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## **REPORT CONFIRMS RECAPPING UNI PLACES WOULD BE 'POLICY TRAGEDY'**

The new Grattan Institute report from Andrew Norton, *Keep the Caps off! Student Access and Choice in Higher Education*, has found that it would be a policy tragedy to recap university places.

The Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Professor David Battersby, said the report echoed the network's concern that a cut-off on student intake applied by Government based on ATARs would hit low socio-economic status applicants hard.

"The report shows that the student demand driven system is achieving its goal of higher student participation amongst students from groups who previously were poorly represented at university," Professor Battersby said.

"It also demonstrates that, even for students entering university with very low ATARs, most complete a degree within seven years of commencement. ATARs are an imperfect guide to university prospects.

"Keeping the caps off is important to build participation in higher education in regional Australia where participation is about half that in capital cities, and many students are low socio-economic status and or first in family to go to university.

"As the Minister for Higher Education, Senator Kim Carr has acknowledged, 'in regional areas and in particular areas of disadvantaged there is still a lot more work to be done' to increase participation in university.

"The report also demonstrates that universities are responding to demand trends, labour market and societal need by providing new places in science, health and engineering.

"Among a range of new courses and other initiatives implemented at RUN universities over the last few years the Government has funded projects under the Education Investment Fund and the Structural Adjustment Fund. These have been designed to build participation in and pathways to higher education, and to increase the training of health, agriculture, engineering and other professionals in regional Australia. It is essential that these places and pipeline continue to grow to realise the investment and contribute to the productivity and competitiveness of regional Australia.

"RUN urges the parties to commit to keeping the caps off places and continuing the demand driven system" Professor Battersby said.

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