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REGIONAL AUSTRALIA NEEDS MORE UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

The Australian Regional Development Conference in Canberra on September 6 will hear that regional Australia needs more university graduates and that regional universities should be formally recognised in regional development policy.

The Executive Director of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Dr Caroline Perkins, said that the post-election period provided an opportunity for new policy development with a focus on regional higher education.

“Contrary to the view that there are too many university graduates, Graduate Careers Australia reports that graduate outcomes in the regions are good with respect to both employment and salaries. Seventy-two per cent of graduates who resided in regional areas in 2015 are likely to be in full-time employment, compared to 67.8 per cent in capital cities. RUN graduates are more likely to be in full-time employment compared to those of other university groups” Dr Perkins said.

“Median starting salaries of graduates employed in regional areas in 2015 were higher than those for their counterparts employed in capital cities ($55,000 compared with $53,000). Female graduates employed in regional areas earned a median starting salary $4,000 more than female graduates employed in the capitals.

“The Australian Bureau of Statistics predicts future skills shortages in regional Australia. The regions still lag behind major cities in higher education attainment. This isn’t because regional Australians are less able – their aspiration and preparation for university needs to be further lifted.

“Through university study and research, students become more highly skilled, and are better prepared to be creative, entrepreneurial and flexible to meet future job challenges. Many graduates may work in a range of professional roles over their working lives, including creating jobs for themselves and others, regardless of the discipline they study. For every 1000 university graduates entering the workforce 120 new jobs are created for people without a university degree.

“Effective regional development needs strategies to encourage maximum engagement of all stakeholders in local development issues. Regional universities should be formally recognised in regional development policy and be eligible for regional development funding” Dr Perkins said.

“RUN universities are major regional employers, major purchasers of local goods and services, and make a fundamental contribution to human capital and skills development, regional research and innovation, social and cultural development and regional capacity through engagement with their communities.”
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Find out more about the Regional Universities Network at [www.run.edu.au](http://www.run.edu.au)  
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