

## Student Spaces Shaping Communities and Cities of The Future

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More and more students are living and studying in Australia, with over 1.5 million international and domestic students now enrolled at Australian Universities, we have experienced an average 4% annual

growth over the past five years<sup>1</sup>. In Victoria alone, we have quarter of a million international enrolments<sup>2</sup>, and International education continues to be one of Australia's most important exports worth \$32.4 billion to the Australian economy in 2017-2018<sup>3</sup>.

While these populations form an important part of our cities and regional communities, they are transient and often disconnected from their embraced societies and cultures. In fact, research indicates that our society at large is reporting increased levels of loneliness and a lack of a sense of connection<sup>4</sup>. These issues can however be particularly acute for students, who are operating in increasingly complex, pedagogical, digital and social worlds. Research conducted by the University of Melbourne has highlighted that student's feel that their campus-based experience lacks 'a sense of connection', with both international and domestic students reporting that they can feel isolated and disconnected.

Further to this, recent research conducted by the Department of Education indicates that Australia stands to gain great social and cultural benefits from international education, including knowledge exchange, an increase in entrepreneurship and global collaboration, with additional benefits stemming

from enhanced cultural literacy and capitals<sup>5</sup>. This coupled with the associated rise in the experience economy (which has seen a shift from traditional consumerism to an increased demand for services that are experienced focused) has resulted in a real desire for these populations to participate and engage fully in Australia's multicultural society.

Within this context, Universities are uniquely positioned to enable students to engage and further understand the societies with in which they are studying by helping to improve their sense of and connection. The New Student Precinct at the University of Melbourne is envisioned to embrace this opportunity, by delivering a highly connected and accessible precinct for the whole campus and Melbourne community.

**Alex Kennedy** has extensive experience in the strategic setting, design and development of complex major capital projects, and brings best practice approaches to Indigenous, environmental, inclusive and user centred design to the University. Alex has been responsible for complex national and international projects and managing relationships with diverse partners, including from corporate, tertiary, cultural and development sectors, as well as philanthropic organisations and donors.

**James Wilson** is a Director of Australian architectural design practice Lyons, and a national leader in the design of 'vertical campuses'. His expertise includes the development of innovative learning environments which create new ways for delivering lectures, discursive thinking, project-based learning, informal 'self-organised' student spaces, simulation environments and places for interactive learning.

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<sup>1</sup> uCube - <http://highereducationstatistics.education.gov.au/Default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/MONTHLY%20SUMMARIES/2019/Jun%202019%20MonthlyInfographic.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp1819/Quick\\_Guides/OverseasStudents](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1819/Quick_Guides/OverseasStudents)

<sup>4</sup> <https://theconversation.com/how-the-digitalisation-of-everything-is-making-us-more-lonely-90870>

<sup>5</sup> <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-papers/Documents/ValueInternationalEd.pdf>