

MEDIA RELEASE
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New Rural and Regional Scholarships should encourage study in the regions

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) welcomes the release of the draft guidelines for the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships for students to study STEM subjects in higher and vocational education. Following a commitment in the 2016 election campaign, funding of \$24 million was provided in the 2017-18 budget for 1200 scholarships over 4 years. The Department of Education and Training released the draft guidelines on May 22 for comment.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Greg Hill, noted that more financial assistance for regional students to undertake tertiary education was welcome.

“Studies by RUN universities and others have shown that many students drop out of university due to financial hardship. The scholarships will go some way to addressing this issue, although we note that the funding isn’t ongoing so that the impact will be relatively limited.

“As well as providing support for regional Australians, it is important to provide some incentive for the scholarships to be taken up in regional Australia. Those who study in the regions largely stay in the regions to work, and regional Australia will benefit more widely.

“In the draft guidelines, it is proposed that priority is given to those in financial need (50 per cent weighting), and consideration is given to capability (35 per cent weighting) and significance of the proposed study (15 per cent weighting). Various considerations (e.g. people from areas of high unemployment, applicants proposing to undertake an internship, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and women studying in fields with low female representation) are listed for bonus points. We propose that bonus points are also given to those intending to study at a regional campus,” Professor Hill said.

“Providing an incentive to keep regional students in the regions is consistent with other government policy which is encouraging the location of government agencies and development of businesses in regional Australia.”

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