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RETURNING STUDENTS A WIN FOR THE ILLAWARRA ECONOMY

The region's peak business advocacy organisation, Business Illawarra, has welcomed yesterday's announcement by the NSW Government of a pilot plan for the return of international students to NSW over the second half of the year.

"This is a huge win for the Illawarra, as a university region that has benefited significantly from the presence of international students who contribute to our community and our economy," said the Executive Director of Business Illawarra, Adam Zarth.

"The University of Wollongong is a major employer in the Illawarra, responsible for 7,666 full time equivalent jobs locally, providing a significant contribution to the regional and state economy, to the tune of \$1.4 billion in 2018."

"The pandemic has obviously had a severe impact on international student numbers and yesterday's announcement by the State Government is an important step towards getting international students back onshore and supporting the sector's recovery."

"At the end of December 2019, the University of Wollongong had 15,618 international students, approximately half of whom were studying onshore. These numbers dropped off dramatically during the pandemic, with significant flow on effects for the University and the broader Illawarra economy."

"International students are an important part of our economy and provide valuable income for local businesses as well as being an important source of labour. There is a clear multiplier effect from student spending with every \$1 million spent by students generating \$3.2 million elsewhere in the economy."

"The NSW Government's pilot plan to allow up to 250 students back per fortnight from mid-year has the potential to benefit tens of thousands of NSW residents whose jobs rely on this industry across retail, hospitality, tourism and many other sectors."

"We understand that the pilot plan involves accommodating students in purpose-built student accommodation adhering to the same quarantine requirements as all incoming travelers."

"The NSW plan has been submitted to the Federal Government for final review. Business Illawarra strongly supports the plan and commends it to the Federal Government."

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About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation; a not-for-profit advocacy group dedicated to the economic development of the Illawarra.

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