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## **RUN: NOT A HAPPY NEW YEAR - MYEFO A BLOW TO REGIONAL AUSTRALIA AND ITS UNIS**

The MYEFO announcement of the freeze on Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding at 2017 levels for two years, and linking growth from 2020 to performance and national population growth, will disproportionately impact on regional universities and regional Australia.

The chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Prof Greg Hill, said that he was dismayed that the measures would freeze the inequality between cities and the regions.

“Regional Australian universities need specific policy recognition and support to meet the needs of the regions and the nation. We use our base funding for teaching and learning, research and regional development, and the freeze on funding will hit us hard.

“The Government has encouraged the growth in university places through the demand driven student system, and our universities have responded by building new infrastructure, putting on new courses, and undertaking outreach activities to lift aspiration for university study. This will go to waste because universities will not be able to enrol more students.

“The Minister says that the government will maintain its commitment to establishing and maintaining up to eight regional study hubs, but, without continuing to encourage, and support, more regional students to attend university, this infrastructure will not be fully used. The regions will continue to lag behind the cities in the professions and economic development. In 2017, 45 per cent of 25-34 year olds in major cities held a bachelors degree, but in the regions it was around half that - 20-25 per cent.

“Many of our students are first in family to attend university, and most do not come to university straight from school. Many have worked and/or have undertaken post-school education prior to enrolling in undergraduate study. Many balance part-time university study with work and/or family commitments. Despite this, the majority finish their qualifications, and work in the professions in regional Australia. Their communities, and the nation, benefits” Professor Hill said.

“The proposal in MYEFO to significantly lower the repayment threshold for student debt from \$52,000 to \$45,000 will disproportionately impact on low income households.”

### **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)