

**25 FEBRUARY 2014**

## **RUN AND THE NATIONALS DISCUSS REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES**

The importance of regional universities to their regions and the nation will be discussed by the Regional Universities Network (RUN) and National Party Members of Parliament and Senators at a Regional Universities Education Forum in Canberra on February 25.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Peter Lee, said the forum would provide a networking opportunity for Vice-Chancellors and Chancellors to raise the profile of regional universities with members of the National Party and to discuss issues of mutual interest.

"Regional universities play a fundamental role in regional Australia. They help the regions enhance their economic, social, cultural and environmental development, productivity, unlock full human potential and fully participate in the modern economy to the benefit of the nation.

"Issues we will be discussing with members of the National Party, including many of our local members, are the importance of keeping the demand driven student system, ensuring that regional universities can continue to expand and contribute to their regions, and enhancing the role of our universities in regional development.

"It is imperative to increase the participation in higher education by regional Australians so that the regions have similar higher education attainment rates to the capitals.

"The demand driven student system is playing a key role by enabling growth in student numbers and enhancing opportunities for people from low SES, regional and Indigenous backgrounds. Its extension to sub-bachelor places would assist in providing pathways for less well prepared students.

"Regional economies must diversify. For many regions, continued reliance on one industry or one employer makes entire communities vulnerable to decisions beyond their control.

"Regional development is just as much about human capital and facilitating the strategic collaboration of key players as it is about building infrastructure. A more strategic approach to regional development is needed with the key role of regional universities recognised," Professor Lee said.

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