
Southern Cross University: Rising Star Scholarship program

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Corporate and Commercial (Guy Bezrouchko)

Recommendation

That Council approve the renewal of sponsorship for the Southern Cross University Rising Stars Scholarship program for a total of three (3) one-year scholarships of \$5,000 per annum with the first scholarship to be granted in 2022 and subsequent scholarships offered in 2023 and 2024.

Background

In 2016 Council resolved to sponsor the Rising Star Scholarship program with Southern Cross University (SCU). SCU Rising Star Scholarships aim to reward students who demonstrate outstanding academic potential and provide financial support to students who might otherwise not have the opportunity to achieve a university education. The sponsorship was renewed by Council again in 2018, with the scholarship concluding in 2021. Scholarships of \$5,000 have been offered annually for six years to students residing in one of the constituent council areas of Ballina, Byron, Lismore or Richmond Valley.

This program has seen Council support 6 students (4 female and 2 male) enrolled in a course of study with Southern Cross University's Faculty of Science and Engineering; with preference given to a new or continuing female student enrolled in an engineering degree.

Southern Cross University has formally requested Rous for renewal of the agreement which will continue to support higher education opportunities and outcomes for the local community. Typically, recipients of the scholarship have had the opportunity to meet with Council at the conclusion of the scholarship.

Outcome of review

A review of the scholarship was undertaken in late 2021 and determined that the scholarship should continue to preference a new or continuing female student enrolled in a course within SCU's Faculty of Science and Engineering. Courses within the school range from environmental solutions to regenerative agriculture and engineering (civil/mechanical/coastal).

These courses are complementary to Council's core functions, with the review recommending that courses within the faculty be given equal preference, and a view to the future that the scholarship agreement include a placement component at Council for the successful recipient.

Governance

Council is not required to provide 28 days' public notice as per section 356(3)(b) of the *Local Government Act 1993* as the sponsorship program is already provided for in Council's Operational Plan, budget and long-term financial plan.

Finance

Funding is allocated in the existing Operational Plan 2021/22 for the scholarship and consists of a total of three (3) one-year scholarships of \$5,000 per annum with the first scholarship to be granted in 2022 and subsequent scholarships offered in 2023 and 2024.

Conclusion

The continued support of the Southern Cross University Rising Star scholarship will encourage and support students with knowledge and skills that complement Council's core functions. Approval is sought to renew the agreement for an additional three years commencing in 2022. A review of future arrangements will be undertaken prior to 2026, with the aim of expanding the scholarship agreements to include a placement component at Council for the successful recipient.