

**5 DECMEBER 2013**

## **ROLE OF REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES MUST BE RECOGNISED IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The key role of regional universities in regional development needs to be clearly recognised in Government policy, a regional development conference was told on December 5.

Speaking at the Annual Conference of the Australia and New Zealand Regional Science Association International (ANZRSAI), the Regional Universities Network Executive Director, Dr Caroline Perkins, said that regional development wasn't just about roads and bridges.

"Regional development is just as much about human capital and facilitating the strategic collaboration of key players to realise the unique development of particular regions. It is core business to our universities, not just an add-on to teaching, learning and research," Dr Perkins said.

"The Federal Government is yet to articulate a policy for regional development that includes recognition of the importance of human capital and the role that regional universities play.

"In a number of other countries there is clear policy recognition of the role of universities in regional development. For example, in England universities are important players in Local Enterprise Partnership committees, which determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation in regions.

"In the Republic of Korea, the Government is trying to discourage further centralisation in Seoul and promote regional areas. Regional universities are seen as a driving force for regional development, and the Government is promoting structural reform of the universities and encouraging further development of their links with industry to realise its ambitions for the growth of regional areas.

"RUN calls for clear recognition by the Australian Government of the role of regional universities in Australia's regional development policy.

"A broad strategic approach, similar to the English Local Enterprise Partnerships, which brings universities together with other key regional stakeholders such as industry, local government, vocational education providers, schools, health providers, social development organisations, not-for-profit groups, and environmental organisations, would help the alignment of RUN teaching, research and service or civic engagement effort with other regional strategies to enhance regional innovation and development, and skills and workforce planning. It would help develop and maximise the contribution of regional human capital, encourage investment and deploy technology and research."

[www.run.edu.au](http://www.run.edu.au)

“The broader expertise of universities would also be harnessed by the regional committees, through the provision of leadership, advice, facilitation and expertise in innovation, knowledge exchange and transfer to ensure that regional programs and services are well developed and supported by a strong evidence base,” Dr Perkins said.

Dr Perkins said in 2011 RUN contributed \$2.1 billion in gross domestic product, \$1.2 billion in household income and provided 14,000 full time equivalent jobs, equivalent to the Australian fishing industry in contribution to GDP.

“Regional universities have a fundamental role to play in the development of the nation. They drive regional economic, social, cultural and environmental development, innovation and productivity, and help unlock the full human potential of their regions.”

**For media enquiries:**

Dr Caroline Perkins, Executive Director, Regional Universities Network, 0408 482 736

Issued by: Aaron Hall, RUN Media Adviser, 0402 756 835

[www.run.edu.au](http://www.run.edu.au)