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REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES NETWORK OFFERS A PLAN TO HELP UNLOCK AUSTRALIAN POTENTIAL

With two-thirds of the nation's economic assets and productive activity located outside Australia's capital cities, along with one-third of the population, the economic and social wellbeing of regional Australia is crucial to the success of the nation.

Regional Universities Network (RUN) Chair Professor David Battersby is today launching a policy statement – Smarter Regions, Smarter Australia – which details a variety of ways in which government can unlock the full human potential of regional Australia.

"By improving opportunities for people to access higher education, RUN universities already help unlock this human potential," Professor Battersby says. "Adopting the policies we've articulated would contribute to Australia achieving the level of graduate skills needed to ensure its international competitiveness and help strengthen communities across the nation.

"RUN believes that the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of Australia will be enhanced by further building human, social and cultural capital, employment, entrepreneurship, productivity and industry diversification within Australia's regions. This will contribute towards an Australia which is healthy and safe, socially, culturally and economically prosperous, with increased productivity and innovation.

"This document also builds on some of the themes raised last month in the Universities Australia policy plan, A Smarter Australia, with a particular focus on the role that regional universities can play.

"We believe that this nation needs to have a conversation about the role of higher education and we want to play our part in this."

RUN universities teach more than 100,000 students across 29 campuses or 9% of enrolments in Australian public universities. They educate 25% of Australia's regional higher education students, 34% of its distance education students, 16% of its low socio- economic students, 15% of its Indigenous students and 32% of its students in enabling courses.

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