

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee**Agenda item 6.4****Post travel report by Cr Kevin Louey: Manila, The Philippines, March 2023****2 May 2023****Presenter:** Andrew Wear, Director Economic Development and International**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Future Melbourne Committee with information on the travel undertaken by Cr Kevin Louey to Manila, The Philippines associated with 2023 Business Partner City (BPC) Roundtable for the period 15 to 18 March 2023.
2. On 7 February 2023, the Future Melbourne Committee approved the proposal for Cr Kevin Louey to travel to Manila, The Philippines for the period 15 to 18 March 2023 to participate in the BPC Roundtable in Manila.
3. City of Melbourne has been a member of the BPC network since 1999 and has attended each annual Roundtable. As a globally-engaged city, targeted international visit programs are an important part of profiling Melbourne's capability globally, facilitating new connections and fostering long-term relationships. The intimate scale and tailored nature of the BPC program optimises interactions between program delegates, officials and industry representatives, through forums and networking functions.

Key issues

4. The primary purpose of the trip was to participate in the BPC network Roundtable meeting where the theme was Post-COVID Business Promotion Policies. Cr Louey's presentation highlighted Melbourne's COVID-19 recovery measures and key insights from the pandemic. Important information was also gleaned from fellow BPC cities, such as Ho Chi Minh City's renewed interest in AI technologies and the innovation shown by the City of Manila to curb the outbreak while maintaining its vibrant community lifestyle. During the Roundtable meeting, the City of Osaka as Secretariat requested that the City of Melbourne consider hosting the next BPC Roundtable meeting in Melbourne.
5. A comprehensive side program that included networking opportunities, city-to-city connections and relationship-building meetings with Manila-based organisations operating in the innovation, startup and investment space supported Cr Louey's BPC participation program. The meetings indicated that clear opportunities exist for Melbourne in the areas of media and tourism-tech, agtech, game development and med-tech for further consideration. This included the invitation of a game development business delegation to visit Melbourne by the The Philippines Game Development Association. Stakeholders indicated that the Lord Mayor would be warmly welcomed in The Philippines, where she could meet important counterpart women Mayors from Manila, Makati and Quezon City.
6. A meeting with Australian Ambassador to The Philippines, Ms HK Yu, also confirmed that there are ample opportunities for City of Melbourne to pursue further relationships with Manila-based organisations, particularly in the areas of education, design, game development, urban planning, health technologies, financial and mining services.
7. Outcomes and benefits of the travel can be found in Attachment 2, along with a detailed program of Cr Louey's travel in Attachment 3. Images documenting these meetings are contained within Attachment 4.
8. An additional side meeting was held with the Deputy Director of the Tianjin Commission of Commerce, Mr Lang Dong. The meeting was significant, as it represented the first face-to-face meeting between officials from each city since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions centred on exploration of potential areas of cooperation, including liveability, the used vehicle market, industrial design, 20 minute neighbourhoods, e-commerce and capitalising on shifting consumer behaviour, education exchange and health forming sectors.

Recommendation from management

9. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 9.1. Notes this report, along with attached outcomes and benefits, itinerary and images.
 - 9.2. Requests that management follow up on business leads created during the Manila visit.
 - 9.3. Endorses the hosting by the City of Melbourne of the next Business Partner Cities Roundtable meeting.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 18)
2. Outcomes and Benefits of Travel (Page 4 of 18)
3. Cr Kevin Louey itinerary (Page 6 of 18)
4. Travel images (Page 8 of 18)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. No legal implications are deemed to have resulted from the travel.

Finance

2. The total costs associated with this travel for Cr Louey were \$7,569.09. This includes airfares (\$5,834.57), accommodation (\$1,539.46) and incidentals (\$195.06).
3. Hosting of the next Business Partner Cities Roundtable meetings is to be funded by the City of Melbourne and is included in Council's draft Budget 2023-24 (subject to Council approval).

Conflict of interest

4. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a general or material conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Relation to Council policy

5. The General Manager City Economy and Activation has confirmed that the travel costs accord with the requirements of the travel guidelines outlined in the Council Expenses Policy.

Environmental sustainability

6. Carbon emissions resulting from air travel to The Philippines were offset with the purchase of credits.

OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS OF TRAVEL

Outcomes and Benefits

1. The outcomes and benefits arising from the travel include:
 - 1.1. The Manila visit program began with a Melbourne-Manila Collaborative dinner, which brought together key stakeholders from both cities, including the Australia Philippines Business Council, Philippines Australia Business Council, Philippines Games Development Association, QBO Innovation Hub and private sector representatives from startups and law firms. There is significant goodwill to further progress the Melbourne-Manila relationship and an eagerness to maintain momentum created during the night.
 - 1.2. Participation in the BPC Roundtable in Manila reaffirmed Melbourne's connections with major cities in the economically important region of the Indo-Pacific. Cr Louey's presentation to Roundtable members was received with great interest, especially in relation to City of Melbourne's policies to recover from the pandemic and planned city-shaping projects such as Greenline, Queen Victoria Market Renewal Project, as well as clean energy projects such as Power Melbourne. During the Roundtable meeting, the City of Osaka as Secretariat requested that the City of Melbourne consider hosting the next BPC Roundtable meeting in Melbourne.
 - 1.3. In particular, this year's BPC Roundtable afforded City of Melbourne the opportunity to reconnect with the City of Manila, the Mayor of Manila and various Councillors. Melbourne and Manila both share an interest in building safe and liveable cities for communities and have pro-business attitudes.
 - 1.4. Cr Louey visited the Founders and key staff members at the QBO Innovation Hub, an early stage startup incubator and investor. Founded in 2016, QBO is the Philippines' first public-private partnership platform for Filipino startups created through the collaboration of IdeaSpace, J.P. Morgan, the Department of Science and Technology, and the Department of Trade and Industry. QBO has invested in more than 50 startups and is very active in learning and development as they run four incubator cohorts annually, including the Startup Pinay program, which focuses on women in tech.

Particular areas of potential engagement with Melbourne were discussed, with med-tech and hospital management systems, supply chain/logistics, tourism-tech through brands like www.cocotel.com.ph, agtech solutions, game development and online marketplace solutions for professional services such as real estate and insurance found to have strong potential. In particular, QBO Innovation Hub would like to connect with university-linked incubators in Melbourne, with an online joint pitch showcase event considered a good first step.

- 1.5. Cr Louey met with Mr Christian Gonzales, Global Vice President, International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI). ICTSI is headquartered in Manila and operates a portfolio of 32 container terminals throughout 19 countries – including Melbourne. Victorian International Container Terminal (VICT) is ICTSI's first entry point into Australia. The innovation behind VICT's Webb Dock East terminal lies with its integrated automated technology as Australia's first and only fully automated terminal. Webb Dock's advantage is its proximity as it is located on the bayside of the Westgate Bridge, which allows for larger ships and faster stevedoring services. ICTSI announced it has a plan to invest a further AU\$500 million in addition to the more than AU\$700 million it has already invested in the VICT since its establishment in 2014. Under the proposal, ICTSI would undertake a phased development of the Webb Dock North Container Terminal and integrate its operations with VICT.

The design would deliver higher operating efficiencies at a lower development with a reduced environmental impact compared to other proposals. The development would increase VICT's container capacity to 3.7 million twenty foot equivalent units (TEU), allowing for four container berths with the ability to service vessels up to 14,000 TEU and up to 367 metres in length. This proposal would increase efficiencies and pave the way for larger ships to berth at Melbourne.

- 1.6. During a meeting with Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, Ms HK Yu and Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner, Christopher Lim, Cr Louey received an in-market briefing on the Philippines economic climate, Australia's interests in the Philippines and areas of possible collaboration for the City of Melbourne. Ambassador Yu explained that the Philippines enjoys one of the fastest growing economies in the world, at a rate of 6.9 per cent. Combined with a population of 110 million, of which half are under 26 years of age, and high rates of education and English literacy, the opportunities available to Australian companies who choose to operate in the country are profound.

The Ambassador advised that, despite great opportunities, Australian companies are not choosing Philippines as a market to do business. With opportunities abundant in professional services such as financial, mining and infrastructure, and sectors like medical, education and defence, more needs to be done to encourage businesses to explore. Ambassador Yu concluded by encouraging the Lord Mayor to visit Manila with experts from the urban design and climate change realm, and to meet with counterpart Mayors from Manila, Makati and Quezon City – all dynamic female city leaders who hold mandates to create green, liveable and sustainable cities.

- 1.7. The final meeting during the Manila visit was held with Deputy Director of the Tianjin Commission of Commerce, Mr Lang Dong. The meeting was significant as it represented the first face-to-face meeting between officials from each city since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This, combined with geopolitical tension surrounding the wider Australia-China relationship, had resulted in a slowing of activities related to the highly active Melbourne-Tianjin relationship.

Discussions with Mr Lang centred around exploration of future areas of cooperation between the two cities. Suggestions included community liveability improvements such as the advent of 20 minute neighbourhoods, the vehicle market, industrial design, e-commerce and capitalising on post-COVID consumer behaviour, education exchange and health. Mr Lang further explained that Tianjin is also experiencing issues around shopfront vacancies and that the city was exploring novel ways to respond. These include livestreaming in shops for online audiences, combining experiences such as dining and libraries where people can read and dine, pet cafes and bricks and mortar/online combination stores.

2023 Business Partner City Roundtable – Manila Itinerary

Cr Kevin Louey

Date	Time	Activity
Day 1 Wed 15 March	1900 - 2100	Melbourne Manila Collaborative Dinner Hosted by Cr Kevin Louey
Day 2 Thu 16 March	0800 - 0915	Meeting with Christian R. Gonzalez, Executive Vice President International Contained Terminal Services International
	1000 - 1130	Meeting with QBO Innovation Hub CEO Katrina Chan, Ben Alderson and Dave Del Rosario
	1200 - 1400	Lunch meeting with Mr Floro C. Balato Jr Davina Law
	1430 - 1530	Ambassador HK Yu and Trade Commissioner Christopher Lim courtesy call
	1830 - 2030	Meeting with Philippine Airlines President and COO Capt Stanley Ng and Regional Head Shiela Yuliong
	0800	Wreath Laying and Military Honours Ceremony for Philippines independence national hero Jose Rizal
Day 3 Fri 17 March	0845	Arrival at Manila City Hall
	0900 -1045	2023 BOC Roundtable [Business Promotion Policies for the post-COVID-19 era] morning session Program Presentations from each BPC city (10 min) Moderated Discussion (30 min)
	1100 - 1130	Courtesy Call with Vice Mayor of Manila Mayor and City Councillors
	1200 - 1400	Roundtable Luncheon
	1445 - 1600	2023 BOC Roundtable

2023 Business Partner City Roundtable – Manila Itinerary
Cr Kevin Louey

Date	Time	Activity
Day 3 Fri 17 March		「Business Promotion Policies for the post-COVID-19 era」 Afternoon session Program Presentations from each BPC city (10 min)
	1600 - 1700	City of Manila city policy briefing session on best practices, post-covid business policies, Trade & Investment facilitation and international exchange
	1700 - 1750	Guided tour of Manila City Hall, City Museum and Disaster Preparation and Security Control Centre
	1800 - 1830	Meeting with Mr Lang Dong – Second-level inspector (Deputy Director) of Tianjin Commission of Commerce
	1830 - 2030	BPC Roundtable Dinner Reception Hosted by: City of Osaka

TRAVEL IMAGES – BRIEFINGS, MEETINGS AND SITE VISITS



BPC Roundtable Group photo



Cr Louey speaking during Roundtable discussion session



Cr Louey with City of Manila Cr and BPC Roundtable facilitator Numero Lim



BPC Roundtable attendees with Mayor of Manila



Mr Phairush Burapachaisri, Vice Chairman, Thai Chamber of Commerce



Mr Nguyen Thanh Son, Deputy Head, Department of Industry and Trade,
People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City



Rizal Monument Wreath Laying Ceremony



Meeting with Australian Ambassador HK Yu



Meeting with Directors of QBO Innovation Hub



Meeting with Capt Stanley NG, President and COO of Philippine Airlines



Meeting with Mr Lang Dong, Deputy Director, Tianjin Commission of Commerce