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## **REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES: KEY TO CLEVER REGIONS**

Regional universities are key to regional development and supplying the highly skilled workers to drive the innovative and highly productive industries of the future, the Regional Capitals Australia Regionalism 2.0 conference will be told in Wodonga on April 8.

The Executive Director of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Dr Caroline Perkins, said that by improving opportunities for regional Australians to access higher education regional universities help unlock the full human and innovative potential of the regions for the national good.

“The jobs and industries of the future will need highly skilled university graduates to connect regional Australia with the global, innovative economy. More value-add industries are needed in the regions to diversify and strengthen regional economies. Regional Australia still has relatively low levels of educational attainment. It is vital for regional capitals and regional Australia that more regional Australians attend university. Students who study in the regions largely stay in the regions to work,” Dr Perkins said.

“The regionally headquartered RUN universities all have strong links to their communities and a fundamental commitment to regional Australia. Universities are important players in regional development, but haven’t always been seen through that lens or been part of the regional development conversation. The enormous asset regional universities provide to regional Australia should be better harnessed.

“Regional universities should be formally recognised by Government in regional development policy by having a mandated place on regional consultative committees, and by being eligible for regional development funding,” Dr Perkins said.

“By working more closely with bodies such as Regional Capitals Australia, RUN can enhance the impact and awareness of the contribution that regional universities make to the regions and nation.”

### **For media enquiries:**

Dr Caroline Perkins, Executive Director, Regional Universities Network, 0408 482 736

Issued by: Diana Streak, RUN Media Adviser, 022 536 064

[www.run.edu.au](http://www.run.edu.au)