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TEHAN DELIVERS FOR REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) congratulates the Minister for Education, The Hon Dan Tehan MP, on delivering a higher education reform package which will help fuel regional economic growth and jobs, and address the gap in educational outcomes between regional, rural and remote Australia and capital cities.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Helen Bartlett, said that the Minister's announcement would drive national resilience and cohesion, and action priorities identified by the network from the National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy (Napthine Review).

"Addressing educational equity across the nation is in Australia's interest as a whole.

We are delighted by the particular focus in the package to assist more students from RRR Australia to attend and succeed at university – particularly the new Tertiary Access Payment of \$5,000, and the new \$500 million fund per year to universities for programs to support Indigenous, regional and low SES students. Guaranteed bachelor-level Commonwealth supported places for Indigenous students are particularly welcome" Professor Bartlett said.

"Lowering the cost of the student contribution for courses such as nursing, allied health, teaching, agriculture, engineering, IT and maths, should encourage greater uptake by regional students in these areas. It is estimated that there should be more places in the regions. More graduates from our universities will produce more graduates to work in regional Australia in areas of skills need.

"The National Priorities and Industry Linkage fund will help our students engage with regional STEM industries, including via internships and placements, boost employment, and reward research partnerships with industry.

"We enthusiastically welcome the new \$48.8 million research grants program to fund regional universities to partner with industry and other universities to boost research capacity. The program will further build research in regional Australia in areas of importance to regional industry and communities. Collaborative research priorities for RUN are: food and crops for the future; health and wellbeing in regional, rural and remote Australia; and new industries. We are currently developing proposals to advance our research in these areas.

"Addressing educational inequality in regional Australia will take years. A Regional, Rural and Remote Education Commissioner will be a champion for regional education and an advocate for a coherent policy response across governments and portfolios in the medium-term to make a lasting difference. The Commissioner will oversee the implementation and

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monitoring of the government's RRR Education strategy" Professor Bartlett said.

"RUN is looking forward to working with the Minister and department on the details of the funding model and continuing discussions on the need to recognise the role of regional universities in regional development".

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