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REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES NETWORK WELCOMES BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

In speeches to the Universities Australia Higher Education Conference 2019, both the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, and the Shadow Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, have prioritised lifting higher education participation and attainment in regional, rural and remote (RRR) Australia.

The Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Professor Helen Bartlett, welcomed the recognition by both sides of politics that, for the national good, the benefits of higher education should be spread more evenly across the nation.

“RRR Australia needs a place-based focus to achieve equity in higher education attainment, and fully realise the economic, social, and cultural benefits that universities bring to their communities,” Professor Bartlett said.

“We welcome the Government’s and Minister’s ongoing commitment to regional higher education. This includes developing a National RRR Education Strategy, the ongoing review led by the Hon Dr Denis Napthine, and the previously announced funding for regional campuses and study hubs.

“Minister Tehan’s interest in ensuring that both metropolitan and regional Australia benefits from the vibrant international student market is very welcome, and we look forward to hearing about new initiatives,” Professor Bartlett said.

“We are delighted that Labor, should it be elected, will appoint a RRR Education Commissioner to provide advice to the proposed National Inquiry into Postsecondary Education.

“The commissioner would develop strategies and policies to support students and tertiary institutions. RUN has argued for some time that such an appointment would provide a national focus for regional education.

“Labor advocates a multi-pronged approach, which will assist in lifting participation in higher education by RRR students.

“Increasing participation of underrepresented and disadvantaged Australians in postsecondary education and addressing the unique needs of post-secondary students and institutions in regional and remote Australia, are among its proposed inquiry’s Terms of Reference,” Professor Bartlett said.

“The restoration of the demand driven student system for bachelor places, the new equity

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and pathways funding, enshrining Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program funding in the Higher Education Support Act, and providing \$3.2 million over the next four years for mentoring and pathways programs in the 22 communities where there are study hubs, will all assist.

“RUN is very pleased that RRR education has become a focus for action,” Professor Bartlett said.

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