

22 September 2017

Department of Immigration and Border Protection  
6 Chan St  
Belconnen ACT 2617

To whom it may concern

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (**ATN**) welcomes the opportunity to convey its views and recommendations on pending visa reforms and to assist the Department of Immigration and Border Protection in its review of Australia's visa system and the requirements surrounding visa simplification. The ATN is also supportive of Universities Australia's (UA) position on visa simplification.

The ATN is a national collaborative group of five major universities: RMIT University, Queensland University of Technology, University of Technology Sydney, University of South Australia and Curtin University.

The ATN universities have a strong international focus and overseas profile with the five universities comprising a significantly greater proportion of international students than all other Australian universities. As a network, we educate 20 per cent of Australia's domestic students and 22 per cent of international students.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (**ASB**) estimates that international education accounts for \$18.8 billion in Australia's total export revenue in 2014, making international education Australia's third largest export industry and Australia's largest services export. International education is a crucial element of the Australian economy and requires a visa system that is effective, efficient, and responsive to the dynamic nature of the higher education sector.

The sector is unique and delivers not only skilled graduates and research to earmark Australia on the international stage but also through direct contribution to the demand for goods and services. Furthermore, Universities are neither for profit, nor a charity. The most valuable asset of the Australian university sector is its people and we require a visa system that allows Australia's skilled workforce and collaborative research capability to flourish.

The ATN supports the notion of simplification in the visa system and recommends that the system remains responsive, transparent, and flexible in determining the number of sub-classes that remain after the simplification process.

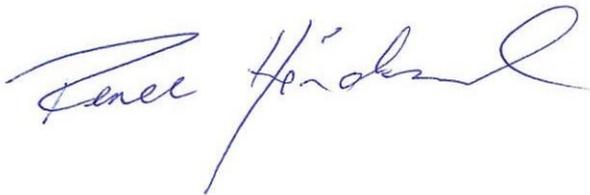
[atn.edu.au](http://atn.edu.au)

World-class research relies on attracting the best researchers in the world, particularly if Australia is to realise the aims of the National Innovation and Science Agenda. All Australian universities compete for the best academic talent world-wide to further grow our research capacity and cement our reputation as world-class institutions. ATN universities have been recognised for their research excellence across a range of discipline areas. 93 per cent of ATN research is ranked at world-class or above. The ATN are also leading participants in Australia's Cooperative Research Centres linking government, industry and researchers. ATN universities are committed to high quality research that contributes practical solutions to real-world challenges, yet we need a system where we can continue to attract the best and brightest.

Recognising that innovation is vital to future economic prosperity, universities are critical to achieving the goal of becoming a top tier innovation nation which is known for excellence in science, research and commercialisation. ATN seeks clear and stable visa arrangements for international academic staff that provide secure and long-term working conditions that are internationally competitive and attractive. The lack of security surrounding high value academics presents a disincentive to academics that weakens Australia's position as a world-leading provider of education and hub for innovation.

The Australian Technology Network of Universities welcomes visa simplification and the opportunity to clearly delineate between legitimate global academic interchange and education providers that take advantage of Australia's enthusiasm for higher education. The international sector of Australian education has an important role to play in the continued growth, prosperity, and dynamism of the Australian economy. The ATN wishes to work constructively with Government to enhance this role in a framework that is fair, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the Australian economy.

Kind regards



Renee Hindmarsh