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RUN LEADS EQUITY GAINS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A new report from the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education at Curtin University has found significant growth in low SES, Indigenous, regional and remote student enrolments at Regional Universities Network (RUN) universities between 2007 to 2014.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Jan Thomas, said that the demand driven system for undergraduate places had facilitated the growth.

"The RUN universities increased their undergraduate enrolments by 32%, the largest growth over the period of any aligned university subgroup. RUN had the largest growth in low SES student enrolments (29.8%), Indigenous enrolments (2.7%), and enrolments of students with a disability (7.2%) regional (51.6%) and remote students (1.9%) of any group," Professor Thomas said.

The overall percentage share of low SES enrolments at Australian universities has increased to 17.9% since 2009, having been around 16.1 to 16.4 % over much of the past two decades.

"While the growth in regional student enrolments has been significant, their overall percentage has declined in the student population since 2007 from 19.1% to 18.9% in 2014. This is due to the expansion in university participation by metropolitan students, including in external (online) courses.

"There is still a long way to go before there is parity in higher education participation between regional Australians and those in capital cities. That is why keeping the demand driven system for undergraduate students is so important, as is expanding it to sub-bachelor places to provide further educational pathways for students less well prepared for university," Professor Thomas said.

"RUN universities are committed to playing their part in further contributing to higher educational attainment in regional Australia, and providing the professionals needed for the regions to develop in the future."

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