

MONDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2024

## **STATEMENT FROM PROFESSOR DUNCAN BENTLEY, VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT OF FEDERATION UNIVERSITY**

*Following the release of university International Student Profiles (ISPs) by the Commonwealth Government to the Senate Committee on Education and Employment, Federation University Australia notes the potential inadvertent impact these proposed reforms may have on our university's sustainability.*

*Federation University remains committed to delivering a vibrant international student program that meets the skills needs of regional Victoria, enriches our learning environment, and supports the sustainability of its campuses across Ballarat, Berwick, Gippsland and the Wimmera. International students should know that they are welcome in regional Victoria.*

*The Commonwealth Government's proposed ISP for Federation University stands at just 1,100 international student commencements for 2025. If this is put in place by the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, our ISP would be just half a per cent of the 270,000 international student commencements allocated to universities for next year, and less than half of our university's international student commencements in both 2022 and 2023.*

*I have negotiated in good faith with the Commonwealth Government and emphasised that basing Federation's ISP on 2024 international student commencements does not represent a true recovery to the post-COVID levels of 2022 and 2023.*

*As I have stated previously, this is neither fair nor sustainable and does not consider that our 2024 enrolments were kept deliberately low to comply with new visa settings relating to the soon-to-be-revoked Ministerial Direction 107.*

*Federation's ISP does not reflect the regional skill shortages we are helping to address, our available student housing or cost of living pressures in the regions – all justifications for the National Planning Level and the imposing of International Student Profiles on public universities.*

*I have met with the Victoria Minister for Skills and TAFE, the Hon Gayle Tierney MP, and also advised the state Treasurer, the Hon Tim Pallas MP, on the possible implications of Federation's proposed ISP.*

*Throughout this process, our position has been that any new reforms must be equitable and provide a foundation that supports the long-term sustainability of our institution and support regional development. In its current form, the proposal does not achieve this.*

*We will continue to work with all levels of government to ensure a solution can be found that does not impact our university's sustainability and ensures that we can continue to provide invaluable support to our regional, rural and outer metropolitan communities, now and into the future.*