

NEW SOUTH WALES-ASIA BUSINESS COUNCIL VISIT TO WOLLONGONG

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The Hon. HENRY TSANG [11.33 p.m.]: On 22 August 2008 I visited Wollongong and the Illawarra with fellow members of the New South Wales-Asia Business Council, the Australian-Asian Business Community, and the Asian media. The purpose of the visit was to discover the potential of the region as a destination for education, innovation, tourism and technology. The delegation visited the University of Wollongong. Vice-Chancellor Professor Gerard Sutton informed the delegation that the university is in the top 2 per cent of the world's leading research universities, is included in the top 500 list, and is ranked as Australia's top university for educational experience and graduate outcomes.

The university has five-star rankings in the categories of research intensity, graduate rating, staff qualifications, getting a job, positive graduate outcomes and graduate starting salaries. The University of Wollongong in Dubai is one of Australia's most successful offshore university operations. The university operates successful transnational education programs in China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia. The delegation also visited the University of Wollongong's new \$500 million innovation campus, which is a creative community centred on research and development, entrepreneurialism, and business growth. The first building has been opened and will form the central services and administration hub of the research and development campus on a beachside location that is just north of the Wollongong central business district.

The three levels of government—State, Federal and local—worked cooperatively to support the university in establishing the innovation campus. Three other major buildings are under construction on the campus, which eventually will have approximately 25 buildings and employ up to 4,000 people, making the campus one of the Illawarra's most significant developments in years. The delegation was pleased to hear from the Minister for the Illawarra, David Campbell, who said that the visit of the New South Wales-Asia Business Council was an opportunity to show that the region's strong and diverse economy was continuing to grow in traditional industry areas as well as in new sectors, such as tourism and education.

The Minister encouraged friendly cooperation between the University of Wollongong and the local Fo Guang Shan Nan Tien Temple to assist in bringing more international students from Taiwan to the university. The two parties are discussing the establishment of pathways for students from Fo Guang and Nan Hua universities in Taiwan to study at the University of Wollongong. There is also a possibility of similar linkages in programs at the Nan Tien Temple to provide pathways to study at the University of Wollongong. I will be travelling to Taiwan in October to further progress the cooperation.

The Illawarra Regional Information Service informed the delegation of the positive business climate in the region. There has been a sharp rise in the value of commercial investment over the last three years. This investment has been directed to education and training, shops, health and entertainment. As a result, not only has there been a dramatic jobs increase in the education sector, which accounted for more than 30 per cent of total jobs growth in 2001-2006, but there has also been diversification of the regional economy. Another good news story has been the tourism sector. There has been strong growth in accommodation revenue and in the number of guest rooms.

The delegation was also interested to hear that the Illawarra Regional Development Board employs an Asian business adviser. This is an initiative by the board and the Department of State and Regional Development in conjunction with the Wollongong City Council and the Illawarra Business Chamber to build reciprocal business networks and opportunities for Illawarra businesses in Asia as well as Asian investment in the Illawarra. At Port Kembla, the Port Kembla Port Corporation briefed the delegation on its planned outer harbour expansion. The New South Wales container shipping market is forecast to grow considerably over the next 20 years. Port Botany will not be able to meet all the requirements of this growth.

Port Kembla is well placed to cater for some of that growth and has well-developed road and rail links with Sydney. The delegation also visited the NRE No. 1 Colliery of Gujarat NRE Minerals Limited. The group

heard about the company's confidence in the Wollongong region and has invested heavily to acquire two more collieries following its initial acquisition of the old South Bulli Colliery in 2004, which was renamed the NRE No. 1 Colliery. The company has a bright future, given India's fast-growing demand for coke and coal.

In conclusion, with the positive publicity of the region being promoted in the Asian media I have no doubt there will be more tourism, students and investment in the future. I thank the Department of State and Regional Development for organising the visit. I also thank all those who participated, my fellow New South Wales-Asia Business Council members, and the Asian media. I congratulate the New South Wales Government and the Minister for the Illawarra, David Campbell, on their hard work in supporting Wollongong and the Illawarra as an education, innovation, tourism and technology destination.

Question—That this House do now adjourn—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.38 p.m. until Thursday 25 September 2008 at 11.00 a.m.