Skills for Australians package an opportunity for regional Australia

The Skills for Australians package announced by the Federal Government this week will provide important education and training opportunities for regional Australians, according to the Regional Universities Network (RUN).

The Chair of RUN, Professor David Battersby, said that in its report the government had recognised that education and training were key to regional development and productivity.

"Improving vocational education and training (VET) will help regional Australians attain stable and well paying jobs," Professor Battersby said.

"Compared to higher education, vocational education and training (VET) has almost double the proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. About 42 per cent of VET students are studying in the regions and are disadvantaged.

"The proposal to tie significant funding to agreed improvements in training outcomes, including in skills shortage occupations in the regions, will increase regional productivity and help meet regional industry needs.

"Higher education and vocational education and training must work closely together in regional Australia to maximise the opportunities for students. RUN's universities include dual sector institutions and all of our members work closely with TAFEs," Professor Battersby said.

"Our Structural Adjustment Fund projects will further enhance our partnerships across the tertiary sector."

While welcoming the proposed income contingent loan scheme for diplomas and advanced diplomas at VET providers, RUN urged that the proposed arrangements work in symmetry with the Higher Education Loan Program.

"It is important that the balance between student and government contributions in both sectors is broadly consistent so that there is no adverse flow on effects on higher education participation," Professor Battersby said.

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