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UNIVERSITIES ACCORD DELIVERS FOR AUSTRALIA'S REGIONS

The release of a major suite of proposed reforms targeting Australia's world-class higher education system acknowledges the pivotal role that regional universities play in supporting regional Australians, communities, and workforces.

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) welcomes the release of the final report of the Australian Universities Accord and congratulates Professor Mary O'Kane and the Accord Panel for delivering a comprehensive and visionary long-term plan for Australia's universities and the tertiary education sector.

RUN Executive Director Alec Webb said it was incredibly pleasing to see the views of regional Australian students, communities, and their universities reflected so prominently in the Accord Panel's final deliberations, especially the inclusion of a dedicated regional chapter.

"The expert Panel have spent more than a year conducting intensive consultations in preparation of their final report to the Government, and it has been clear throughout the entire process – including today's release of the final report – that the pivotal role played by universities in regional communities should be better recognised and supported by targeted policy adjustments.

"Regional universities are not just nice to have, they are essential to the one-third of Australian's living outside of capital cities, and the recommendations of the Australian Universities Accord will be essential in ensuring regional Australians will be serviced by sustainable regional institutions," said Mr Webb.

The Australian Universities Accord Final Report recognises the crucial role that regional tertiary education providers play in Australian society, from delivering local jobs, to their significant social and economic community contributions.

The Accord Final Report also recognises the real and prevalent diseconomies of scale and costs associated with educational delivery in regional Australia.

"The Australian Universities Accord Final Report acknowledges that regional universities are the catalysts for regional development and are essential to Australia's future prosperity.

"To meet the education attainment, and participation targets outlined in the Accord Final Report, it is essential that a regional loading is implemented as a part of the needs-based funding model to address the funding challenges faced by regional universities.

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“As institutions that enrol the largest number of students from under-represented student cohorts, the needs-based funding model will deliver significant impact for the success of future generations of students choosing to study at Australia’s world-class regional universities,” said Mr Webb.

RUN looks forward to working constructively with Minister Clare and the Commonwealth Government as they develop their response, and plan, to implement the findings of this comprehensive review.

RUN will continue to be a trusted and valued partner in translating the findings and recommendations of the Accord’s Final Report into increased tertiary opportunities, participation, and success for all Australians.

RUN welcomes specific recommendations outlined in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report that are designed to enhance opportunity, equity, and certainty within the system, namely:

- The establishment of meaningful targets to meet increase participation of under-represented student cohorts.
- The needs-based funding model which will provide additional funding to support the success of students studying at regional universities.
- The inclusion of a specific regional loading in the needs-based funding model.
- The recognition that the diseconomies of scale facing regional universities and the additional costs of regional education delivery require urgently addressing.

RUN’s initial submissions to the Higher Education Accord Panel can be accessed [here](#), and RUN’s submission to the interim report can accessed [here](#).

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