

FRIDAY, 30 AUGUST 2024

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

Federation University Australia acknowledges the Commonwealth Government's proposed National Planning Level and its intent to create a fair and sustainable system for recruiting international students.

While I welcome the intent of the proposed reforms, in the case of Federation University our proposed 2025 International Student Profile (ISP) is neither fair nor sustainable.

Today I spoke with the Department of Education, emphasising that Federation's ISP should be based on the number of our international student commencements in 2023, as is the case for other universities whose international student commencements decreased between 2019 and 2023.

Instead, I was informed that our 2025 ISP is set on a formula related to our 2024 levels. This is an unfair distinction applied to our university which 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 University was the only institution required to take such extreme action for its 2024 intake, under the close direction of the Department of Home Affairs. While we commend the withdrawal of this direction as part of recent reforms, it is crucial that its lasting impacts do not hinder our sustainability.

I share the concerns of the Treasurer of Victoria, the Hon Tim Pallas MP, about the potential damage the National Planning Level could cause if not implemented fairly. I thank the Treasurer for advocating for a careful consideration of these reforms.

I also extend my gratitude to the Victorian Minister for Skills and TAFE, the Hon Gayle Tierney MP, for her support for Federation University and Federation TAFE, as well as our work to meet critical skill shortages in nursing, education, technology and engineering across our campuses in Ballarat, Berwick, Gippsland and the Wimmera.

Federation University's approach to vocational and higher education has made us the number one university in Australia for first-in-family enrolments for the past six years. This highlights the key role our university, and regional universities in general, continue to have in helping the Commonwealth Government achieve its target of raising tertiary education attainment among the working population to 80 per cent by 2050.

I will continue to advocate strongly to the Commonwealth Government that future reforms to international student recruitment should support our mutual objectives of addressing key skills shortages and increasing post-secondary attainment levels in our rural, regional, and outer metropolitan communities.