



Monday 2 March, 2020

Dear colleagues

As semester one commences, universities across Australia have been very focused on addressing the challenges of COVID-19 (previously known as coronavirus). Federation is less impacted than most because our numbers of on-shore Chinese students are relatively small.

None of our staff or students have been impacted by the virus. We only have around 100 Chinese international students who may be unable to join us at our Ballarat and Berwick campuses if the travel bans continue. We have identified online study options for the majority of these students and hope to transition them to on-campus study when the travel ban lifts. We have a small number of Chinese international students who have been in Australia since before the travel bans were introduced. They are not impacted by the virus and will commence their studies on-campus this week as per usual.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that this is a general public health issue – not a university issue. As university staff, we are at no greater risk of contracting the virus than Australians working in a supermarket, an office or anywhere else. The situation is still unfolding, with the travel bans currently being extended on a weekly basis. The sector is continuing to work closely with the Australian Government to ensure that the interests and concerns of students are addressed, and in reassuring Chinese students that they will receive a warm welcome when they are eventually able to travel to Australia.

Opening of the Health and Sports Precinct

We were delighted to have the Federal Minister for Education, the Hon. Dan Tehan, visit our Mt Helen campus last Friday to officially open the new Health and Sports Precinct. This is a world-class facility for our students, staff and community members. Plans for stage two of the project to redevelop the sporting ovals and buildings opposite the new precinct were also launched at the opening. Stage two will include a new synthetic oval and outdoor courts, spectator pavilion, car parking and public transport facilities, as well as upgraded research, teaching and staff facilities. This [important development](#) will not only establish Federation University as a leader in health and sports research and

teaching – it will deliver first-class sporting facilities and expertise for community sport in Ballarat and across Western Victoria.

Thank you to all of our staff who have worked so tirelessly over the past three years to deliver a first-class facility and successful launch.

Becoming a university town

We were honoured to welcome one of the world's leading biochemists and university leaders to Ballarat in February. Sir Peter Downes played a major role in turning the Scottish city of Dundee into a 'university town' by developing significant partnerships and profile for the University of Dundee, to feed into an urban, cultural and economic renewal for the city. He spoke to business and community leaders about the concept of developing magnet cities to reposition major regional cities – such as Ballarat and Gippsland – as centres for economic growth and development.

As a regional university, we are not only among the largest employers in our regions – we have an important role to play in driving innovation, rejuvenation and growth. We co-hosted this forum with the Committee for Ballarat and were able to engage local government and industry into an exciting discussion about the role of our university in the future growth of our regions.

You [can read more about Sir Peter Downes' insights](#) via our website and about how this can translate to Ballarat in [The Courier](#).

Our first Fulbright scholarship

I would like to congratulate Associate Professor Robyn Brandenburg for receiving a Fulbright Research and Teaching Scholarship. Robyn is Federation's first Fulbright scholar and it is an outstanding achievement. She is Associate Dean of Research in the School of Education and has received the scholarship to complete a comparative study of Teacher Performance Assessment Standards, to determine what impact these have on educators, pre-service teachers and mentors. I invite you all to wish her well on travels to Montclair State University in New York state later this year.

Supporting our academics to both start and extend their careers via national fellowship schemes and overseas scholarship schemes, such as the Fulbright Commission in the United States and the Marie Curie Mobility Fund in Europe, is a key component of our new research strategy. I am confident that as our new research strategy is implemented there will be many more awards to come.

VC Staff Forums

The first round of VC Staff Forums will get underway later this month, with the dates and venues for each campus to be posted on FedNews. I am pleased to advise that members of the Vice-Chancellor's Senior Team will be joining me at each session to take your questions. We will also be providing some light refreshments for staff. I strongly encourage you to email any questions you have to feedback@federation.edu.au so we can make sure the forums cover the issues and topics you are most interested in.

One topic that will be addressed during the March forums is the university's plan for our 150th year, which I know many staff are very interested in. Our marketing team has been working very hard to deliver a whole-of-university plan that not only involves staff and students, but is outward looking and embraces our communities and partners.

We have an exciting year ahead of us and I wish you all the very best as the academic year gets underway this week.

Best regards

Professor Helen Bartlett

Vice-Chancellor and President

