

Federation University Response Decentralisation Questionnaire

Prepared for The Hon. Andrew Gee MP
Minister for Decentralisation and Regional
Education
Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and
Investment

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1. Outline the role that universities can play in the context of encouraging and facilitating regionalisation, including:

- a. Businesses relocating their operations to regional Australia**
- b. Businesses establishing a new presence in regional Australia**

- As a multi-sector provider, Federation University contributes to regionalisation by leveraging our expertise, capability, assets and infrastructure in support of community and workforce capacity building, drives business innovation and entrepreneurialism and delivers applied research with real world impact. We are an anchor institution in the communities in which we operate, contributing to human capital growth, job creation and sustainability, and building community resilience.
- Federation builds strong links with industry and government to trigger and support economic transformation and create the jobs of the future. This includes partnering to co-design and co-deliver our programs which result in a high-quality student experience and deliver a pipeline of job capable graduates. An example is our Bachelor and Master IT programs which have been developed with IBM, through a 25-year partnership; and our innovative MBA program developed in collaboration with [Runway, the regional business accelerator hub](#).
- We are investing in a University Town Precinct in Ballarat, and aspire to become Gippsland's University of choice, developing a distributed campus model in Gippsland that will see us further expand from our Churchill campus to embed our capacity and expertise in communities across the region.
- The University Town concept will leverage our capability, expertise, infrastructure and partnerships, acting as an anchor to increase commercial investment, grow jobs and boost innovation. University Towns blur the boundaries between the institution and the broader community – creating hubs for industry, students, researchers and academic staff to collaborate and co-create.
- A collaborative approach on infrastructure investment between universities, local government areas and business provides far greater impact in regions than in metropolitan areas. For example, the rejuvenation of Ballarat CBD depends on joint investment, supported by State and Federal Government investment in health, education and critical digital and transport infrastructure. The equivalent investment in a capital city provides less impact, leverage and collaboration, simply because the return on investment is often too low to incentivise partnered investment.
- We offer integrated, blended programs and micro-credentials, leveraging our position as a multi-sector provider, offering life-long learning and professional skills. This means we are well placed to work with regional employers to upskill and reskill their workforces. We design and facilitate bespoke training and development for business.
- Federation is a major employer in the communities in which we operate. It is recognised as being an employer of choice, meaning it can attract professional and academic staff from metro areas, nationally and internationally.

2. How can we drive closer collaboration between businesses and universities in regional Australia?

- Federation works to support collaboration with industry through co-design and co-delivery of programs, addressing workforce shortages and skills needs, developing opportunities for work integrated learning, placements and internships for all students

and strengthening the start-up ecosystem through business incubator and accelerator programs, such as [our partnership with Runway](#).

- We strongly support the Federal Government's new National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund that seeks to facilitate a greater degree of partnership between universities and industry in the regions. We look forward to working closely with the Government in implementing this agenda.
- Government can facilitate closer collaboration between universities and industry through targeted incentives and investment in regional research infrastructure, incubator/accelerator programs, and partnering to deliver applied research, with direct benefit to regional industries and communities.
- Federation's partnership with J-Power in Gippsland is a valuable case study exemplifying productive partnerships between universities, industry and government.
 - Federation's Carbon Technology Research team in collaboration with Australian Carbon Innovation is working with J-Power Latrobe Valley, to analyse the quality and performance of its pilot hydrogen plant, with the aim of determining the scalability of hydrogen production as an energy source. This work is part of the \$500M jointly funded Commonwealth, Victorian Government and Japanese Industry funded Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain project currently underway in Gippsland. This world-first pilot project will produce and transport clean hydrogen from Victoria's Latrobe Valley to Japan and support the building of a local workforce capacity for ongoing gasification research and development. In the longer term, the research will lead to job creation in the region and have national economic benefits.

3. What actions can the Government take to accelerate collaboration between businesses and universities in regional Australia?

- Investment that incentivises co-location with industry and supports collaborations that are synergistic to research, education and training – such as innovation hubs and technology parks.
- Targeted investment in infrastructure that enables engagement and partnership with regional industry and provides broader social benefit to regional towns. For example, the Regional Universities Network (RUN) has previously proposed the establishment of a new fund, the Resilient Regions Fund (RRF) to build and diversify regional economies and encourage decentralisation via investment in regionally headquartered universities. RRF would potentially cover infrastructure which builds regional employment, supports communities and facilitates links with industry.
- Investment in innovative programs that respond to emerging regional needs. For instance, Federation's new MBA being delivered in Gippsland or the Grampians Regional Health Work Readiness Project, developed in partnership with the Victorian Government and six local health providers, demonstrate innovative approaches to addressing skill shortages in regional communities.
- Greater promotion and national recognition from Federal Government, showcasing examples of good practice across regions, industry and universities.
- Federation University and the RUN Group support the Government's strategies to attract highly skilled academics, researchers and businesses to the regions by building integrated university/business/government precincts. This is supplemented by the

Government's incentives for international students to study in regional locations. RUN research demonstrates that 7 out of 10 students studying in the region stay in the region and international students tend to study, work and stay in the regions, providing much needed skills to support business innovation and growth. Attracting greater numbers of international students to smaller cities and regional areas eases pressure on capitals and drives economic development and social capital in the regions.

4. How effective are innovation hubs or jobs precincts (co-located with regional university campuses) in:

- a. **attracting businesses to the host destination, and**
- b. **supporting the growth of localised industries in that location**

- Federation hosts Australia's largest regional [Technology Park at its Ballarat campus](#). This was established in 1995, and has demonstrated significant impact locally, state-wide and nationally. It is estimated to contribute \$700M to national GDP annually, and employs over 2000 people across 60+ businesses, including the IBM IT services centre.
- The Park was initially established as a partnership with the University, Victorian Government and IBM. IBM was the Tech Park's foundation tenant in 1995, kick-starting a revolutionary partnership with the University that has had wide-reaching benefits for our students and the broader community. Key achievements include:
 - The Bachelor of IT (Professional Practice) in 2001 with students at IBM working on real projects.
 - Introducing the Graduate Certificate in IT (Professional Practice) in 2013.
 - Australia's 1st P-TECH program supporting disadvantaged students (Yrs7-12).
 - The expansion of the Professional Practice degree and internship to the business school in 2018.
 - The extension of undergraduate opportunities to students at Berwick Campus.
 - Launching the first IBM/Federation PhD scholarships in 2020.
 - The launch of IBM's Neurodiverse employment program, which supports students with autism.
- The [Morwell Innovation Centre](#), located at the Gippsland Hi Tech Precinct, is on track to become a hub of collaboration between researchers, educators and local industry to help shape the future for Gippsland and the La Trobe Valley. The Centre build on the success of the Ballarat Tech Park and focus on the expansion of key industries in the region: food and fibre, ICT, advanced manufacturing, new energy and health. The Centre will host incubator and accelerator programs and delivery of Federation's MBA; and is integrated with Gippsland Tech School and TAFE Gippsland. The Hi-Tech Precinct is a partnership between the Victorian Government, Federation University, TAFE Gippsland and Latrobe City Council to foster innovation at a local, national and global level.

Key surveys, studies or data:

- RUN's new economic impact study found that [RUN universities contributed \\$2.4 billion to real GDP in regional Australia](#) and created 11,300 jobs, a 41 per cent increase since 2015.

- The study found that Federation's higher education operations and research across Ballarat, Berwick and Gippsland campuses contributed \$269M to regional Australia's real GDP in 2018, with expenditure of \$289M and students spending \$99M in regional areas. Note: analysis does not include Federation's TAFE operations or the Technology Parks.

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