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FUNDING REVIEW PROMISING BASIS ON WHICH TO ACT

The **Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN)** says a review into funding of Australian Universities provides the ground work for successive Governments to ensure a globally competitive university system which is underpinned by a sustainable funding model.

However ATN Chair and Vice Chancellor of Curtin University, Professor Jeanette Hacket, said the challenge now will be determining priorities for funding in what are difficult budget circumstances.

“Given the significant growth that will occur under a student centred higher education system and the demands of growing and renewing the academic workforce, a strong commitment for the next two decades and beyond is required from all stakeholders – government, industry, the professions and universities - to ensure we have a sustainable, world class university system,” Professor Hacket said.

“The big challenge of the report is not so much with its contents. The challenge becomes one for Government to act on its recommendations and achieve its implementation.

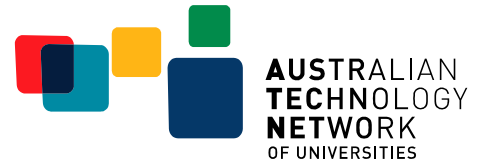
“The ATN is mindful of the growth in funding to the university sector by the government and would welcome further commitment, and a funding environment, that would enable early action towards many of the report’s recommendations. More investment in funding for teaching towards globally competitive funding levels, infrastructure funding and demand driven SES loading will be high priorities for ATN universities,” Professor Hacket said.

The report has identified that in a demand driven system that *‘it is more important that costs of course delivery match funding’* and that several clusters are underfunded. The ATN supports higher funding levels for identified clusters and will be examining the proposed compression of cluster bands as well as the staged implementation of the 40:60 contributions by fields of study.

“The concept of moving to 40:60 ‘in a sequence of smaller steps’ for students who will pay more and freezing the student contributions for courses where students will pay less and grandfathering arrangements for current students seem to have considerable merit. However the potential impact on areas of low demand but high importance to the nation’s skills, including science, need to be examined,” Professor Hacket said.

Amongst the issues on which the ATN looks forward to further consultation are

- the level of supplementation proposed for ‘base research capability’ - proposed as 6-10%;
- The level of supplementation proposed for ‘scholarship’ – no additional provision made;
- the level of supplementation proposed for ‘contemporary learning spaces’ – approx. 2% suggested;
- the most effective means of ensuring retention and completion, for those elements of the student experience within the ‘control’ of universities;



There are several areas of additional study recommended in the report including in relation to clinical placements and education practicums and the ATN has a strong interest in this, given its considerable student load in nursing and teaching.

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