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RAY OF HOPE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

The Albanese Government's announcement on international students finally signals the end to a period of uncertainty that has been disproportionately impacting Australia's regional universities.

In welcoming today's announcement to replace Ministerial Direction 107 – the policy instrument used to throttle the enrolment of international students at all but a handful of large universities – the Regional Universities Network (RUN) urged a speedier implementation of the decision.

Chief Executive Office of RUN, Mr Alec Webb said that while a date has been set to revoke the damaging policy, its impact is still playing out today and continues to hurt regional universities the most.

"Revoking Ministerial Direction 107 on 1 January 2025 is equivalent to shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted.

"The current visa processing times are such that the revoking of this policy on 1 January 2025 is simply too late to enable universities to meet their allocated international student quotas for Semester 1.

"To rectify the damages of this policy, regional universities call for the Minister to revoke Ministerial Direction 107 today, or at the very least the moment the relevant legislation is formally passed", said Mr Webb.

RUN welcomes the Government's returned focus on regional universities and looks forward to working with the Government to make sensible changes to Australia's broader migration settings that will encourage international students to study at Australia's world-class regional universities.

"In welcoming institutional caps, which indicate sustainable growth for regional universities, it is important to place that growth in the context of the losses sustained by regional universities in the recent past.

"Since 2019 regional universities have seen a 61 per cent drop in international student fee revenue and an over 50 per cent drop in international student numbers.

"Regional universities have witnessed the slowest post-COVID recovery of international student enrolments of anyone in the sector", said Mr Webb.

Today's announcement indicates an end to the uncertainty, and regional universities will work proactively and constructively with the Government in implementing the complex methodology for university student limits.

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