

ATN AND IRU UNIVERSITIES ARE UNITING FOR THE FIRST TIME TO CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THREE CHALLENGES:

- 1. Australia's skills and labour shortages**
- 2. Increasing access and participation in higher education**
- 3. Closing the Gap for First Nations Australians.**

The Australian Government needs to prioritise the role of universities in responding to these challenges. Together with government and industry, universities will prepare Australia for the technological, demographic and global shifts of the 21st century.

To enable future job creation and the post-COVID recovery, a high-quality post-school education will need to remain open to all Australians to meet the needs of our economy and society.

The skills crisis we face

To accelerate our recovery from the pandemic and meet the challenges and opportunities ahead, we will need a more highly skilled and educated workforce across the country.

We will need almost a million new people in the workforce by 2025. Nine out of ten of these people will require a post-school education and over half of them will require a university level education.

Particular skills shortages exist in the digital, technology, healthcare and education sectors, and these are all areas where our universities play a central role in training the future workforce.

All Australians will need access to a post-school education so they can fully participate in society and secure the new and emerging jobs being created.

While participation in university has improved over recent decades, more needs to be done to ensure the benefits are more evenly shared across all communities and regions in Australia.

Our challenge to the major parties in this election year is clear: we seek a clear plan for how the next government will work with universities and industry to solve this skills crisis and improve access to university education for Australians across the nation.

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CHALLENGE 1: AUSTRALIA'S SKILLS AND LABOUR SHORTAGES

Australia is experiencing the impact of major skills and labour shortages. If we are to ensure a strong economic and social recovery, we need government, businesses and universities to play their role in skilling Australians.

KEY FACTS



74 per cent more job vacancies than before the pandemic – almost 400,000 in total ¹



Over a fifth of businesses currently have job vacancies ²



Almost half of businesses have vacancies due to increased work and over a quarter because of expansion ³



57 per cent of recruiting businesses are having trouble finding staff ⁴



Businesses outside of capital cities are experiencing more difficulties in recruiting staff ⁵



Businesses struggle more when recruiting for higher skilled occupations ⁶



60,000 vacancies in health care and social assistance ⁷



46,000 vacancies in accommodation and food services ⁸



37,000 vacancies in professional, scientific and technical services ⁹



30,000 vacancies in manufacturing ¹⁰

- Occupations in national shortage with strong future demand include accountants, auditors, planners, engineers, agricultural consultants, medical and health professionals, psychologists, IT specialists – most require a university level education ¹¹
- Jobs growth in the five years to 2025 will be highest in health care and social assistance (250,000 jobs), accommodation and food services (140,000 jobs), professional, scientific and technical services (130,000 jobs) and education and training (120,000 jobs) ¹²
- Jobs growth in the five years to 2025 will be highest in professional occupations (440,000 jobs) ¹³
- Jobs in STEM are predicted to growth twice as fast as non-STEM jobs (13 per cent) ¹⁴

ATN AND IRU ARE CALLING ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT:

- Post-school education can meet the short and long-term needs of the national economy, local communities and the aspirations of all Australians
- Universities are part of the skills solution and are prioritised alongside vitally important investments in VET and apprenticeships
- Government supports innovative models of collaboration between universities and the VET sector and university start-up/incubator programs that drive job creation
- Priority growth sectors, including health care, manufacturing and defence, are not limited by the supply of skills
- Funding systems are fit-for-purpose and keep pace with labour market needs and demographic change.



CHALLENGE 2: ENABLING JOB CREATION THROUGH ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

There is nothing more important than giving all Australians, regardless of their background, the opportunity for an education and a good job. For almost everyone this will require a post-school qualification, so more Australians from outer suburban and regional areas will need a fair go.

KEY FACTS

Rates of post-school attainment vary considerably across the country ¹⁵



Upper Hunter Shire
38 per cent

North Sydney
68 per cent



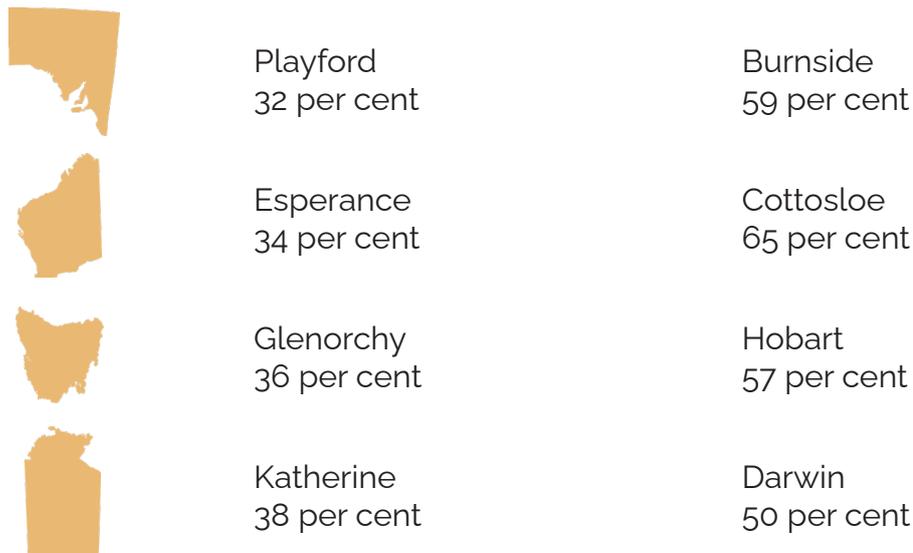
Corangamite
35 per cent

Yarra
62 per cent



Lockyer Valley
35 per cent

Brisbane
54 per cent



A university education provides a foundation for a life of learning and working, but some are missing out on this opportunity.

- Gains in university participation rates for low-income students have stagnated at around 18 per cent in 2019, short of the overall population target
- Regional and remote participation rates have been in steady decline since at least 2011, declining to 20 per cent in 2019.

ATN and IRU universities play a critical role in providing opportunities for these students. With campuses spread across growing cities and suburbs around Australia, and leading online programs, our universities have higher participation rates for first-in-family, low-income, regional, remote and First Nations students.

ATN AND IRU ARE CALLING ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE ALL AUSTRALIANS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED IN WORK BY:

- Ensuring universities have enough fully funded places to supply local and regional businesses with the skilled graduates they need to grow and create more jobs for a diverse range of Australians.
- Targeting additional funding for places at universities that are serving a broader, more diverse range of students like regional, first-in-family and low-income students
- Recognising the role of businesses, universities and the Government working together to support the creation of highly skilled and secure job.



CHALLENGE 3: CLOSING THE GAP FOR FIRST NATIONS AUSTRALIANS

There is no more effective way to Close the Gap than by providing access to post-school education for all First Nations Australians. This is priority for all governments, and education is the right way to address disadvantage in a long-term, sustainable and targeted way.

KEY FACTS

- 42 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 25-34 years had completed non-school qualifications (certificate III or above) in 2016
- Significant progress will be needed to reach the Closing the Gap target of 70 per cent completion by 2031¹⁶
- 35 per cent of employers suggested that further education and training would improve Indigenous employment prospects¹⁷

ATN AND IRU ARE CALLING ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO CLOSE THE GAP BY:

- Ensuring that the third of First Nations Australians living in metropolitan areas have the same access to a place in higher education as those living in regional and remote areas
- Supporting universities that are committed to cultural support for inclusion and success.

ATN AND IRU UNIVERSITIES COMMIT TO:

- **Working closely with government and industry to provide places** in key priority disciplines and key geographic regions in order to meet skills needs. We will prepare students for successful careers by ensuring opportunities to work with industry whilst they study. We will provide a pipeline of graduates ready to meet the needs of the Australian economy and meet the emerging, medium and long-term needs of industry and society.
- **Using university connections with industry** to ensure that what we teach and how we teach students keeps up with the day to day on the job demands of industry and small to medium enterprises. This will include short courses, stackable credentials, inclusive learning pathways and stronger industry ties.
- **Working with the Government to pursue excellence and equity** ensuring no Australian misses out on the opportunity of getting a job or an education in a rapidly changing economy. Universities will redouble our outreach to ensure we provide programs ensuring valuable pathways into learning and upskilling for First Nations students, first-in-family students, regional students and mature-aged students.

ABOUT US

Together, ATN and IRU are 14 leading universities with campuses across all mainland states and territories. We are research-intensive universities with a commitment to innovation and inclusive excellence – defining success by those we include, not exclude.

Our universities make world class research and education accessible and relevant to our communities. Alongside our commitment to excellence, we deliver solutions and skilled graduates that are meaningful to our people, communities and industries.

We are united by our innovation and enterprise.



OUR 14 UNIVERSITIES:

- Educate 40 per cent of all domestic undergraduate students
- Open access to higher education, with almost half of all our students the first in their families to attend university
- Lead higher education for First Nations students – we educate 42 per cent of First Nations students
- Lead through inclusive excellence – we educate 44 per cent of students from low-SES backgrounds
- Support students across Australia – we educate 36 per cent of students from regional and remote areas

ENDNOTES

- 1 [ABS, Job Vacancies, Australia \(November 2021\)](#)
- 2 [ABS, Job Vacancies, Australia \(November 2021\)](#)
- 3 [ABS, Job Vacancies, Australia \(November 2021\)](#)
- 4 [Australian Government, Labour Market Informational Portal, Employers' Recruitment Insights](#)
- 5 [Australian Government, Labour Market Informational Portal, Trends in vacancies and recruitment in capital cities and rest of state areas](#)
- 6 [Australian Government, Labour Market Informational Portal, Employers' perspectives on recruitment difficulty](#)
- 7 [ABS, Job Vacancies, Australia \(November 2021\)](#)
- 8 [ABS, Job Vacancies, Australia \(November 2021\)](#)
- 9 [ABS, Job Vacancies, Australia \(November 2021\)](#)
- 10 [ABS, Job Vacancies, Australia \(November 2021\)](#)
- 11 [National Skills Commission, Skills Priority List, June 2021](#)
- 12 [National Skills Commission, Jobs and skills in the years ahead](#)
- 13 [National Skills Commission, Jobs and skills in the years ahead](#)
- 14 [National Skills Commission, Jobs and skills in the years ahead](#)
- 15 [Certificate III or above equivalent education for those aged 15 years and over by state and local government area \(LGA\) - Census of Population and Housing, 2016, TableBuilder](#)
- 16 [Productivity Commission, Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2021](#)
- 17 [Australian Government, Labour Market Informational Portal Improving employment prospects for Indigenous Australians](#)