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RUN UNIVERSITIES RESPONDING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) has responded to the challenges identified in the Ernst and Young report 'University of the Future', which contends that broad based teaching and research institutions will be unviable in all but a few cases over the next 10-15 years. Commenting on the report, the Chair of RUN, Professor David Battersby, said that regional universities needed to survive as comprehensive institutions for regional and national development and to build human capital in the regions.

"RUN recognises the competitive and changing world educational environment and is responding to it – it is vital that we do. We play a unique role in raising the aspirations of regional students for tertiary education, and contributing to the economic, social and cultural development of our communities," Professor Battersby said.

"That is why, in a national first for Australia, RUN is committing to a multi-lateral accord covering collaboration in teaching and learning, appointments, research, and consolidation of support functions. Through collaboration between our universities we can boost the range of courses available to students by pooling teaching resources in a cost effective manner in a thin market. Through this we can better contribute to the development of human capital in regional Australia.

"RUN universities must continue to give students a choice of qualifications across the broad spectrum of professional and other awards needed in the regions. Many students should stay in regional Australia for university qualifications and regional institutions need to offer them opportunities they require. The best way to keep professionals in regional Australia is to train them in regional Australia.

"Many regional Australians do not aspire to and are not well prepared for higher education. Year 12 completions in regional Australia are 20 per cent less than those in capital cities."

RUN universities are the leaders in teaching to students with diverse needs – we educate 16 per cent of low socio-economic status students, 15 per cent of Indigenous students, and 32 per cent of students in enabling courses. RUN universities excel in keeping these students engaged in university studies – this support is not available to the same extent at many other institutions.

"RUN universities are leaders in Australian distance and flexible education and teach 34 per cent of all distance students. Distance education is well suited to the regions – it diversifies regional economies, is relatively low cost, runs counter to the cycles of other regional industries, and reduces pressure on infrastructure in capital cities. We are well placed to respond to the developments in online education," Professor Battersby said.

www.run.edu.au

“Research undertaken by RUN institutions addresses issues of strategic importance to regional Australia, such as the economic, environmental, health and wellbeing, and social impacts of regional development. RUN institutions are embedded in their communities.

“For regional and national development, it is critical that regional universities adapt and survive as comprehensive teaching, learning and research higher education institutions.”

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