

20 AUGUST 2013

MORE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SHOULD ATTEND REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

RUN supports greater international student enrolment at regional universities.

Responding to comments made by the shadow education minister Christopher Pyne that streamlined visa processing would be extended beyond just universities if the Coalition won government, the Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Professor David Battersby, urged all political parties to encourage more international students to go regional Australia.

"Political parties should consider providing incentives for more international students to study at regional universities," Professor Battersby said. "International students diversify regional communities, and facilitate and enrich cultural development. They also provide students in disciplines not necessarily in demand from domestic student who can potentially address areas of skills need in the regions.

"RUN has called for incentives such as: providing additional bonus points to students towards Australian residency for attending regional campuses, particularly for those studying in areas of regional skills need; extending the work rights of international students who study in non-metropolitan locations (we support provision of an extra year on completion of undergraduate or post graduate study); providing work rights to students who have completed a bachelors or masters at a regional campus regardless of the duration of study; and facilitation of two way exchanges between the Asia-Pacific and Australia.

"Regional universities should be full participants in any new Colombo Plan should the Coalition win government.

"I also particularly welcome Mr Pyne's comments that there are no plans for further cuts to the university sector or to the demand driven student system if the Coalition wins government.

"RUN strongly endorses Mr Pyne's view that that the demand-driven system should not be limited by introducing minimum Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks for Commonwealth Supported Places. Any such cut-off would hit low socio-economic status applicants hard.

"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," Professor Battersby said.

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