

FRIDAY, 22 MARCH 2024

FEDERATION UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES MAJOR TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE TO DRIVE LONG-TERM GROWTH

Federation University Australia today announced a major transformation program – Future Fed – designed to put the university on a strong and sustainable financial footing and position it to better meet the needs of regional communities in Victoria.

Future Fed will bring about a streamlined and contemporary operating model for Federation that removes duplication and red tape and allows for strengthened investment in the student experience, technology, high-quality teaching and research, and an expansion of regional industry partnerships under the university’s innovative Co-operative Education Model.

The program responds to the ongoing decline in student numbers being experienced across the higher education sector since the onset of Covid-19 which has been exacerbated by unexpected but necessary changes to international student visa arrangements.

The number of international students attending Federation fell by 49% between 2019 and 2023, causing a drop of \$79.1 million in the university’s revenue.

The Future Fed transformation targets annual cost savings of \$20 million in 2024 in a bid to return to an operating surplus from 2026. As a first step Federation has today invited staff to express interest in a voluntary redundancy process.

Federation University Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Duncan Bentley, said: “Since Covid-19, the environment for Australian universities has become more challenging and Federation is no different. As a public university, we have an obligation to ensure we operate sustainably and are generating sufficient surpluses to reinvest in students, staff, and teaching and research.

“Our transformation requires difficult decisions - we acknowledge the impact of these on our people and communities and we will be doing everything we can to support them through the process.

“The decisions are necessary for us to strengthen investment in the strategies that set Federation apart and underpin our long-term growth.

“Central among these is our co-operative learning model – getting students work-ready through direct connection to employers, paid placements, career preparation and workplace skill development,” he said.

With campuses in Ballarat, the Wimmera, Gippsland and Berwick, Federation is the leading regional university in Victoria. Under the co-op model, Federation offers vocational and higher education courses in partnership with employers and industry groups in disciplines including nursing, allied health, education, IT, renewable energy, engineering and conservation science.

The Australian Universities Accord Final Report launched last month recommends partnerships with industry to fill critical skills shortages as a key priority for regional universities.

“Federation has a unique and powerful role supporting the development of regional Victorian communities. The Future Fed transformation will provide the foundation necessary for us to seize the mantle as the natural university of choice for regional Victoria,” Professor Bentley said.

Federation continues to work closely with the Commonwealth Government to explore appropriate models for attracting talented international students and the contribution they make to diverse student bodies and local economies.

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 number one 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.