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## Perth underperforming in attracting overseas students

Perth is not attracting enough students from overseas to study and therefore missing out on a significant opportunity to diversify its economy. The findings in the latest FACTBase Bulletin revealed that while Australia's share of the international higher education student market has increased over the past 15 years, WA's share has been in decline.

"The international education and training sector is very important to the local economy. In 2015, it's estimated to have contributed up to \$1.4 billion in total export revenue in the state, which is approximately 8% of the national total. While this is a significant amount of money, it's a lower share than all other states and territories apart from the Northern Territory. There's no doubt we're currently missing out on a significant income stream," said Committee for Perth CEO, Marion Fulker.

"When we look at the total number of overseas students, during the same period, our higher education institutions had only 5% of the total number of international students studying in Australia. and having fewer students, means fewer jobs. Across Australia, the international education sector directly and indirectly generates 128,385 full-time equivalent jobs, while half of these are in New South Wales, only 4% are in Western Australia."

The FACTBase Bulletin is the first to be released as part of the Committee for Perth's two-year research project, Bigger and Better Beyond the Boom. The project will examine industries and to challenge conventional wisdoms and identify strategies for a more economically diverse and robust future.

One of the Bulletin's findings is that despite being geographically closer to China, a larger percentage of Chinese students choose to study in the eastern states.

"WA attracts international students from a diverse range of countries, but Chinese students are under-represented in WA when compared with the Australian average. Two years ago, 14% of WA's international students were from China compared to an average of 26% nationally. More needs to be done to capitalise on our proximity to source countries in Asia," added Mrs Fulker.

On a positive note, Western Australia did have a slightly higher than average proportion of student enrolments from India (12%); Malaysia (7%); Brazil (4%); Taiwan (4%); Hong Kong (3.6%) and Singapore (3%)

Mrs Fulker said there are a number of challenges facing Perth in its bid to attract more overseas students.

"The global international student market is expected to grow over the next 15-20 years, however competition between host countries and cities is also increasing, while Asian countries are encouraging students to study at home. With both of those factors at play, Perth must be more competitive," Mrs Fulker said.

"Overseas students currently rate Perth below other Australian capital cities, describing it as a suburban destination that is second only to Sydney when it comes to the cost of living.

"We need to broaden our offering to attract more overseas students. On top of receiving a quality education in relevant fields like IT, engineering, mining and resources, they're looking for accommodation close to campus, a vibrant nightlife and cultural events, affordable housing, lifestyle and transport options and employment opportunities during and after study. The local economy also benefits to the tune of \$15.5 million dollars every year when family and friends come to visit."

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