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RUN: KEEP THE DEMAND DRIVEN STUDENT SYSTEM

Despite calls to reintroduce caps on student places, the Regional Universities Network (RUN) strongly supports retaining the demand driven student system, as outlined in its policy document *Clever Regions, Clever Australia*.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Jan Thomas, said that there is no point in raising the aspiration of regional Australians to study at university if there are no places to accommodate them.

"Many more low SES and regional students have attended university because caps on places have been removed. Proportionally, there has been a 1.5 per cent increase in the participation by low SES students overall which is progress. More than 4-5 years is needed to solve the problem" Professor Thomas said.

"RUN universities have seen a significant growth in students from low SES and regional backgrounds due to the demand driven system. At RUN universities in 2013, 32 per cent of RUN universities' commencing, domestic, undergraduate students were from low SES backgrounds and their enrolments had increased by 26 per cent between 2009 and 2013. Enrolments by students from regional and remote backgrounds at our universities grew by 18.5 per cent between 2009 and 2013.

"The demand driven system has also allowed regional universities to establish new courses which are important to their communities e.g. allied health and engineering.

"The Higher Education Participation Program needs to be better focussed to lift the aspiration of regional students for university in a way that achieves broad impact. Regional universities provide the only realistic option for many regional students to attend university. These students are tied to their communities for reasons of personal, family and work commitments, and financial circumstance. Funding from the program needs to be concentrated in universities which have a significant proportion of regional and low SES students" Professor Thomas said.

"Rather than the growth of the demand driven system being out of control, it is now in line with population growth, thereby easing financial pressure on the system. The February 2016 Applications and Offers data issued by the Department of Education and Training shows that offers were up 1.2 per cent, compared to the same time in 2015."

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