

TUESDAY, 14 MAY 2024

FEDERATION UNIVERSITY SUPPORTS A PRIORITY SKILLS INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ARRANGEMENT

On Monday, 13 May 2024 the Vice-Chancellor of Federation University Australia, Professor Duncan Bentley, wrote to the Commonwealth Minister for Education and Minister for Home Affairs proposing a regional student skills visa to complement announced reforms to Australia's international education sector.

Introducing this visa now will provide universities with the opportunity to develop new offerings to attract overseas students from diverse markets – like South East Asia and South America – with the opportunity to undertake higher education studies aligned to the skills needs of regional Australia.

Under the proposed visa, international students are prioritised if they undertake university programs that favour industry placements in areas where there are domestic skill gaps.

This offers the opportunity for these students to gain experience working in leading industries that are emerging in the Australian labour market where there have been issues attracting domestic workers – this includes fields like renewable energy, new mineral use, battery manufacturing and cybersecurity.

This directly addresses the Universities Accord and Commonwealth Government's call for a more skills orientated international student program. It will see skill gaps that have inhibited economic growth in the regions addressed in a long-term sustainable way that will create opportunities for our domestic graduates and attract more talent into the regions.

In addition to this, if adapted, the proposed visa requires international students to use student accommodation to avoid cost of living pressures and offers successful students work opportunities to work with placement partners during non-study periods or part-time in their final year, to maximise their prospect of successful employment.

Implementing this visa in the near future will ensure universities are ready for the introduction of the proposed reforms to Australia's international education sector – regional universities can pursue the exciting opportunities these reforms offer to play a significant role in sharing in the collaborative upskilling of Australia's strategic partners in the region.

Federation University is working in close partnership with employers to develop opportunities that target key roles where they have struggled to fill roles domestically.

This follows Federation's long-term planning and work to introduce a Co-Operative Education Model that co-designs, co-develops, and co-delivers courses and placements with industry – Federation is excited to welcome the expansion of this model into its international student program.

This proposal is part of a suit of innovative solutions Federation University is working with the Commonwealth Government on to support the Universities Accord's recommendations with a regional and skills focused significance.

Quotes attributable to Federation University Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Duncan Bentley

“Federation University welcomes the certainty the recently announced reforms on international education offer to regional universities. A priority skills regional student visa is an innovative solution to allow us to recruit overseas students who want the best opportunity to succeed in Australia’s cutting-edge industries that are affected by domestic skill shortages.”

“Managed immigration is pivotal to ensuring we have equal economic opportunities for everyone in our community – this is evident in the outer metropolitan and regional communities Federation serves – and we believe focusing on skilled student migration connected to local employees strikes the right balance in easing cost of pressure and create the greatest prospect for productive long-term migration in our communities.”

“Getting started with a priority skills regional student visa under the existing student migration system smoothens the way for comprehensive reforms – it means universities can collaborate with their industry and local government partners to offer programs that will be proven, sustainable and demonstrate the greatest return for the community.”

About Federation University Australia

With a history spanning over 150 years, Federation University Australia is Victoria’s premier regional dual-sector university with campuses located in Ballarat, Berwick, Gippsland, and Wimmera. From 2018-2023 Federation ranked first in Australia for first-generation student enrolments. In a first for Australia, the globally recognised co-operative education model will be embedded across all Federation programs from 2026.