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RUN WELCOMES GOVERNMENT'S COMPROMISE ON HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) enthusiastically welcomes the Government's decision to split the higher education bill, and urges the Senate to support the revised package. The 20 per cent reduction in the government funding of university places will be set aside for later consideration, and funding for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy is guaranteed for a further twelve months.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Peter Lee, said that the move should assist the passage of the higher education reforms.

"The Government has shown real willingness to listen and to compromise on the package. It is essential for regional universities and their students to retain the demand driven student system for bachelor places and to expand this to sub-bachelor degrees to provide more pathways for less well prepared students. The higher education system must be adequately funded to ensure quality and sustainability, and the deregulation of fees provides the most realistic way to do this," Professor Lee said.

"The Government's decision to delay for further consideration the 20 per cent reduction in the Commonwealth Grant Scheme will assist in putting downward pressure on university fees.

"The Australian higher education system is under financial pressure and the current impasse must be resolved. The uncertainty is particularly detrimental to 'non-traditional' students, who may lack the confidence and familial history – but not academic capacity – to embark on university studies.

"Any alternative of soft caps on university places determined by the preparedness of students to undertake higher education, or the government determining how many places a university should have in certain courses based on predictions of skills need, is simply unacceptable to regional Australian universities," Professor Lee said.

"RUN urges the Senate to end the uncertainty for students and universities and to pass the package."

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