

29 APRIL 2015

RUN TELLS SENATE COMMITTEE - FUNDING REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES HELPS REGIONAL TOWNS

In a submission to a Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry, the Regional Universities Network (RUN) has emphasised the critical role regional universities play as one of the largest and most visible assets in their regions.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Peter Lee, said that RUN had made a submission to the committee's inquiry into the future role and contribution of regional capitals to Australia as issues around funding and supporting universities fundamentally impacted on regional Australia and its cities.

"Government funding towards the vital contribution regional universities make to regional Australia does not come from the regional development portfolio, but largely from the education portfolio," Professor Lee said.

"Our teaching and learning activities, research and innovation and service functions contribute to: human capital development; regional governance and planning; community development; health and ageing; arts, culture and sport; environmental sustainability; and industry and business development. Regional universities are looked to for leadership in stimulating positive change, and their staff and students play active and visible roles in their communities.

"The component of base funding allocated to universities to undertake research is essential in contributing to the ability of regional universities to broadly support regional development and regional communities.

"Regional universities must continue to be adequately funded to continue their important role. Much of the employment growth in Australia is occurring in high skilled jobs and this trend is likely to continue. The student demand driven system must be kept to continue to lift the participation in higher education in regional Australia," Professor Lee said.

"The current uncertainty about the future of funding of higher education is an issue of concern to regional Australia and its towns."

The RUN submission is at: <http://www.run.edu.au/>

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