

## ATN Universities a key driver for Government's employment roadmap

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Long-held Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) ideas around skills and teaching and learning are key planks of the policy proposals in the Employment White Paper released today by Treasurer Jim Chalmers.

ATN is the leading group of universities for skills development and teaching and learning innovation and we are pleased that our recommendations form an integral part of the Albanese Government's plan to deliver a highly skilled and highly productive Australian workforce.

With almost every job in the future economy requiring VET, TAFE or university qualifications, Australia should move to a system of universal access to post-secondary education to ensure that every Australian has the skills they need to fully participate in our future workforce and economy.

ATN Executive Director, Luke Sheehy, has welcomed the White Paper's policy ideas of a National Skills Passport, fast-tracking TAFE Centres of Excellence and developing higher apprenticeships.

"The policy ideas in the White Paper are central to building a more collaborative and innovative post-secondary system which will accelerate the cooperation between TAFE and unis," Mr Sheehy said.

"Australia will unlock the potential of our people if we ensure universal access to post-secondary education and this will require the development of new qualifications and skills which are both portable and flexible.

"People should be able to choose whatever mix of technical, practical and transferable skills they need to succeed from a range of shorter and longer form courses offered by a mix of universities, TAFEs and other providers. As the leaders in learning and teaching innovation, ATN universities will have a key place in delivering these skills.

"Through our partnership with the Tech Council, we have seen clearly how valuable a skills passport would be to industry and workers. That's why we developed a proposal for a tech skills passport to better connect people with skills and job opportunities. Through the TAFE Centres of Excellence there is a valuable opportunity to develop and pilot new ways of skills development before scaling up. The Government should consider rolling out the passport alongside the Centres in the tech, caring and net zero sectors, as a priority."

As Ai Group and ATN outlined in our pre-election statement, we need adaptive and innovative solutions to fill skills gaps in priority areas, such as short courses to upskill qualified overseas workers, recognition and portability of short courses to transfer existing workers into priority jobs, and preferential migration pathways.

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ATN's submission to the Employment White Paper recommended full implementation of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Review to better serve the skills needs of Australians, through stronger cooperation and exchange between higher education, VET and industry and more coherent strategies for lifelong learning, through shorter credentials and innovative education.

"The bigger, better educated and more productive workforce envisaged by the Employment White Paper will start with a more comprehensive, more adaptable and better organised post-secondary education system. A more modern, fit-for-purpose and responsive qualifications system will be the bedrock on which this is built," Mr Sheehy added.

"We look forward to working closely with government, the university sector and industry to also ensure we build the best possible National Skills Passport system."

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**The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN)** was established in 1999 and brings together six of Australia's leading universities focused on enterprise, impact and finding solutions to issues facing our rapidly changing economy and society. Our member universities are Curtin University, Deakin University, RMIT University, The University of Newcastle, University of South Australia, and University of Technology Sydney. Our universities produce Australia's most job-ready graduates and undertake world-class research with real-world impact. Through our innovation and leadership, we are proud disruptors challenging the status quo. ATN universities provide world-class education to almost 310,000 students and teach 20 per cent of domestic higher education students, along with 19 per cent of international students and we are the fastest-growing university grouping in terms of domestic students. Together, we are proud of who we include, not exclude, with a strong commitment to equity, excellence, and social justice. ATN is one of Australia's leading university peak bodies with a track record of advocating and shaping positive policy outcomes with all levels of government.