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RUN: GOVERNMENT NEEDS A MORE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO POLICY AND FUNDING ACROSS EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Policy and funding for regional universities should be driven by regional development as much as by education and research a conference in Albury will be told today.

Regional Universities Network (RUN) Executive Director, Dr Caroline Perkins, will tell the Australian Regional Development Conference that regional universities need to be more formally recognised as a key player in regional development.

"The Government is currently considering ways to boost the collaboration between universities and industry to generate more applied research and knowledge transfer to drive innovation and productivity. This could be addressed in regional Australia with the better integration of regional universities in regional development policy and funding. Our universities believe that it is our civic mission as public institutions to play a central role in contributing to the development of the regions where we are located," Dr Perkins said.

"Regional universities 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.

"At present, our universities largely fund education, research and innovation, and service activities through base funding from the education portfolio. Any attempt to reduce this to generate a separate pool for research funding will greatly reduce our ability to broadly support regional development and our communities.

"Strategic, locally-based committees across regional Australia, with membership comprised of representatives from universities and other key educational institutions, industry, including small to medium enterprises, local government, and not-for-profit organisations, with access to dedicated funding would reinvigorate regional development," Dr Perkins said.

"The development of specific industries could be effectively addressed on a regional basis".

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