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RUN URGES CAUTION ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POST-STUDY WORK RIGHTS

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) urges caution on extending international student post-study work rights to ensure that this policy will benefit all of Australia, and not just those in metropolitan areas.

While RUN commends the Government for their desire to increase the 16 per cent of international students who remain in Australia post-graduation, it is imperative that the regional differential in international post-study work rights policy is maintained.

Regional universities play a vital role in driving Australia's economic and social prosperity forward, providing opportunities for students, both domestic and international, to engage with higher education, world class research, and community partnerships. International students are an essential component in addressing the regional workforce needs.

International students choose their university of study for many reasons, one of which is the current policy settings that allow for international students who study in Australia's regions to benefit from extra years of post-study work rights.

The current policy has been successful in attracting additional international students to Australia's regions, resulting in more vibrant, diverse and productive regional communities while also providing regional Australia with an increased highly skilled workforce.

RUN's Executive Director, Alec Webb, welcomes the focus on international student post-study work rights, however, cautions against policy decisions that have unintended consequences for Australia's regional communities and regional universities, noting that workforce shortages are worse in Australia's regions.

"In addressing the jobs and skills crisis and allowing international students to remain post-graduation in Australia for longer, the Government must remain vigilant to guarantee that any policy response does not detract from Australia's regions.

"Australia's regional communities benefit socially, culturally, and economically from the international students who choose to study at our regional universities.

"It is imperative that the existing benefits provided to international students who enrich Australia's regional communities is maintained with the expansion of post-study work rights for international students in select degrees.", said Mr Webb.

RUN look forward to constructively working with the members of the working group to ensure outcomes that benefit all of Australia.

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