

Education now a primary industry

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SOUTH Australia's booming international education industry has passed the half billion-dollar mark for the first time, with Adelaide continuing to attract overseas students in record numbers.

Estimates from the Australian Bureau of Statistics for 2005/06 show international students brought \$553 million into SA's economy in tuition fees and living expenses, such as accommodation, transport and shopping.

This is up from \$470 million in 2004/05, an increase of almost 18 per cent.

Further Education Minister Paul Caica said the ABS figures also showed 19,218 overseas students chose Adelaide as their study destination in the first nine months to September this year - a 13.8 per cent increase on the same time last year.

"And well ahead of the national average rise of 9.5 per cent," Mr Caica said.

"It's anticipated that by the end of this year, the number of international students in Adelaide will rise to more than 20,000."

Mr Caica said the state had managed to almost double overseas student numbers in just four years, and had already topped the 2005 total of 18,031 students.

International education could move from fifth to fourth place in the state's ranking of export goods and services.

So far this year, Adelaide has also secured 5.4 per cent of the national overseas student market, up from 4.5 per cent in 2003.

"This puts us on target to capture 9 per cent of the Australian international education market by 2013, in line with the goal set in the South Australian Strategic Plan," Mr Caica said.

Out of the international students in SA, 10,638 are at university - a 14 per cent rise over the past year compared to a national average rise of 4.9 per cent.

Vietnam, India, China and South Korea are the fastest-growing source countries for students, with numbers from those countries rising over the past nine months by 49.8 per cent, 35.9 per cent, 29 per cent, and 27.8 per cent respectively.

Yan Xiao Xue, 18, from China; Nguyen Thuy Huyen, 18, from Vietnam; Baek Jung Eun, 22, from Korea; and Madhab Raj Bhattarai, 29, from India; said yesterday they had chosen to study in South Australia because of its reputation for great education and affordability.

"South Australia is very friendly and is known for its good education," said Ms Nguyen, who will begin school here when her English course at Eynesbury College is completed