**Completions & Continuations**

**Executive Summary**

*VIC Division: Sofia Viegas & Johanna Leitch*

**Background**

In the four-year period of June 2016 to June 2019 the Award completion rate increased from 41.3% to 44.7% *(statistics taken from 2018 number, updated 2019 statistic to be added when released)*. Whilst the target of 60% may be considered aspirational, there are currently no national initiatives directly targeting improvements to this area on the current National Strategic Plan. As such, we believe greater improvements are possible through this targeted strategic project.

This project is in support of:

* **The 2020 National Headline Goals**of a 60% completion rate and 50,000 new Award participant registrations each year, and future but-as-yet unset 2025 goals.
* **The 2025 National Strategic Plan –**‘Award Completion Management’ research project which sets out to determine the factors inhibiting retention, with the outcomes of this research to identify evidence-based actions to redress the attrition and premature cessation rates across Australia.
* **The 2020 Victorian Business Plan**‘*2.2 Completion & Continuation’*initiatives to increase quality and effectiveness of the Award

In 2018, at the Staff Conference held in Melbourne, the notion for greater attention afforded to the growth of completions and continuations of the Award across Divisions was loosely raised, with a consensus made on this matter but not yet actioned. In 2019, the Victorian Team commenced an official launch of a focused Completions and Continuations (C&C) Project leading into the National Staff Conference held in Sydney in 2019. Qualitative and quantitative research was undertaken in the months prior as part of Phase 1 of the C & C initiative, in establishing a snapshot of the current baseline practice across Australia to present to all Divisions.

Information presented at the conference, as per the National Staff Conference Report, demonstrated a strong demand for a targeted strategic approach to improving completions and continuations Australia-wide. It is as a result of the positive support from all Divisions that we move forward with the next phase of this project, in working to improve our capabilities in delivering and growing the Award, as well as creating more tailored and effective experiences for all involved in the Award.

**The What**

The *Completions and Continuations Project* is a 5 year long national project, led by the Victorian Division in partnership with the National office, which aims to increase participation in The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award through the lifting of Award completion rates, and the increasing of Award continuation

rates. The project seeks to create an understanding of the current climate of practices pertaining to the growth of completions and continuations as carried out across each Division, in order to develop a sound best practice model for Australia-wide implementation, as informed through thorough research from various stakeholders involved in the Award experience.

**The Why**

This project assumes that the increasing of continuations and completions of the Award Australia-wide will lead to more positive Participant experiences, more tailored opportunities for Award involvement and success, and in turn, greater societal impact through enhanced Award value. As a national network, we are improving our capabilities in delivering and growing the Award, as well as creating more effective and beneficial experiences for all involved in the Award. In doing so, we are continually evolving as the leading youth development program, whilst also directly supporting the national strategic Headline Goals, Victorian Business Plan, and hopefully all Division’s Business Plans, through specifically targeting operational improvements to this area.

**The How**

The C&C Project will satisfy our aim of enhancing completions and continuations of the Award for our Participants through the following means:

* Establishing a clear understanding of current practice across Australia and NZ Divisions pertaining to increasing completions and continuations through qualitative and quantitative analysis
* Engaging representation from each division to conduct research with respective Award Centres, in order to capture a full picture of the national landscape
* Undertaking extensive discovery research regarding the challenges faced in increasing C&Cs and opportunities for improvement via interviews, focus groups and surveys with various Award users. These include, but are not limited to, Field Officers, Award Leaders, Participants, Assessors, and Alumni.
* Establishing a set of best practice initiatives committed to improving C&Cs across each Division, as informed by the above research undertakings, accompanied by monitoring and evaluation of their success over a 12-month period.

*\*Please refer to the full-length Research Plan document for a more detailed breakdown of time, resources and operational logistics of the Project\**

**The Outcome**

1. Establish a set of standard best practice procedures and protocols to ensure maintenance and steady growth of continuations and completions (operations that should be carried out as part of everyday practices in permanent staff roles)
2. To create a set of strategic initiatives to significantly lift the rate of completions and continuations over the next five years
3. To create a better understanding of, and commitment to, enhancing Award user experience through more consistent operational practices and initiatives between divisions and national teams

**Next Steps**

As we enter Phase 2 of the C&C Project, the next steps include:

1. Finalising a detail Project Plan for circulation to all relevant divisional staff members.
2. Engaging with Divisions to scope interest and involvement here forth in supporting the execution of this project.
3. Training and support given to Divisional staff who are interested in helping to conduct the research.
4. Research is initiated, as per the detailed plan outlined in the full-length Project Plan (please refer to Research Plan document for further information).
5. Based on these findings, key initiatives are to be adopted and rolled out across Divisions, and continually monitored and tested.
6. Measure and capture percentage of completions and continuations for each Division to establish effectiveness of baseline and best practice models.