

30 November 2011

## **ATN commends strategic nature of belt-tightening in Higher Education**

The **Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN)** commends the Government for the strategic manner in which it has implemented savings in the Higher Education sector.

ATN Chair, Jeanette Hackett, said she was “optimistic” that the cuts announced as part of MYEFO would not affect the ability of the ATN universities – and the sector as a whole – to deliver quality teaching and learning outcomes for the Australian community.

“While the ATN would prefer that funds were redirected within the education sector rather than withdrawn, the ATN is also mindful of the scale of cuts that the government has sought and acknowledges that two less effective portfolio initiatives – lower student contributions for maths and science and Reward Funding relating to student experience and learning outcomes – have been targeted for cuts.”

“As a technology based network of universities the ATN is committed to increasing the number of maths and science graduates in the Australian workforce. However, the funding of lower HECS contributions by maths and science students has not been effective in attracting students, with no substantial increase in the number of students enrolling in maths and science since 2009.”

“The ATN believes that a better option for recruiting students to these fields is by innovative training and enhanced career options – as will be provided by the new ATN Doctoral Training Centre in Mathematics and Statistics, an initiative part funded by the Government through DIISR.”

“Equity in access to Higher Education is also part of the mission of the ATN and as such we were pleased to see the retention of Reward Funding for universities to lift the participation of Australians from low socio-economic backgrounds and other under-represented groups.”

In a positive funding outcome for Higher Education the Government has announced that student visa application fees will decrease by 5 per cent from 1 January 2012.

Professor Hackett said that she was “delighted” by the announcement.

“There is a degree of uncertainty regarding enrolment levels for international students in 2012, given the global financial situation, the continuing high level of the Australian dollar and increasing competition from the US and UK. This visa fee reduction by the Government is very welcome as recognition of the need to maintain our competitive position in international education and to support its further development.”