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VISA FEE HIKES WILL HARM AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Top international talent seeking to invest their time, abilities, and life savings to meet critical Australian skills shortages have today been handed yet another financial barrier to their participation in Australia's workforce.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Regional Universities Network (RUN) Alec Webb said today's hike to the non-refundable visa fees for international students and graduates makes little sense from a national skills and productivity standpoint.

"Already the most expensive compared to our global competitors, the latest increases to Australia's visa fees are an astonishing act of self-inflicted economic harm and risk increasing skills shortages in vital sectors.

"The Government's decision further diminishes the attractiveness of Australia as a world-class destination for global talent to study and work," said Mr Webb.

Across Australia, but especially in the regions, there are widespread critical skills shortages across the most important sectors.

The latest figures from Jobs and Skills Australia show the national vacancy rate gap between metropolitan and regional Australia is worsening, including in important sectors that regional Australians rely upon such as health and aged care.

"To meet Australia's high-skilled workforce shortages, we need to be encouraging the world's best to undertake training in Australia, and to then progress to the workforce upon graduation.

"Instead, the Government continues to gouge this cohort with unprecedented and unfair visa fee hikes, undermining Australia's sovereign talent pool," said Mr Webb.

In two years, the international student visa fee has risen multiple times from \$710 to \$2,500 – a 252 per cent increase.

During the same period, the Temporary Graduate Visa, which enables international students with an Australian qualification temporary post-graduation work rights has risen to a staggering \$5,750.

"Australia has intense economy-wide skills shortages, and we are now asking highly-skilled graduates with Australian-gained tertiary qualifications to come up with \$5,750 during a cost-of-living crisis before they can use their new skills in our schools, hospitals, and aged care facilities.

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"International students and graduates have done everything asked of them.

"They have worked hard and made tremendous sacrifices for many years to complete their studies in Australia.

"And today, without warning, these students and graduates have woken up to find the goalposts have been moved and they are again being asked to find significant sums of money on short notice simply to remain living, working, and being valued contributors to Australian communities.

"Some students will have commenced their final year of study in Australia, having seen their dream of temporarily remaining and working in Australia after graduation ruined by a 150 per cent increase in their visa application fee since March 2026.

"For decades, international education has benefited Australia and made us friends around the world.

"Today's decision, atop a series of recent policy measures, risks Australia's standing in the world and undermines the well-established soft-diplomatic power of our international education sector," said Mr Webb.

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