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SPEAKERS' COMMENTS FROM THE RUN-INFORMA CONFERENCE

Professor Andy Smith, Deputy Vice Chancellor Schools and Programs, University of Ballarat, on the need for a more seamless approach to tertiary education in regional Australia.

"There is a need for vocational education providers, particularly TAFE institutes and universities to work in a much more integrated way in the regions.

"For students living in regional Australia it's important that they have access to really good pathways between vocational and higher education and I'm not just talking school leavers, but particularly for mature age students living and working in regional areas access to higher or even vocational education can often be very difficult.

"My prediction is that over the next few years we will see lots of different forms of tertiary institutions beginning to emerge, some will be conventional dual sector, like ourselves (Ballarat) and CQU but others will be hybrids of that with much closer collaboration between TAFE and higher education. I think that will benefit the regions in particular and will help to address the chronic low participation rate that you get in both VET and higher education in regional Australia."

Professor Mike Hefferan, Pro Vice Chancellor Engagement, University of the Sunshine Coast, on RUN engaging with regions and building a stronger nation.

"Regional development in Australia has at best been eclectic, you have people doing a bit there and bit here and each case is different so that means RUN universities by their nature of being in regional locations can translate a body of knowledge about contemporary regional development.

"The study of regions, how they really work and how they are changing in today's environment is undercooked. There is very little constructive research in that area, it's growing though and the RUN group has a wonderful opportunity to provide a vehicle to move that forward."

Professor Birgit Lohmann, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of the Sunshine Coast, on USC's involvement in the development of the Sunshine Coast Education and Training Industry Group.

"Each education and training institution in a region can be stronger when the whole education and training industry in the region is stronger.

"The education and training industry is an economic sector in its own right – generating a significant proportion of regional wealth.

"In some regions, such as the Sunshine Coast, the education and training industry is one of the biggest contributors to regional wealth.

"Planning for the provision of quality education and training in Queensland is potentially best served by plans at the regional, rather than the state, level because Queensland is so large, diverse and regionalised.

"Regional plans should be evidence-based and grounded in local realities, not just be aspirational.

"Demographic growth in a region does not automatically translate into growth in university enrolments in the region."

Prof. Dato' Dr. Saran Kaur Gill, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Industry & Community Partnerships) & Executive Director of AsiaEngage (ATNEU, AUN USR&S and AYVP), on the New Colombo Plan.

"If you want to establish partnerships and relationships with people, there is nothing like having to work together to make sure that the knowledge you have in some way benefits the communities

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that you work with, communities that perhaps are not as advantaged as those you come from. "The 21st century is a century in which we have to expose and develop our youth, not only as youth who have professional skills through internship, competency and skills, but also with the heart and feeling of wanting to give back to communities as well. That will really enrich the relationship and cultural knowhow between Australia and the citizens of ASEAN."

Professor Jim Barber, Vice-Chancellor, University of New England, on emerging trends in tertiary service delivery.

"Pedagogy is moving away from campuses, desktops and teacher centred pedagogy and towards networks of teachers and learners connected by broadband, a merger between the virtual and the material. Mobile devices, open course ware and a new student centred approach to teaching and learning, that's where best practice is heading pedagogically.

"MOOCs are an extreme example in a bigger movement towards unbundling of services. Excellence in the business of higher education will increasingly mean individualised levels of service delivery, so pay for what you want and as you go.

"There are tremendous opportunities for regional universities in digital education because by definition it doesn't matter where you are based, you can still be an international player."

Fiona Larg, Chief Operating Officer and Secretary, University of the Highlands & Islands, Scotland.

"The University of the Highlands and Islands is one of the most interesting, and challenging, developments in post-16 education in recent decades. Under recent Scottish Government legislation, in addition to higher education, the university will assume responsibility for all further education within its region, creating an integrated tertiary institution.

"The Highlands and Islands is a great place to live, to study and to do business. It is known worldwide for its outstanding scenery, for its distinctive heritage and cultures, for its recreational opportunities and for the quality of life which the region offers.

Modern communications, both physical and virtual, are addressing the historical isolation of the region and its communities and traditional and new industries are underpinning an economic resurgence.

"This is an exciting and decisive time for the university, which is still in the early years of its development but also at the leading edge of post-16 education."

Professor Mike Keppell, Executive Director, Australian Digital Futures Institute, the University of Southern Queensland, on the RUN Maths and Science Digital Classroom.

"The focus of the project is to look at the regional nature of science and maths for students and teachers. What we are trying to do is really inspire and enthuse students in Grade 9 and 10, through the digital classroom using real data on subjects such as astronomy, whale watching, smart farms and the input of CSIRO scientists.

"By being authentic and relevant we hope to get to the core of what kids are interested in and inspired by, and show how important maths and science are to Australia. We are also working towards a connected approach for professional development of Maths/Science Teachers' The project will involve 20 secondary schools and 21 primary schools in regional and peri-urban Queensland, NSW and Victoria."

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