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RUN UNIS GIVE HUGE BOOST TO REGIONAL ECONOMIES, SKILLS, JOBS AND WAGES

A new economic impact study for the Regional Universities Network (RUN) has found that the network's six regionally headquartered universities are a driving force in regional economies, and provide a dramatic multiplier effect on regional jobs, wages and productivity.

The study, by Nous Pty Ltd and the Centre for Policy Studies, shows seven out of 10 working RUN graduates are employed in a regional area, compared to two out of 10 of all Australian university graduates.

The universities spend \$1.59 billion and students spend \$480 million in campus regions. RUN universities deliver an additional \$1.7 billion to real GDP in their regional economies, through growing the skilled workforce in the regions and increasing wages; driving demand through increases in private and government consumption and international and interstate exports; and contributing to industry through research and knowledge capital.

The Chair of the RUN, Professor Greg Hill, said the study demonstrated the tremendous importance of the RUN universities: CQUniversity, Federation University Australia, Southern Cross University, University of New England, University of Southern Queensland, and the University of the Sunshine Coast, in contributing to jobs, wages and productivity in regional Australia. The six universities educate around 115,000 higher education students each year – about 9 per cent of all university students nationally. Although two of the universities, CQUniversity and Federation University Australia, are dual sector, the study has only focussed on higher education at regional campuses.

“Regional universities keep graduates in the regions and employ highly skilled staff. Over 18,300 skilled working graduates from our universities work in the regions across a range of disciplines including health and education, engineering, agriculture and environmental studies,” Professor Hill said.

“Graduates earn a premium in wages in line with their level of study (13 per cent for a diploma, 32 per cent for a bachelors qualification, and 41 per cent for masters or PhD). This results in an increase in real wages in relevant regions by an average of 3.2 per cent. Our universities employ 6,000 equivalent/full time staff.

“Our study has reinforced the finding of Emeritus Professor Halsey's Independent Review of Regional, Rural and Remote Education that education should be considered to be a fundamental part of regional development. Increasing the skills levels of employees in regional Australia helps overcome skills shortages, protects regional areas from structural adjustment as the economy shifts to tertiary industries, and encourages population growth

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by increasing the diversity of jobs.

“Providing more opportunities and courses for regional students to study in the regions will grow regional economies,” Professor Hill said.

“The current higher education funding freeze will negatively impact that growth and hurt regional communities. I urge the Government, including the Treasurer, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Senator Simon Birmingham, and the Minister for Regional Development, Territories and Local Government, Hon Dr John McVeigh MP, to consider the impact of regional universities in their decision making.”

Report summaries are at http://www.run.edu.au/cb_pages/publications.php

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