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## **ATN supports a world class university system for Australia - not a system which picks favourites**

The **Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN)** has reiterated its commitment to a globally competitive Australia, but warns that this cannot be achieved through a narrow focus on a handful of world class universities at the expense of a world class university system.

ATN Chair, Professor Jeanette Hackett, said reported comments by the Shadow Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne regarding concentration of university research funding ignores the fact that we should aim for **Australia** to be a winner on the research and innovation front.

“Australia needs research capacity in many areas which is beyond the possibility even collectively of a few Universities, and we need a large network of researchers across Australia in a diverse range of fields.

“Policy driving the development of the university sector needs to reflect the complexity of the demands placed upon the university system in terms of delivering outcomes both domestically and on a globally competitive stage. The key elements of such policy are to support a system that is forward looking, rewards growing capacity to match that of our international competitors, and is dynamic in rewarding research excellence wherever it occurs,” Professor Hackett said.

“The 2010 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative demonstrated the breadth and range of innovation taking place in Australian universities and that research excellence specialities are widely distributed. In particular, ERA showed that institutions who do not necessarily have the advantage of age do have the advantage of being able to grow rapidly the capacity in excellence necessary for international competitiveness. For example, University of South Australia was one of only two Australian universities to get a top score in the field of chemistry.

“Indeed, in the recent 2010 ERA exercise, 68% of research rated at or world class was conducted across 31 of Australia’s universities.”

“Across the ATN, despite our member institutions being less than 30 years old, ERA recognised that in a short period of time we produced world class research in 83 different research disciplines. As a group of universities the ATN has cooperative world class networks in chemical sciences, nursing, applied mathematics and language, communication and culture - all areas critical to developing our national skills and research base. ERA also assessed the ATN as possessing world leading research capacity in physical and analytical chemistry, geology, information systems, sports science, nursing, applied economics and media studies.”

“Rapid growth in performance is also reflected in the ATN performance in university rankings systems which traditionally favour older institutions. Three ATN universities are in the top 400 in the Times Higher Education Supplement rankings and two, Curtin and UTS, are in the top 500 of the Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai Jiao Tong index). In the other major global university rankings system run by Quacquarelli-Symonds (QS) the ATN also performed strongly. In particular, all five universities feature in the

top 300 in overall ranking, and 4 of the ATN universities are in the world top 200 for each of 4 engineering subjects and 3 for computer science and information systems. RMIT ranks in the world top 150 and the Australian top 10 for all 5 subjects and QUT ranks in the top 150 for 4 subjects and in the top 200 for the 5th subject.

“While the ATN is proud of its rankings performance, which is a clear indication of having forged world class reputations both academically and with graduate employers, it is always cautious about placing too much weight on particular rankings.”

“Beyond what rankings can measure the ATN has an engagement focus that sees it deliver benefits directly to the Australian community. As two examples the ATN is in partnership with half of the industry focussed Cooperative Research Centres and trains more than a third of Australia’s future mining and energy graduates who will drive Australia’s future prosperity,” Professor Hacket said.

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