

Education pioneer of SA's united nations

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NHADA LARKIN

BOB Knight is a trail-blazer in an industry now worth more than half a billion dollars to the state's economy each year.

When he became principal of Glenunga International High School in 1991, the State Government was on the brink of closing the school. It had just 400 students, 20 of whom were from overseas.

Mr Knight will retire at the end of this year, farewell what is now SA's largest single-campus Year 8-12 high school, with 1300 students – including 150 international students who pay about \$10,000 a year to study in Adelaide.

"When I applied for the school, I had it in my head it could be developed strongly as an international school for all the students, because the world was becoming a global village," Mr Knight said.

"It was not only intercultural benefits but the economic benefits of having a global view.

"Now we have kids from well over 60 different countries of birth and over one-third of our students are from non-English-speaking backgrounds."

Glenunga's international students are among the anticipated 23,000 who will study in South Australia this year – that figure increased from just 11,116 five years ago, according to Education Adelaide.

The international education industry is now the state's fourth-biggest export earner and supports 2800 local jobs.

Education Adelaide chief executive Denise von Wald said the outlook was for continued double-digit growth from countries like China, India, South Korea and Vietnam.

"We are also looking at opportunities in the Middle East and we're looking at

opportunities in eastern Europe," Ms von Wald said.

Tertiary education is also being attracted to the state, with the U.S.'s Carnegie Mellon University last year opening a campus here and Britain's Cranfield University and University College London touted to arrive in Adelaide soon.

Ms von Wald said the economic benefits were significant, with the industry injecting \$553 million into the state's economy in 2005-07.

"But in a sense, even though the dollars are extraordinary and really beneficial to the economy, in a way that is the least of the benefits," Ms von Wald said.

"Up to 40 per cent of all skilled migrants to Australia were once international students.

"And the fact that we've got a relationship with some of the best and brightest from around the world will put us in good stead for the future."

Ms von Wald said that a

number of foreign government ministers and heads of major international corporations were former Adelaide students.

"It makes a tremendous difference when you want to trade or do business or advance international relationships," she said.

"The business community benefits, government benefits and ordinary South Australians benefit."

It's an industry that Mr Knight will have difficulty saying goodbye to.

"I have been really privileged and it's been so exciting," he said. "There are always new things to do and I've been able to see that growth of international mindedness and I'm going to miss all that."

Education Adelaide is a government-funded organisation charged with promoting Adelaide as an education destination.



MAN IN THE MIDDLE: Bob Knight surrounded by some of his international students.

Picture: CHRIS MANGAN