



ATN in PROFILE

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Federal Budget provides building blocks for world class university system

The ATN has hailed the Federal Budget outcomes for universities as the most significant in a decade, providing the building blocks for long lasting reform of the sector and the creation of a world class university system.

ATN Chair, Professor Ross Milbourne, said the initiatives announced in last week's Federal Budget would help shape the future of our universities and Australia's place at the international education table.

"The ATN group of universities, with almost 200,000 students, has long advocated the need for reforms which go to the core of our universities' business – our students, and therefore teaching and learning, and our research capacity," he said.

"This is the first budget which recognises that for Australia to play a major role on the international stage, we had to have a significant boost in funding.

"The Government has addressed the top four priorities as outlined by the Network in our representations to both the Deputy Prime Minister and Senator Kim Carr by providing for indexation, an increase in research infrastructure funding, better outcomes for our students by way of improved income support, and an increase in the value of APA Awards for higher



■ ATN Chair Professor Ross Milbourne

degree students.

"We all understand the difficulties the Government faces in this economic climate and are very supportive of the measures they have announced in this context.

"It also underscores the significant role of our sector in being part of the economic recovery solution.

"Given the diversity in the sector and the scale of international higher education, it is important that there is national certainty about the capacity and quality of the sector in order to ensure a world-class system.

"The Ministers have delivered on that with this budget.

"With one in five Australian university students studying at an ATN university, and one in four international students at an ATN, we will continue to work with Government and stakeholders to deliver Australia a world class university system," he said.

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member universities

- University of South Australia
- Curtin University of Technology
- RMIT University
- University of Technology, Sydney
- Queensland University of Technology



**AUSTRALIAN
TECHNOLOGY
NETWORK**
OF UNIVERSITIES

Migration changes concern for higher ed sector

The recently announced changes to Australia's business skilled migration program has consequences for the higher education sector.

The government has mandated a 14 per cent reduction in the national permanent skilled program intake for the program year ending 30 June 2009.

While the reduction doesn't seem significant, with the expectation that in 2010 more baby boomers will exit the workforce than Gen Ys will enter, immigration becomes the only means to meet large aggregate labour demand in Australia.

So, changes to immigration policy has downstream effects for the higher education sector. As universities strive to attract international students they look to occupations listed as "in-demand" to make strategic decisions about program offerings.



In addition to the lifestyle and cost benefits of studying in Australia, the prize of obtaining permanent residency at the conclusion of their degree is a significant driver of international student numbers – particularly in commerce and IT programs. An equally important issue is academic workforce renewal.

As the academic workforce ages and departs the sector in increasing

numbers over the next 15 years, universities will increasingly rely upon international migration to staff its institutions (as it did in the academic staff recruitment crisis of the 1960s and '70s).

In the period 1993-94 to 2005-06 alone, Australian universities employed more than 7000 academics from overseas on permanent and long-term arrangements. This figure will need to grow exponentially to replace the exodus of academics leaving the workforce in the next 15 years.

While at this stage there are no changes to the student visa program and the pathway from a student visa to General Skilled Migration remains in place, GSM is predominantly driven by Australia's labour market needs and therefore the requirements for permanent residence are subject to change.

ATN to join United Nations global initiative

The ATN has accepted an invitation to join the United Nations Academic Impact initiative.

The program aims to bring into association with the United Nations, institutions of higher learning throughout the world in actively supporting 10 universally-accepted principles in the areas of human rights, literacy, sustainability and conflict resolution.

The initiative is premised on the significant role of higher education in economic and social development as foundations for world peace – ideals strongly supported by all ATN partner institutions.

In a call to arms, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasised the important role that universities have as global citizens.

"Colleges and universities prepare the agents of change – the business, political, social and artistic leaders who define and build economies, societies and cultures," he said.

"Your work addresses, in many ways, the future of our world; and your challenge is, indeed, to educate the next generation of world leaders."

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will formally launch this world-wide project at the United Nations headquarters later this year.

Universities key to future skilling needs

As the group of universities most closely linked to the professions, the ATN has spoken out in support of a national training system underpinned by the principles of flexibility, innovation and better developed pathways between the educational sectors of secondary school, VET and higher education.

It has stressed, however, that the importance of the higher education sector goes beyond a functional skills requirement and extends to developing a broad set of knowledge and capabilities that create "work-ready" graduates across a range of industry sectors.

In its recent response to the Skills Australia paper *Foundations for the Future*, the ATN is in favour of a national governance framework that incorporates regulatory arrangements and quality assurance across training providers. The Australian higher education system should aim to be the best in the world, delivering the world's best-educated people and most innovative, cohesive and sustainable society, and it is necessary

for the sectors to collaborate and coordinate to achieve this goal. The ATN has advocated:

- a national tertiary education agreement between the State and Federal Governments;
- establishment of an independent national regulatory body;
- that state governments undertake appropriate reforms to increase the operational flexibility and autonomy of public providers.

But more importantly, before Skills Australia finalises its proposals, we believe that further engagement with the higher education sector is necessary. Universities are an extremely important part of delivering the kind of skilled workforce needed to support Australian industry.

A National Training System that incorporates the unique role of all education sectors should not be rushed, so that we can ensure a fully unified national vision that is in the best interests of the country.

■ [Read the full submission on the ATN website at www.atn.edu.au](http://www.atn.edu.au)



■ **Professor Coaldrake, pictured speaking at the 2009 ATN Conference, has assumed the role of Chair of Universities Australia.**

ATN Vice Chancellors take up Universities Australia positions

The ATN would like to congratulate Professors Peter Coaldrake and Peter Høj on their recent assumption of Board roles within Universities Australia.

From May 19, Professor Coaldrake, Vice-Chancellor of Queensland University of Technology (QUT), assumed the responsibilities of Chair of Universities Australia. Professor Høj, Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Australia, has been elected to its Board of Directors.

Professor Coaldrake held the position of deputy chair of Universities Australia during 2008. He has been Vice-Chancellor of QUT since 2003, was previously Deputy Vice-Chancellor in the same institution, and prior to that served for four years as chair (CEO) of Queensland's Public Sector Management Commission, the body established by the Goss government to overhaul Queensland's public sector.

He is also a member of the board of The Foundation for Development Cooperation Ltd., was appointed by the Queensland Premier as a Smart State Ambassador in 2006, and is Executive Chair of

Queensland's 2009 Sesquicentenary Celebrations Advisory Board.

Professor Høj has been Vice Chancellor of UniSA since June 2007. Prior to that, he served for two-and-a-half years as CEO of the Australian Research Council. He has been a teaching academic, a professor engaged in high quality research in biochemistry and viticulture, and an industry leader in his former role as the Managing Director of the Australian Wine Research Institute.

He has previously served as a member of the Prime Minister's Science Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) for many years, and is a former member of the Australian Institute of Marine Science Council; the Cooperative Research Centres Committee; the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy Committees; and of the Industry and Technology Council of South Australia, the Premier's Science and Research Council, and the South Australian Wine Industry Council.

■ **Professor Høj, pictured in a panel discussion at the 2009 ATN Conference, has been elected to the Board of Universities Australia**



ATN prepares graduates for work

In a recently released report on graduate outcomes, ATN graduates have been shown to have better employment rates, higher salaries and possess degrees more relevant to their work.

The inaugural Australian Council for Educational Research Graduate Pathways Survey, which involved 9,238 participants from every Australian university, five years after graduation, has released its results by categorising graduates in to five groups (Go8, ATN, IRU, Regional and Metropolitan) and the results indicate support for what we have been saying all along – ATN graduates are better prepared for the workforce.

As soon as they graduate, more ATN graduates see their bachelor degree as relevant for their work and study. While only 61-67 per cent of graduates from other groups one year out of university see their degree as relevant, gradually rising to ~70 per cent after five years, ATN graduates begin at 70 per cent and stay there, illustrating the focus on work-ready graduates that is a hallmark of our members.

Similarly, more ATN graduates find paid work after graduation. While again this is particularly noticeable one year after graduation, with a range of ~79-87 per cent employment between the groups with the ATN at the top, even five years after graduation with employment clustering for all at ~92 per cent, ATN graduates still come out on top.

The study also found that ATN graduates tend to have higher salaries. Starting salaries for ATN graduates are at a median of \$40,000, rising to \$64,000 after five years. In comparison, starting salaries for other groups range between \$35,000 - 40,000 at graduation, rising to \$56,000 - \$63,000 after five years. Whilst this may in part be due to our discipline profile, we believe that the ATN's imparting of practical job skills also gives our graduates a kick-start on their careers.

"The ATN has always focused on preparing our students to enter the mainstream workforce," Professor Ross Milbourne, ATN Chair, commented.

"That's the university role on which we have always been focused, along with applied research that has direct implications for business and industry.

"While we've always known we have been successful in that goal, this type of independent verification is always gratifying to see."

ATN Assessment Conference 2009: Assessment in Different Dimensions

19 - 20 November 2009 RMIT University, Melbourne

The ATN Assessment Conference 2009 is now accepting submissions for papers and other contributions to the conference. This conference will explore different dimensions of assessment – different needs and objectives, contexts and approaches, practices and tools of assessment. Participants will share practices which are demonstrably effective, contributing to the scholarship of assessment and engaging with communities of academics and teachers, students and employers.

Conference keynote speakers will be posing challenges and offering ideas for practice and policy associated with the key themes:

- Dr Chris Rust, Oxford Brookes University
- Professor Geoffrey Crisp, University of Adelaide
- Professor Jan Herrington, Murdoch University

Papers can undergo a full double blind peer review process meeting DEEWR standards or may be submitted as non-peer reviewed.

Lodge an abstract at www.emedia.rmit.edu.au/atnassessment09/
Submissions close June 24, 2009.

Developing the Knowledge Economy Conference: Partnering for innovation and the sustainability of our economy

4-5 August 2009 Woodward Centre, University of Melbourne

Get involved and contribute to discussions on the development of the knowledge economy as the preferred solution for improving Australia's overall economy. By attending this symposium, you will join forward-thinking business, community, education and government stakeholders aiming to promote the significance of knowledge engagement activities-known as the "third stream"- in terms of enriching our culture and our way of life.

The conference will provide you with:

- A global economic outlook on the knowledge economy
- International perspectives on the meaning of "third stream activities"
- Ways to develop a sustainable economy with "knowledge" at the centre
- Views on public policy & partnerships with government
- A discussion concerning rural communities & the significance of third stream activities
- Case studies on facilitating knowledge transfer activities
- Sessions on successfully developing knowledge sectors through third stream activities in the current economic downturn

ATN members are entitled to a 10 per cent discount on registration for this event. Download a detailed program and ATN registration form from our website.



member universities

University of South Australia

Curtin University of Technology

RMIT University

University of Technology, Sydney

Queensland University of Technology

www.atn.edu.au

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

FINDING SOLUTIONS



THE Australian Technology Network brings together five of the most innovative and enterprising universities in the nation.

We are committed to forging partnerships with industry and government to deliver practical results through focused research.

We educate graduates who are ready to enter their chosen profession, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and eager to claim a stake in building sustainable societies of the future.

ATN universities teach around 180,000 students, or almost 20 % of Australia's student population. With 1 in 4 international students choosing to study at an ATN university, we are also the largest provider of international education, both with our onshore and offshore students.

The ATN's aim is to help secure Australia's reputation as the clever country, and contribute to its social and economic wealth, while championing the principles of access and equity that have ensured its members are the universities of first choice for more students.

- For more information about the ATN, our organisation and activities, please visit our web site at www.atn.edu.au

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