

ADDITIONAL ITEM

10 June 2015
To the Ordinary Council Meeting

Director's Report
Property and Economic Development

4.10 Multi-Campus University

TRIM REFERENCE: F2015/00040 - D11970708

MANAGER: Michael Whittaker, General Manager

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SUMMARY

To discuss strategies to enhance tertiary education services for Wyong Shire Residents

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 ***That Council note the following:***
 - a ***Only 8.1% of the residents of the Wyong local government area (Wyong LGA) hold a bachelor or higher degree, compared to 19.1% in NSW;***
 - b ***The rate of youth unemployment within the Wyong LGA is one of highest in NSW, and the rate of youth unemployment on the Central Coast is 17.3% compared to the NSW rate of 12.6%;***
 - c ***The Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle provides important but not the full diversity of courses of study for tertiary qualifications that the Hunter or Sydney regions have;***
 - d ***The limited courses of study available in the Wyong LGA provides a significant disincentive and financial barrier to residents of the Wyong LGA securing tertiary qualifications;***
 - e ***There is a need for a more comprehensive and diverse tertiary courses of study to be available within the Wyong LGA to meet current and projected future needs of the residents of the Wyong LGA; and***
 - f ***The University of Newcastle is a very significant employer in the Hunter, and expansion of its operations on the Central Coast, or the establishment of another university in the Wyong local government area, will provide additional employment and promote economic activity within the Wyong LGA.***
- 2 ***That Council invite the Vice -Chancellor of the University of Newcastle and her Executive Team to provide a detailed briefing to all Wyong Councillors on the University's plans to meet the current and projected future needs of the residents of the Wyong local government area.***
- 3 ***That Council request that the General Manager:***
 - a ***identify key universities in Australia (including but not limited to the***

University of Newcastle) and overseas, through the recent Expression of Interest process for the Smart City Vision, to work collaboratively to deliver a broader range of tertiary courses that are accessible to residents of the Wyong LGA; and

- b work with University of Newcastle, TAFE and other key tertiary institutions currently located on the Central Coast through the Campus Forum to deliver a marketing campaign aimed at the community of the Wyong LGA that promotes existing opportunities and affordable pathways to attain tertiary qualifications.***

Overview

The current 4,000 student University of Newcastle campus in Ourimbah provides important but limited courses of study. Students from the Wyong LGA that seek to study courses not currently offered from the University of Newcastle's Ourimbah Campus must undertake studies at the University of Newcastle's campuses in the Hunter (at Callaghan and/or Newcastle) or study at other universities in Sydney. The distance and expenses associated with having to study outside of the Central Coast is believed to be a significant disincentive to the attainment of a tertiary qualification for many residents of the Wyong LGA, and may contribute to residents of the Wyong LGA attaining tertiary qualifications at less than half of the average rate in NSW.

The recommendation proposes that the Vice Chancellor, and her Executive Team, present the University of Newcastle's plans to meet the current and future needs of the residents of the Wyong LGA to the Council. This will allow the Council to understand how the University of Newcastle might address this important social issue.

The recommendation also proposes that Council and other existing education providers within the Wyong LGA (including the University of NSW and TAFE) undertake a marketing campaign to promote existing tertiary courses and the means by which entry and completion of those courses might be achieved.

Finally, the recommendation proposes that Council continue to work with key universities (including the University of Newcastle) to expand the range of courses available to residents of the Wyong LGA, as part of the Smart City Vision. This may include establishing a Central Coast University, which may include the current Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle.

This report focuses on the Wyong LGA, however it must be understood that the provision of tertiary education will have to be considered in a regional context. While engagement with Gosford City Council on this important issue has not, to date, resulted in a common position, it is important that Wyong Shire Council engage with relevant stakeholders on the Central Coast so that a broader range of tertiary studies are available to the residents of both the Wyong LGA and the broader region.

Benefits

Enhanced local campuses will provide tertiary course variety and gravitas with capacity for 15,000 students, providing a comprehensive tertiary service that is accessible for current and future residents of the Central Coast region.

An enhanced range of university courses will help to raise the education levels of residents across the Wyong LGA, with more students likely to complete high school matriculation and move onto a local university course that allows them to live at home while studying.

It would also provide cross-campus variety and integration with business and industry creating a “brains trust” that would have far reaching impact on innovation in the region. This in turn will attract more industry supporting economic development and job creation. It would be advantageous to have collocated with the university activities, TAFE facilities and other educational institutions that can provide pathways for our citizens into tertiary education.

Universities are also significant employers, and generate significant economic opportunities for local businesses. For example, in 2014 the University of Newcastle employed over 4500 people with total employee related expenses of over \$380M (source: Annual Report for the University of Newcastle), and is widely recognised as being the second largest employer in the Hunter.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil