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NAIDOC WEEK A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION AND REFLECTION ON REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) is this week celebrating and reflecting upon the tremendous histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in higher education as it marks NAIDOC Week 2023.

Chair of RUN, Professor Nick Klomp said that while NAIDOC Week affords an opportunity to pay respect to First Nations Peoples and celebrate their remarkable contributions and achievements in higher education, it was also important for regional universities to reflect upon their own evolving journeys with Australia's diverse First Nations Peoples, and the work yet to be done.

"Regional Universities, and their First Nations students and employees, have much to celebrate in terms of achieving meaningful progress towards many of the targets of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap," said Professor Klomp.

"For example, Graduate Outcomes Survey data shows Indigenous university graduates are more likely to have higher employment rates, and higher median starting salaries, than non-Indigenous graduates.

"RUN universities are incredibly proud of this fact given that approximately one in every four Indigenous undergraduate students in Australia today is studying at a RUN university, which is the highest representation of any university network.

"Our regional universities understand the important role they play in supporting the aspirations, participation, support and attainment of First Nations students in recent years.

"Indeed, RUN is the only university network in the nation whose rates of Indigenous enrolment (4 per cent as a proportion of domestic students) exceeds parity with First Nations representation within the Australian population.

"This success only tells part of the story of RUN's ongoing commitment to working alongside First Nations Australians on a shared journey towards genuine Reconciliation, and in meeting the many targets of Closing the Gap.

"We recognize that there is still more work to be done in lifting aspirations to higher education, removing more barriers, expanding support services, improving retention rates, and enhancing the online and on-campus experiences of First Nations students.

"RUN universities also recognise the importance of further growing our First Nations staffing cohorts at all levels, including the development of First Nations research workforces and research outputs, building upon our partnerships with First Nation representatives

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and communities, and importantly, supporting cycles of traditional knowledge transfer that have occurred for millennia,” said Professor Klomp.

The members of the Regional University Network acknowledge the diversity of Traditional Custodians of the lands upon which we live and work. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across Australia.

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