MEDIA RELEASE
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Some gains and major cuts for universities in 2013 Budget

While the 2013 Federal Budget offers some minor funding increases for universities, it also implements the major cuts to funding for universities and student support announced by the Government in April.

Regional Universities Network (RUN) Chair Professor David Battersby acknowledged the new funding but said that the cuts remained a major setback for the sector and regional universities.

“While some new money for the sector is welcome, RUN remains deeply concerned about the impact of the previously announced cuts to regional universities, our students and our communities,” Professor Battersby said.

“RUN urges the Government to deliver some of the new diploma-level and masters-level places in teaching, nursing and Asian languages to regional Australian universities.

“We also welcome the announcement by the Government of an additional $135.3 million over five years to extend the Future Fellowships, and the $185.9 million to continue National Collaborative Research Infrastructure funding.

“However, the new money comes on top of the major cuts to higher education announced in April – the $900 million cut to universities via an efficiency dividend, the $1.2 billion savings arising from the conversion of student start-up scholarships to HECS loans, and the removal of 10 per cent up-front payment HECS discount ($228.5 million). These are in addition to significant cuts in university funding announced in 2012.

“We welcome the Government’s agreement to consult on the capping of self-education expenses at $2000 per annum, which was previously announced.

“There is also some positive news for education in regional Australia in the 2013 Federal budget, including $300 million through the Early Years Quality Fund to attract and retain qualified professionals in early childhood services, and extra funding for National Broadband Network Initiatives.

“It is critical to the nation’s future that all parts of the education system, from early childhood to tertiary education, are appropriately funded. Regional universities provide the most direct and cost effective way of further harnessing talent and developing skills in the regions.

“RUN universities are committed to realising the goal of contributing to human capital and national productivity in regional Australia. However this cannot be achieved
without adequate funding to our universities and support for our students,” Professor Battersby said.

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