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FUNDING FREEZE HITS REGIONAL UNIS HARDEST – RUN CALLS FOR NATIONAL REGIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSIONER

Figures released by the ABC show that regional universities will be worst hit by the Federal Government's funding freeze on base funding.

The Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Professor Greg Hill, said the cuts had disproportionately affected regional universities as the institutions are more dependent on government funding than larger, metropolitan universities.

"This is an example of a one-size-fits all policy not working for the regions. Regional universities and graduates are major drivers in regional economies, and we need more skilled professionals working in regional Australia," Professor Hill said.

"Many of our universities are intending to grow student numbers and courses. The regional higher education attainment rate averages around 20 per cent, about half that of the major cities, but in some regions is much lower. For example, in the case of my own university, University of the Sunshine Coast, the Moreton North (Caboolture) and Fraser Coast areas have 13 per cent attainment.

"Seven out of 10 graduates from RUN universities work in the regions, compared to 2 out of 10 nationally.

"The Government could take action by appointing a National Regional Education Commissioner and supporting a National Regional Higher Education Strategy to ensure that policy and programs work in the interests of regional Australia," Professor Hill said.

"In the national interest, we call on the Government to take action to support the growth of regional university campuses."

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