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SENATE AMENDMENTS STRENGTHEN THE ROLE, EXPERTISE, AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE ATEC

The passing of legislation in the Australian Senate establishing the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) is an important step on the long road to meaningful tertiary education reform.

The amended ATEC Bill meets a key recommendation of the Australian Universities Accord, bringing overdue reform one step closer for regional Australians and the universities they rely upon.

In welcoming the Senate's passing of legislation establishing the ATEC, RUN's Chief Executive Officer Alec Webb said it was reassuring to see sensible amendments made to the original legislation.

"RUN advocated for a series of pragmatic amendments to the legislation that sought to strengthen the role, expertise, and independence of the ATEC, and it was pleasing to see these amendments were ultimately adopted by the Senate," said Mr Webb.

Key amendments made to the original ATEC legislation that were the subject of ongoing RUN advocacy included:

- The establishment of a committee with deep sectoral expertise to determine the Higher Education Standards Framework.
- Enabling the ATEC to use its expertise to provide high-quality, evidence-based work outside the direct direction of a Minister.
- The inclusion of research in the role of the ATEC.
- Additional ATEC Commissioners.
- Clarity around the National Tertiary Education Objective.

With the passing of the legislation, Mr Webb said the ATEC can now begin to implement the many important equity reforms recommended by the Accord.

"The Accord set out a blueprint for reform that was designed to benefit students from regional, rural, and remote Australia, and the regional workforces and communities they graduate into.

"These reforms are long overdue, but with the amended ATEC legislation having now passed the Senate, it is time to finally roll up our sleeves and get on with the job of creating a more equitable and sustainable tertiary system that works for all Australians, regardless of background or geography.

"Regional universities will work proactively with the ATEC and its Commissioners to create a better, fairer system that enables regional students and the universities they rely upon to play a stronger role in Australia's skilled future," said Mr Webb.

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