

**14 APRIL 2016**

## **CONTINUED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT NEEDED FOR REGIONAL AND LOW SES UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

In the lead up to the Federal Budget, the Regional Universities Network (RUN) urges the Government to continue to support the increased participation and success of regional and low SES students at university via dedicated funding programs.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Jan Thomas, said that a consistent policy approach was needed to encourage regional Australians to undertake higher education.

"Recently, changes were made to Youth Allowance to provide financial support to more regional students to attend university. This initiative works in a complementary way with programs in the education portfolio which assist regional students, many of whom are from low socio-economic status or first-in-family, to undertake higher education," Professor Thomas said.

"The Higher Education Partnerships and Participation Program (HEPPP), designed to increase and support the participation in higher education of students from low SES backgrounds at university, funds outreach and aspiration raising programs to schools and community groups, as well as a range of other activities. This includes special projects to support improved student outcomes, student engagement and enhancing the student experience. RUN universities have been particularly successful in attracting funding for priority projects from this program.

"Government support and recognition for quality university teaching, currently through the Office of Learning and Teaching and potentially through a new entity in the future, is vital to promote student success at regional universities.

"Teaching and learning is of great importance to us – while we excel at supporting our students in higher education, our endeavours must be recognised, encouraged and supported by appropriate programs, projects and awards. Adequate funding for projects must be available to help ensure that our universities are able to address the issues of importance to our student cohort. It is also important to balance the recognition and reward of research in our universities.

"While we recognise that the Federal Budget is under pressure, and we continue to commit our own funding to support student success, we are unable to provide enough support to adequately address the significant need in regional Australia for greater participation by regional students at university," Professor Thomas said.

"The regions, including regional cities and towns, need more highly skilled professionals to develop an innovative economy for the good of the nation as a whole. It is vital that we continue to be assisted by a range of Government programs to fully realise this ambition."

### **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)