

University opens doors to tourism experiences

By GREG ELLIS

THE growing importance of tourism to the Illawarra economy can be seen in the contribution the University of Wollongong is making to tourism teaching and research.

It started in 2001 when Associate Dean of International and Development in the Faculty of Commerce, associate professor Gary Noble, saw the increasing importance of tourism.

As a result, tourism marketing was developed as a subject offered in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

During the last decade hundreds of students have completed study in tourism-related subjects and many have gained careers as tourism managers internationally and in tourism-related businesses.

Dr Noble said tourism was such a significant industry that the commerce faculty was considering expanding delivery of tourism marketing to the university's South Coast and Southern Highlands education centres, which would give more students the opportunity to study the subject.

Dr Noble said the faculty had many high-profile academics who had undertaken extensive research in the area, such as professors Sara Dolnicar and John Rossiter.

Prof Dolnicar and her colleague Dr Lois Burgess have established international links with tourism researchers from Europe and the United States.

Their research contribution has established the university as a leader in tourism research and a number of tourism studies have been published.

Prof Dolnicar said the focus the university was giving tourism added to Wollongong's profile as a serious player in the industry.

Prof Dolnicar is supervising several PhD and honours students researching tourism.

One of the students is Katie Lazarevski, who is completing a PhD on segmentation of tourism markets.

Ms Lazarevski has received support from Tourism Wollongong general manager Greg Binskin and Novotel Northbeach general manager Walter Immoos.

The university was represented at last month's Council for Australian Tourism and Hospitality Education Conference in Fremantle, where findings from two Wollongong tourism studies were presented.

Ms Lazarevski presented the findings of a study on converting business travellers to leisure travellers by encouraging them to



On their travels: University of Wollongong PhD student Katie Lazarevski and Professor Sara Dolnicar are involved in researching tourism. Picture: DAVE TEASE

return for a family holiday.

The second report related to a study by Masters of Strategic Marketing graduate Monica Millar on the capability and capacity of Wollongong to host conventions.

Prof Dolnicar said there were opportu-

nities for the university's research group to work with government agencies, tourism bodies and local operators which would contribute to the capabilities and prominence of the Illawarra as a tourism destination.

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