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REVISED NATIONAL COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) views the final report of the Policy Review of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) as a missed opportunity for Australia's regions.

The Chief Executive Officer of RUN, Mr Alec Webb, said that the review was a perfect opportunity to readdress the continuing gravitation of research capabilities, infrastructure and workforces towards metropolitan Australia.

"While it was encouraging for the final report to acknowledge that excellence in research is not necessarily best served by concentrating funds on a small number of existing high performers, there was little to suggest the revised NCGP has been designed with Australia's regions in mind.

"The revised NCGP contains no dedicated scheme, nor collaborative requirements or incentives, that seek to explicitly support the research infrastructure, research capabilities, or research-trained workforces of Australia's regions and the universities they rely upon," said Mr Webb.

It is a national interest imperative for Australia to have strong regional universities who continually expand their research capabilities and specialist workforces.

Australia's regional universities are the leading place-based providers of highly-engaged research, leveraging their locational advantages to meet diverse regional needs.

"When you consider the most pressing challenges facing Australia today – food, water and soil security; mineral, resource and energy security; natural disaster response and resilience; border and bio-security, defence assets and capabilities; Australia's energy transition; our Closing the Gap targets – these are national challenges requiring regional solutions.

"The revised NCGP will almost certainly result in Australia's largest metropolitan universities increasing their already disproportionate share of NCGP grant success, which undermines the national interest of boosting tertiary and research participation within Australia's regions," Mr Webb said.

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