

Australian Technology Network

FIVE UNIVERSITIES: ONE VISION



Curtin University
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University of
South Australia



RMIT University



University of Technology,
Sydney



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MEDIA RELEASE

UNIVERSITIES ON THE ROAD TO REFORM - ATN

The Australian Technology Network (*ATN*) has welcomed what it describes as a landmark piece of legislation for the higher education sector, which marks the start of the reform process for Australia's universities.

ATN Convenor and Vice-Chancellor of the Queensland University of Technology, Professor Peter Coaldrake, said the challenge now lies in the implementation of the complex package, in a form that will deliver benefits for all universities, their students and staff.

Professor Coaldrake said the Federal Education Minister, Dr Brendan Nelson, and the four Senate Independents, had demonstrated their commitment to ensuring Australia continues to maintain quality and diversity within its higher education sector.

Professor Coaldrake, has welcomed the additional funding, including that earmarked for the improvement of teaching and learning.

"The ATN represents some 170,000 students and 13,000 staff. After intense negotiation, consultation and compromise, we now have a package that delivers a much better overall deal for our universities, our students, parents and others with a stake in higher education. Whilst we are yet to examine in detail each element of this complex package, the ATN is pleased that amendments were made in those core areas which would have impacted adversely on our students and staff."

These include:

- an increase in the HECS threshold from the Government's proposed \$30,000 to \$36,184 in 2005/06 (up from the current rate of \$24,365);
- The removal of the interest rate on postgraduate loans and the removal of the 3.5% interest rate on undergraduate loans;
- the removal of Commonwealth Learning Scholarship from the social security income test so that students awarded one of these scholarships will not lose their Youth Allowance or Austudy; and
- the removal of the tying of \$404 million to the imposition of Australian Workplace Agreements.

"We support a review of the indexation of higher education funding as a valuable element in the package but we remain concerned about the timing and implementation of such a review if it is to have any meaning in future funding agreements. The ATN will be looking for a review that demonstrates a genuine attempt to better reflect the reality of rising university costs," Professor Coaldrake said.

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