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RUN WELCOMES APPOINTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERT PANEL

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) welcomes the appointment of an expert advisory panel by the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham, to help develop a future plan for Australia's higher education system.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Jan Thomas, said that the network was pleased that the panel included members with experience of regional universities.

"RUN has argued that, given that much more targeted policy attention and effort needs to be directed at redressing the participation by regional Australians at university, the advisory panel should contain members who have a deep understanding about regional and rural higher education issues. We are glad that two of the four panel members have first-hand experience of regional universities.

"Any changes to sector funding and policy need to be referenced against whether such changes will ameliorate or exacerbate the inequalities in higher education participation in Australia. It is essential to retain the demand driven system for bachelor places, and its extension to sub-bachelor places, including diploma, advanced diploma and associate degree courses, at universities, will provide more pathways to undergraduate study and improve student success.

"It is in the national interest that continued support must be given to encourage more participation at university by regional Australians. Through university study and research, students become more highly skilled, and are better prepared to be creative, entrepreneurial and flexible to meet future job challenges" Professor Thomas said.

"It is important that the reform timeline proposed in the Government's discussion paper Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education is adhered to, with finalisation of the reform package later this year, changes legislated by mid-2017, and implementation at the beginning of 2018" Professor Thomas said.

"RUN looks forward to the announcement of the Government's reform package later this year."

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