

# **Student Welcome 2010 At Melbourne Airport**

Sharon Smith

Office of Knowledge Capital-City of Melbourne, PO Box 1603 Melbourne, Vic, 3001

In 2009, Victoria attracted a record 178,000 international student enrolments with a projected increase of more than 180,000 for 2010. A welcome desk was operated as a pilot in 2009 by the Office of Knowledge Capital (OKC) at Melbourne Airport to greet arriving international students and provide them with a Welcome Pack. The desk operated for 5 days during peak arrival times in February and July, 2009. An evaluation report of the pilot was produced by the OKC and subsequent Focus Group research was conducted with international students to further assess the value of the welcome desk, its services and information provision.

Both the Evaluation Report and Focus Group Report recommended continuing the initiative in 2010 and beyond with a number of improvements, including increased operations and support. In September 2009 the Victorian Government released its *'Thinking Global: Victoria's Action Plan for International Education'* which included provision for partial sponsorship of the International Student Welcome Booth at Melbourne Airport for the next four years.

The project was initially developed to benefit newly arriving international students by improving the provision of information that is available to students about studying and living in Melbourne, Victoria and services and information for international students in the areas of employment, accommodation and social integration.

However, in addition to the benefits of a permanent Welcome desk in the peak arrival periods for international students into Melbourne, the project has developed a volunteer program attracting over 100 student volunteers of which 70% are international students. This aspect of the project has proven to be a successful community engagement and social integration program for international students in Melbourne.

The presentation will discuss 2010 Student Welcome Desk operation in January-February and July and the development of the volunteer program in relation to the evaluation of the experiences of both the volunteers at the Welcome Desk and the newly arrived international students into Melbourne in 2010.

## **Key Words**

Student welcome desk, student experience, airport arrivals, volunteering, community engagement, information provision, stakeholder engagement,