

**Submission  
No 25**

## **SUPPORT FOR START-UPS IN REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES**

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The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson MP  
Chair, Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment,  
Industry and Regional Development  
Parliament of New South Wales  
6 Macquarie Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Chair,

**Re: Inquiry into support for start-ups in regional NSW**

Universities Australia (UA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into support for start-ups in regional NSW. We are pleased that the 'Start Up Smarts' publication has been helpful in informing this discussion.

UA is the peak national body representing Australia's 39 comprehensive universities in the national interest. Our members make major contributions to Australia's economic and social well-being, and are an integral part of the Australian innovation ecosystem.

In regional areas universities are often a major focus not only for education, research and innovation but are also major employers, purchasers of goods and services, and providers of cultural, sporting and other facilities. Across Australia, universities contribute over \$2 billion each year to Australia's regional economies and sustain over 14,000 jobs. This places them in a central and visible role within their communities.

In considering support for start-ups in regional NSW, UA proposes the following issues be considered:

- Both Commonwealth and State governments offer a range of support aimed at encouraging and supporting innovation and start-ups. It is important that there are synergies between these programs, as well as with the activities of local governments. Without a level of co-ordination there is a danger that while some aspects of the start-up and innovation ecosystem could be well supported, there may be unhelpful gaps that jeopardise success.
- Local resources, strengths and interests will shape each regional innovation ecosystem. Therefore program design should maximise flexibility to allow for local conditions.
- Programs that facilitate and grow relationships between people inside and outside universities are valued. While universities are working hard to 'reach out' and enterprises are increasingly 'reaching in', both benefit from assistance from experienced facilitators. The Commonwealth 'Innovation Connections' program is being spoken of by SMEs as an effective model.
- Infrastructure such as advanced information and communication technology and effective transport links are key elements for growing enterprises and supporting innovation hubs. These are important for start ups regardless of location, but can present additional challenges for those in regional areas.

Professor Caroline McMillen, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle has said “Universities bring young people into (regional) cities, which leads to startups and new and emerging industries. Universities can’t do it alone. It requires shared leadership from civic leaders, business, industry and academic partners. But once there is a shared vision, it is possible to reshape the DNA of place and transform our cities and regions”.<sup>1</sup>

Universities in NSW, including those in the Regional Universities Network, along with Universities Australia would be pleased to work with the Committee on programs that support that shared leadership model.

Yours sincerely,

Catriona Jackson  
**DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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<sup>1</sup> Universities Australia (2017) *Startup Smarts: Universities and the Startup Economy*, p10