

18 August 2010

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Research workforce must be supported – ATN**

The **Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN)** says today's announcement from the Coalition of increased funding for the Research Training Scheme is a small step in the right direction towards research workforce renewal.

However the ATN, which has recently called for a new visa category to be introduced targeting quality International research students and research-qualified immigrants so that they are attracted to Australian Universities to study and settle as researchers in Australia, says much more is needed to curb what is now a crisis in the academic workforce.

ATN Executive Director, Vicki Thomson says it is not widely understood that Australia is running out of researchers and that urgent action is needed to address a critical shortage both for the private sector and for University teaching.

"The RTS, which is the mechanism by which universities fund the education of our research graduates, is a crucial element to addressing this shortage. We have previously called for a substantial increase in the RTS fund as an interim measure to support the increase in supply of doctoral graduates required to support the national research and innovation agenda in the next decade.

"Today's announcement represents a less than 1 per cent increase in the scheme – so clearly there is still a long way to go."

The ATN is also supportive of the new International Science Initiative to support Australia's bilateral and multilateral science relationships.

"Within that fund we would like to see a specific initiative to support linkages between Australia and China. The research environment is a highly competitive one and at a time when other nations are increasing their profile and financial commitment in China, the absence of a dedicated fund is both short sighted and contrary to government rhetoric on the significance of China as a major partner.

"It's worth noting that a survey commissioned by Universities Australia and conducted by Nielson on the attitudes of Australian voters towards universities found that 84 percent viewed applied research as either a very important or important core function of the sector.

The ATN would like to see this level of support in the community matched by the same commitment from all political parties to Australia's research and innovation economy," Ms Thomson said.

*Further information: Vicki Thomson 0417 808 472*

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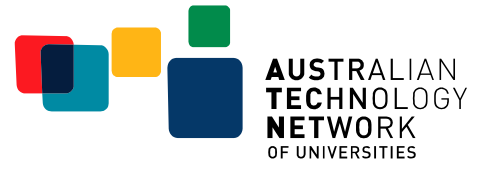
**Queensland  
University  
of Technology**

Chancellery  
GPO Box 2471  
Adelaide  
SA 5001

Tel +61 8 8302 9132  
Fax +61 8 8302 0943

[www.atn.edu.au](http://www.atn.edu.au)

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