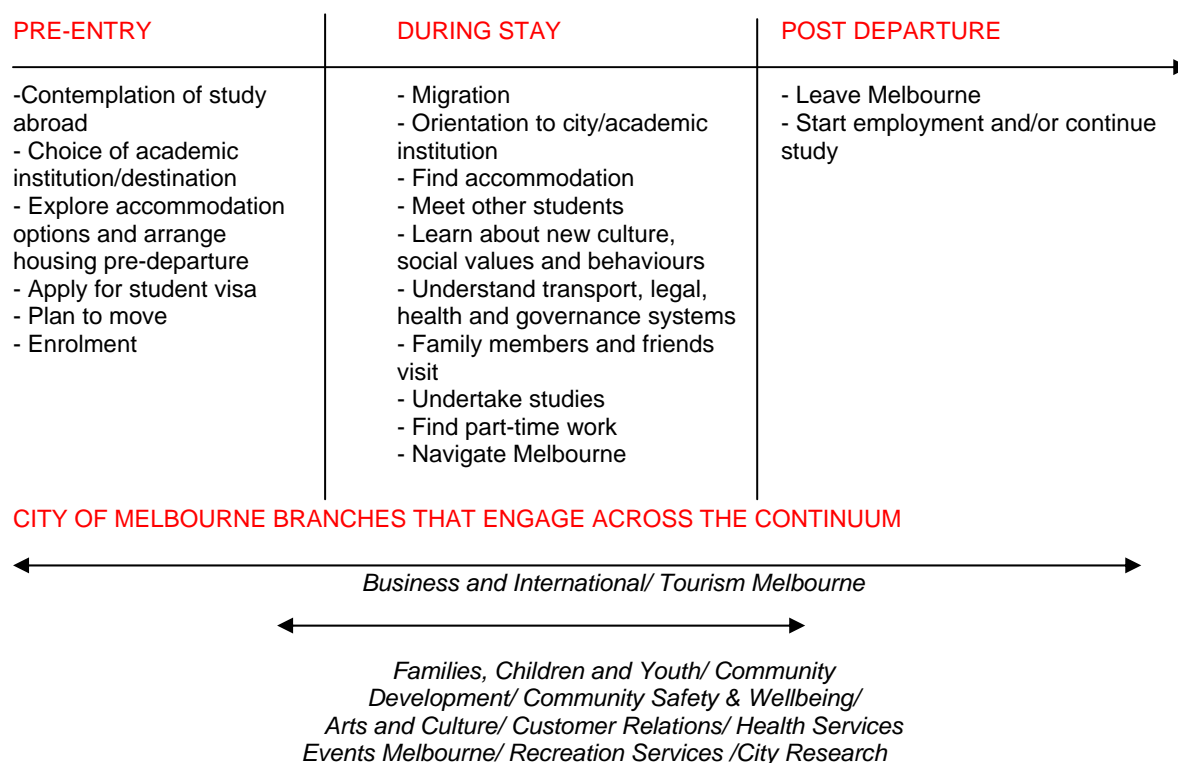


Figure 2: Life-Stage of International Students

Given that there are various branches across council that do work with international students, in 2006 Community Services established the *International Student Working Group* to ensure that organisational initiatives and activities were coordinated and strategic. As a result a terms of reference for the group has been established and the group meets bi-monthly to discuss new initiatives and supports, and to identify emerging issues and trends in relation to international students.

Likewise, State government agencies also have a significant role to play and are responsible at different stages of this continuum. The Department of Education and Training is responsible for attracting international students to Victoria. The Victorian International Directors' Committee comprised of representatives from the State Government and Victorian institutions is responsible for the collective international marketing via a brand strategy for Victorian higher education providers. Victorian education institutions also undertake direct marketing to international students through trade shows, events and the internet. Additionally, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is also responsible for international students in relation to issues pertaining to entry and settlement.

Current research into the needs of international students has largely concentrated on the middle-stage of the continuum. However, further research which examines the information and support needs prior to entry is also required, and findings from this research could inform the development of information resources.

5. Current Research into Needs of International Students

The increasing presence of international students in the city has contributed to a resurgence of city living and creates new markets that offer a range of revenue and marketing opportunities. However, it is crucial that there is a coordinated state and local government

response to the delivery of social and community services to ensure that the health and well-being needs of international students are met and that their experience of Melbourne is positive.

In August 2007, the Committee for Melbourne Higher Education Taskforce released findings from their research into the higher education sector in Victoria warning that although Melbourne ranked fifth in the newly established University City index, that maintaining this ranking raised serious challenges for the university sector¹². The Taskforce concluded that higher education is at a tipping point due to declining levels of Government investment; low private sector engagement and investment; outdated structures and administration; and increasing overseas competition. Eight priority recommendations were made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector in meeting the objectives of higher education and enhancing Melbourne's reputation.

Although a majority of the Taskforce's recommendations relate directly to the higher education sector itself, there are two recommendations that relate to the needs of international students and these include:

- to recognise the need of students in relation to public transport planning and pricing (Recommendation 4); and
- to support international students for their large financial contributions to the higher education sector as well as their value as ambassadors (Recommendation 5).

These recommendations reinforce the overall view that in order for City of Melbourne to position itself as a "university city" then we need to ensure that the experiences of both domestic and international students is a positive and meaningful one, not just in terms of educational attainment, but also in terms of social and cultural capital.

5.1 City of Melbourne Research

In 2006/07, a study was undertaken into the needs of international students as part of the City of Melbourne's inaugural 'Altitude Learning to Lead' Program. The study involved consultations with Victorian Government agencies, universities, accommodation providers, Victoria Police, Alumni, current international students and Council Officers who have contact with international students as part of their role. A literature review and data analysis also informed the study¹³. The project team identified four key issues for international students which included:

- safety;
- isolation and cultural barriers;
- accessibility of information; and
- lack of public transport concessions.

In addition, the study identified a lack of coordination within City of Melbourne in relation to supports and services for international students. It also found that many external organisations offering services to international students operated independently to each other and lacked an integrated approach. In relation to these key issues, a number of recommendations were made regarding the areas where City of Melbourne could engage international students more effectively.

In October 2006, council undertook a major online survey with over 1,400 international students from a wide range of tertiary institutions responding, with the majority studying at the University of Melbourne. The overall findings from the survey were positive, with 84% of international students describing Melbourne as excellent/good as a place to study and live.

¹² 'Higher Education at Tipping Point', Report by Higher Education Taskforce Group, Committee for Melbourne, 20 August 2007.

¹³ 'Engaging International Students' – Docs#4241533

However, there were a number of findings which offered potential scope for improvements and highlighted some of the issues that international students face when studying in Melbourne.

In terms of attracting international students to Melbourne, the survey findings revealed that the academic reputation of the educational institution chosen and the fact that Melbourne is perceived as a relatively safe place to be were major influencing factors. Further international students were asked about their experiences of living and studying in Melbourne and the aspects that received the most positive feedback included:

- quality of education;
- cafes and entertainment;
- diversity of restaurants;
- cultural diversity; and
- personal safety on grounds/campus of place of study.

However, the aspects of Melbourne that were ranked lowest included:

- cost of public transport
- ability to connect to the job market;
- affordability of accommodation;
- affordability of living; and
- ability to get to know Australian students.

20.5% of students had experienced problems with language since arriving in Melbourne. Just under half (44%) had experienced difficulty accessing information and support in relation to employment opportunities, followed by legal rights and issues (35%), accommodation and rental issues (21%) and community groups and organisations (21%). Most students accessed information via their academic institutions or the internet.

International students were also asked to comment on issues about life and study in Melbourne and these comments further highlighted the issues for international students in relation to public transport, social isolation and access to housing and services. For example:

"It rocks, but public transport is expensive!"

"I find it extremely difficult to make friends with local students, even though I have been here for years"

"It needs more student support systems so that we can find jobs easily"

"There is very little integration between international and local students, or even international students from other countries"

"Should lower down the cost of living and also must consider concession fare on public transport for international students....."

5.2 External Research

Current external research has also highlighted that there are a number of key issues for international students which include:

- difficulties accessing accommodation;
- social isolation and loneliness;
- safety;
- difficulties accessing social support services;
- lack of up-to-date information regarding employment and housing; and
- problem gambling.

5.2.1 Accommodation Issues

The Tenants Union of Australia undertook a study in 2004 and 2006 which examined the difficulties for international students accessing the housing market. These studies found that for the majority of international students access to affordable, secure and appropriate housing was the key to ensuring a positive experience of studying in Australia. Most housing available to international students is in the private rental market and this often represents a significant cost of their education in Australia.

International students often face a range of issues in relation to accommodation options. For many international students, this is their first experience of living away from home and many have no understanding of the rental housing market in Australia. Many students attempt to secure accommodation prior to departure either via their chosen academic institution (through student housing services) or through private accommodation providers and education agencies that market their services through the internet. This makes it difficult for international students as there are often limited accommodation options to choose from and choices need to be made from photographs posted on the internet, which can be very different from the reality. As the Tenants Union has highlighted, international students often pay an advanced amount to secure accommodation prior to arrival and this may not be refunded if the student is unhappy with the accommodation.

Other obstacles that international students face when attempting to secure accommodation are:

- lack of rental history and references;
- requirement to sign a twelve month lease agreement when the academic year may only be 9 to 10 months;
- little understanding of tenancy rights and responsibilities;
- unrealistic expectations of the rental market in terms of cost, distance to campus, and standard of living and provision of utilities;
- fear of authority;
- no understanding of how to access support services ie. Tenants Union and Consumer Affairs; and
- discrimination in the rental market.

Homestay accommodation and University-managed accommodation are two of the preferred accommodation options for international students. Currently the homestay industry in Australia is largely unregulated for adult students and there is no training legally required of those participating in homestay programs. While most of the legislation regarding duty of care toward international students refers to minors, there appear to be very few, if any, guidelines for the care of adult students. However, it would be sensible to provide all international students with high standard of care whether they are a minor or an adult. This could both promote Australian provision of international education overseas and provide a legal safety net in case anything goes wrong.

Given that homestay accommodation is not covered by tenancy legislation unless the rental premises contains four or more rooms (which means it is then classified as a rooming house), this means that often international students can be exploited. Complaints received by the Tenants Union from homestay students include issues such as:

- having to pay hourly rates for utilities such as heating, or the internet;
- enforced curfew times;
- meals not being provided, of poor quality or culturally inappropriate;
- lack of connection to host family;
- lack of cross-cultural understanding; and
- failure to return bonds

These issues can be further compounded when students are under the age of eighteen and the accommodation provider takes on the role of guardian. Further research into this area is required. The National Liaison Committee (NLC) Research Department is currently writing a submission for the Victorian Government Residential Accommodation Issues Paper. The main focus for this submission will be to provide the government with information regarding problems that international students face in Victoria when they are looking for housing, while they are in rental properties and the lack of up to date and accurate pre departure information that students are provided before they arrive in Australia.

5.2.2 Social Isolation

While Australian educational institutions promote cultural exchange as a primary drawing card, it has been found often Australian students “expect international student to adjust to them, not vice versa”. However, these expectations of assimilation rather than integration and difficulties with ‘cultural exchange’ not only occur within the educational institutions, but also in homestay environments. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many international students find it difficult to meet Australian domestic students and/or international students from other cultural backgrounds. While educational institutions do provide opportunities for students to meet at Orientation and special events, students often experience periods of loneliness or isolation.

The current ARC research being undertaken by University of Melbourne¹⁴ examining students and placemaking in the central Melbourne has found that housing also contributes to feelings of isolation and segregation among students. Many of the newly built international student housing have only 18 square metres per person (average is 55 metres) and this means there is often limited space to socialise or participate in communal living. This study found that in the new student housing in Melbourne less than five percent of the total building volume is allocated to communal areas – limiting students ability to meet and build relationships with other students.

A study undertaken in 2006/07 by the Cambridge International College of 1155 international students¹⁵ also found that loneliness and depression affected 2 in every 3 international students and was considered an “endemic problem”. The report highlighted that while the delivery of State government assistance and counselling programs exist for migrants and refugees there is the assumption that international students must pay for this assistance. This means that international students often lack the ability to pay for counselling and social support.

5.2.3 Safety

International students and peak bodies have raised concerns regarding the safety of international students given that they often unfamiliar with Australian laws and regulations, experience cultural barriers, and have different understandings and perceptions of personal safety given their cultural backgrounds. Anecdotal evidence from Victoria Police suggests that international students in some areas of Melbourne are often overrepresented in crime statistics especially in relation to ‘opportunistic crime’ such as ‘theft-other’ and robbery such as laptops, mobile phones and i-pods. International students tend to be targeted for robberies when moving between their university campus and accommodation, especially at night. Similarly theft from their rooms in shared dormitory accommodation is not uncommon as students fail to lock their rooms. A number of crime prevention initiatives have been

¹⁴ ‘Transnational and Temporary: Students, Community and Place-Making in Central Melbourne’, Mid-Project Report 2007.

¹⁵ ‘Report on Issues Affecting International Students’, Community Welfare Department, Cambridge International College, April 2007.

implemented by Victoria Police to combat this problem and this includes liaising with student services, crime prevention workshops during orientation and security tagging private property such as laptops.

Universities have also recognised that this is a potential problem and some have appointed crime prevention officers on campus to raise awareness of safety and security issues. For example in 2005, Monash University appointed a crime prevention officer to address issues of safety particularly with Asian international students. Similarly, the Community Safety and Well-being branch ran a number of safety workshops in 2006/07 particularly targeting female international students; and developed a safety-tip booklet for international students.

In 2004, RMIT Union Legal Services undertook research into the safety needs of female international students. Key issues in relation to safety for female international students included:

- race-based violence particularly toward muslim women;
- safety of public transport and walking at night;
- drug and alcohol facilitated assault (ie. drink spiking); and
- safety in accommodation ie. theft.

The research found that there were a number of factors that contributed to women's perceptions of safety and these included:

- isolation;
- language barriers;
- discriminatory attitudes;
- fear of visa consequences if incidents were reported;
- unfamiliarity with Australian culture and laws;
- uncertainty about role of police; and
- not knowing where to go for help.

Student services and female international students recommended that international students needed to be provided with comprehensive information prior to entry and upon arrival. This would include information about:

- emergency and security numbers;
- safe locations;
- role of police;
- support services (ie. crisis services);
- support groups on campus;
- translation and interpreting services; and
- options for complaint and reporting procedures.

In 2006, City of Melbourne funded the development of the 'Keep It Safe' Website for female international students produced by RMIT Union Legal Service (www.su.rmit.edu.au/keepitsafe/relationships.html).

5.2.4 Access to Information and Services

Anecdotal evidence suggests that international students who have health, wellbeing and welfare needs are often reluctant to access either mainstream 'youth-specific' services or generalist support services. Rather, international students will tend to access student services via their academic institution. However, depending on the nature of the health or welfare concern, international students often feel that this may jeopardise their academic place at the institution. Further, many international students do not have a good understanding of the Australian health and welfare system and do not understand how to access information about social services, and the role of particular government and community agencies.

Similarly, reports from the National Liaison Committee (NLC) and other international student organisations have stated that international students are most likely to attempt to access information about services via the internet either prior to arrival and during their stay. This can often be difficult for international students to access as it is often not written in their language of origin, is not current and/or presumes a level of understanding and knowledge of current social systems. All of the major universities currently provide information that is targeted specifically at the information needs of international students, however very often this information is primarily about the services delivered by the university and generic information relating to living in Melbourne (ie. basic information about the weather, types of food, transport etc).

5.2.5 Gambling

National Liaison Committee (NLC) has reported that there is a high proportion of international students who visit casinos and gambling venues, however very little research has been undertaken to date that provides statistics on how many international students develop problem gambling. The most recent research does however show that international students have a higher chance of developing problem gambling than domestic students and that cultural background influences gambling behaviour¹⁶. As the NLC reports there are a number of factors that put international students at greater risk of developing gambling problems which include:

- beliefs and knowledge about gambling;
- boredom;
- depression or anxiety;
- loneliness; and
- for a reward or income.

Gamblers Help Victoria is currently undertaking research into the incidence of problem gambling in the international student community and examining risk factors.

6. City of Melbourne Initiatives

Council works closely with tertiary institutes, international student organisations and international students themselves to identify current and emerging trends and needs of international students and to work in partnership to provide strategies and supports that meet these needs.

Current initiatives include:

- An internal International Student Working Group was established in November 2006 in order to ensure a strategic and co-ordinated approach to working with international students across council. A Terms of Reference for the working group was developed in January 2007 and the group meets bi-monthly to discuss current work being undertaken with international students across council, identify emerging trends and to develop a draft Action Plan for work in 2007/2008. To date there is no budget allocated to this working group;
- A student activities night targeting both international and domestic students who reside at Docklands, was held on 30 August 2007 to encourage students to come together and meet each other. Information about services provided for students was available at the event;

¹⁶ 'Influence of Cultural Background, Country of Origin and Cognitive Distortions on the Gambling Behaviour of International Students', 2002.

- The 'Melbourne – Australia's Knowledge Capital' Report was launched on 23 August 2007 and is the first project undertaken by the Melbourne Vice Chancellors' Forum established to promote closer collaboration between City of Melbourne and metropolitan universities. The release of this report will be followed by a series of joint initiatives and an Action Plan developed by the Forum;
- The Melbourne International Statement 2006/07 outlines Council's commitment to maximising the benefits for Melbourne through its international relations program. The Statement outlines Council's continual support for initiatives that engage international students through programs such as sister school activities, cultural exchange programs and the education program as part of Melbourne Osaka Cup 2007.
- The City of Melbourne currently runs playgroups for families through Parenting Services at the Carlton Family Resource Centre. There are a number of older international students with children who are currently accessing these services;
- The City of Melbourne is an industry partner with the State Government Department for Victorian Communities and the Department of Sustainability and Environment on an Australian Research Council Linkage Project. The three-year project examines how international students engage with the city as a community and place, and aims to identify strategies that would enhance international student's connection to the city;
- Representation on the International Student Welfare Reference Group facilitated by Department of Immigration and Citizenship; and the Melbourne Vice Chancellors Forum;
- An 'Essential Guide for International Students' was developed and distributed to tertiary providers and accommodation providers and international student groups in January 2007. The guide provided tourist and social support information targeted at newly arrived international students;
- A Melbourne Conversations Forum on international students was held in May 2007. The topic of this forum was on the place of international students in the City of Melbourne and a number of academics, urban planners and researchers came together to discuss the needs of students in the inner city;
- A new Quick Response Grant Scheme has been introduced by Arts and Culture which targets new and emerging communities, older people and international students. These grants are available up to \$2000 and enable communities to design and implement creative art projects and to strengthen links with the community;
- A range of forums and workshops regarding safety in the city were delivered to international students in March 2007 as part of International Women's Day;
- Support continues to be provided by Melbourne International for the Tianjin/ Melbourne Student Association, and the Tianjin Government Leaders Program which includes the formation and involvement in sister-city events and activities;
- Crowd Theory @ Southbank: In 2007 the Community Cultural Development Program in conjunction with the Footscray Community Arts Centre staged an event that engaged the Southbank residents which included international students in the taking of a large format photo of a high rise residential community. The photo explored themes

concerning representation of collective identity and how this relates to specific geographical sites and will be exhibited throughout 2007;

- On 2 September 2007, the Melbourne Football Club held a "Come, Watch and Learn AFL Day" for up to 3000 Chinese International Students. The event began at Federation Square before walking down to the MCG to watch the match against Carlton. This event enabled Chinese students to connect and engage with Australian culture;
- In partnership with Continuous Improvement, an online Survey was conducted in October 2006 of approximately 1,400 international students to identify the needs of issues of international students during their lifecycle of studying in Melbourne. A Research report outlining the key findings was disseminated across council in January 2007 and findings were used to inform the discussion of the internal International Student Working Group and a draft Action Plan for work with international students in 2007/2008;
- Three information seminars were delivered in October 2006 by the Community Development and Aged Care branch in partnership with the Australian Federation of International Students (AFIS) and the Victorian Multicultural Commission to provide settlement information to newly arrived international students and to discuss emerging needs;
- A Lord Mayor's Welcome to International Students was held on 9 September 2006. This one day event was to celebrate the arrival of international students to City of Melbourne and acknowledge the contribution they make to the social and cultural life of the city. The event was organised collaboratively with international student groups tertiary organisations and international students themselves. Approximately two thousand students attended the event and sixty international students volunteered to assist with event; and
- In 2006/07, the City of Melbourne funded a number of safety initiatives through the City Safety Grants Program including: the Victoria Police Crime Prevention Campaign Posters that educate international students about protecting their property; the RMIT Student Safety website, and Mirchi Sushi Crap program, a multicultural youth radio program that promotes ethnic diversity among Victorian youth and where community groups discuss safety issues for young people.

7. Key Issues

In order to ensure that Melbourne is indeed positioned as a "university city" or "knowledge capital" rather than a city with a number of universities as highlighted in the latest *Melbourne – Australia's Knowledge Capital Report*, the City of Melbourne needs to ensure that this group of young people have access to services and supports that promote their health, welfare and wellbeing.

Current research highlights that in 2005, higher education students made up 35% of the total City of Melbourne resident population (n= 23,133). There were 11,829 international students living in the City of Melbourne, and 11,304 domestic students.

International students are potentially a vulnerable group that upon arrival in Melbourne experience a number of difficulties relating to:

- cultural barriers;
- social isolation;
- safety;

- understanding and accessing Australia's health, welfare and legal systems;
- accessing safe and affordable housing, and employment;
- accessing public transport concession;
- gambling; and
- access to information regarding services and supports.

As highlighted above, there are a number of initiatives across council currently being undertaken in relation to international students. However, there is currently no specific project position or lead branch area that has direct responsibility for this work and there is no allocated budget allocation. This makes it difficult to ensure that programs and supports targeted at the international student community are strategic and coordinated, and are in line with key council strategic directions. As identified by the Altitude Leadership Group, it is important that there is a designated council officer to develop and implement key projects and supports, establish cross-organisational project teams; coordinate the International Student Working Group and liaise with universities, student associations and organisations, and other key stakeholders as required.

Similarly, there is currently no opportunity for international student groups, organisations, private providers and student services to come together to identify current and emerging issues and trends, share information and network. The City of Melbourne currently facilitates the Melbourne Youth Services Forum (MYSF) and the Melbourne School Welfare Network (MSWN) which provide youth service providers and secondary schools in the municipality with the opportunity to network, share information and build partnerships. This type of forum could be facilitated by the City of Melbourne on a bi-monthly basis in relation to international student issues.

8. Recommendations

This report has identified a number of key issues for international students during their stay in Melbourne. There are a number of key areas where City of Melbourne could provide supports that would promote the health and wellbeing of international students and ensure that their experience of Melbourne is a positive one.

Key recommendations include:

Recommendation 1- Coordination of International Student Work Across Council

- 1.1 Continuation of the International Student Working Group on a bi-monthly basis to:
 - ensure there is a strategic and coordinated approach to working with international students and organisations;
 - that there are integrated services and supports; and
 - identify current and emerging needs and issues.
- 1.2 Recruit an allocated council officer position to:
 - develop and deliver key projects in relation to international students outlined in this report;
 - coordinate the International Working Group;
 - coordinate the International Student Network (see recommendation 2);
 - liaise with student organisations, services and groups, and private providers, State government and universities.

Recommendation 2 – Establish the City of Melbourne International Student Network

- 2.1 Establish an International Student Network that would enable international student groups, services and organisation, private providers and educational institutions the opportunity to network, share information and build partnerships. The network could run bi-monthly and specifically would aim to:

- provide a forum for information sharing on issues relating to international students in the City of Melbourne;
- share information, knowledge and skills to further enhance and inform the development of services and supports for international students;
- identify and discuss emerging trends and issues in relation to international students;
- further develop networks and links;
- provide an advocacy and advisory role in relation to key issues (ie. public transport concessions)

Recommendation 3 – Undertake Biannual Research into Needs of International Students

- 3.1 Use the online survey developed by Continuous Improvement in 2006 and include additional questions regarding health and wellbeing needs, to undertake online research that targets a broad range of international students from different educational settings (ie. schools, VET and universities) to identify current and emerging needs and issues; and changing demographic data. Research findings will inform ongoing program and service delivery, and inform policy development.

Recommendation 4 – Undertake Research into Information Needs and Pathways of International Student and Develop a Specific Website to Cater for these Needs

- 4.1 Undertake research that examines the way in which international student access information online prior to arrival and during their stay and their information needs;
- 4.2 Develop a specific international student website where students could access a wide range of information at different stages of their life-cycle. The site could link to other Federal and State government websites and tourism websites such as 'That's Melbourne'. This could be an extension of the existing City of Melbourne website (ie. www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/internationalstudents) or a stand-alone web-portal. Information on the site would be provided in a diverse range of languages; and
- 4.3 Review current methods of disseminating information to international students in relation to events, activities and programs provided by City of Melbourne that could engage international students and provide opportunities for them to participate in the life of the city.

Recommendation 5 – Provide a Range of Events and Activities that Engage International Students

- 5.1 In partnership with student organisations, groups and services and international students themselves develop and deliver a range of events and activities that provide international students with the opportunity to connect with other domestic and international students, and engage with the life of the city. This could include:
- extension of the AFL Sports Program to all include all international students (which include tickets to the football and other events in the city);
 - a cultural activities program for students where they are given the opportunity every quarter to experience activities of cultural significance;
 - Lord Mayor's Welcome to International Students;
 - education workshops around employment, legal rights, accommodation and health systems in Australia held at the Melbourne Town Hall and facilitated by key speakers from peak bodies such as Tenants Union, Consumer Affairs and State government agencies such as the Department of Immigration and Citizenship; and
 - orientation to the city tours for international students; and
 - safety workshops for international students.

Recommendation 6 – Consider the Establishment of an International Student Ambassador Program

- 6.1 Consider an International Student Ambassador Program, as a component of the existing City Ambassador Program where a number of international students would be trained and mentored by City Ambassadors. This would provide opportunities for international students to learn about and connect with the city; enhance social/community interaction; provide work experience; and will enhance the existing program by having bi-lingual and/or multi-lingual volunteers that represent the cultural diversity of Melbourne. These Ambassadors could be based at particular 'hot spots' for international students.

FINANCE ATTACHMENT

THE NEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

There is no direct financial impact from the recommendation in the report for 2007/08. There may be a requirement for additional funding during 2008/09 and approval as required through the existing budgetary process.

Phu Nguyen
Acting Manager Financial Services

LEGAL ATTACHMENT

THE NEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

The subject matter of the report together with the recommendation made are within the functions and powers of the Council.

Section 3C of the *Local Government Act* 1989 (“Act”) provides that:

“The primary objective of a Council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to the long terms and cumulative effects of decisions.”

Section 3C(2) of the Act states that in seeking to achieve its primary objective, facilitating objectives that Council must have regard to include:

“(c) to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community,

...

(e) ensure that services and facilities provided by the Council are accessible and equitable.”

Toby Hayes
Acting Manager Legal Services