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RUN CONGRATULATES COALITION ON ELECTION WIN AND ANNOUNCES NEW CHAIR

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) congratulates the Coalition on its election win and looks forward to working with the new government.

Saturday also marked the appointment of Southern Cross University Vice- Chancellor, Professor Peter Lee, as RUN's new Chair.

Professor Lee takes over from RUN's inaugural Chair, University of Ballarat Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Battersby.

RUN Executive Director, Dr Caroline Perkins, thanked Professor Battersby on behalf of the network for his major contribution and welcomed Professor Lee to the position.

"Professor Battersby recognised the need for a peak body of regional universities and, along with Professor Bill Lovegrove, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southern Queensland, established RUN in late 2011. Professor Battersby has worked enthusiastically to help RUN build a strong regional and national profile. The network has been extremely influential in raising issues of relevance to regional Australian students, communities and universities with politicians, bureaucrats and the media," Dr Perkins said.

"Our landmark achievements have included: our policy document, Smarter Regions, Smarter Australia; the signing of the RUN Accord, a multi-lateral agreement committing our members to collaborate across a range of activities; two reports into the impact of our universities; winning a \$900,000 grant from the Commonwealth under the Australian Maths and Science Partnerships Program 'RUN Maths and Science Classroom –a connected model for all of Australia' (the first major grant to the network); the Future Forum program 'The Clever Country – Can Universities Meet the Challenges Facing Regional Australia?' broadcast on the ABC News-24; as well as establishment of number of working groups across RUN.

"I greatly look forward to working with Professor Lee to move the agenda forward. RUN has a lot more work to do to lift the participation in higher education in the regions, and further contribute to national productivity," Dr Perkins said.

Professor Battersby acknowledged the progress made by RUN over the last two years.

"The national interest served by regional universities is now widely recognised and because of this RUN has an important role in helping to influence and shape debate and policy parameters particularly around the issues that matter to regional Australians. It is an enormous privilege to be part of this and the RUN team, which will now be led by Professor Peter Lee along with Dr Caroline Perkins," Professor Battersby said.

Professor Lee said that he was looking forward to his role as Chair of RUN.

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"I also want to acknowledge the outstanding work of Professors Lovegrove and Battersby who have played such a vital role in establishing RUN. Without their tireless work we would have not got this far. But there is much to do to ensure that those 34% of people who live in regional and rural Australia have equal opportunity to transform their lives through the power of education. Regional universities are a force for transformation of both individual lives and the communities in which they are located. It will be a privilege to Chair the Regional Universities Network for the next two years," Professor Lee said.

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