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RESEARCH VITAL TO REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

Regional universities have a fundamental mission to enrich their communities through the excellence of their graduates and the quality of their teaching and research, according to the Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Professor Peter Lee, in a keynote address to the Engagement Australia Conference at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga on July 22.

"These requirements, outlined in our universities' formative legislation, underscore our universities' role for public good, which must be remembered in the context of the current debate about university deregulation, diversity, and funding.

"The Government's proposed reduction in its contribution to student fees could be interpreted to mean that it is no longer prepared to support base capabilities in research – if so, this is a worrying development.

"The emphasis on research and teaching is one of the distinctive characteristics of the Australian university. The impact of research undertaken by regional universities on our regions is significant. Researchers grounded in place approach their research with a specific local perspective very difficult to achieve by others from outside.

"In research, we align our knowledge production and dissemination activities to the needs of our communities, industry and the nation. Research is a vital part of being a university – it is written into our founding acts and it is strategic and sensible for us to undertake this activity," Professor Lee said.

"We are deeply committed to our respective regional communities and regional students. We must deliver our core academic endeavours, including research, through engagement." Engagement Australia is the peak body for university-community engagement in Australia. For more information: www.engagementaustralia.org.au.

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