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RUN ANNOUNCES NEW CHAIR

Professor Jan Thomas, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southern Queensland, was appointed today as the new Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN).

She takes over from Professor Peter Lee, Vice-Chancellor of Southern Cross University.

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

"Professor Lee has certainly had an extremely interesting and busy couple of years as the RUN Chair," Dr Perkins said.

"During the debate on higher education fee deregulation he has made a great contribution to enhancing RUN's position as a key and influential university lobby group. Regional universities are now widely seen as an important part of the university sector.

"Other highlights during Professor Lee's tenure have been: establishing collaboration across the network in the teaching and learning of languages and creative and performing arts; promoting our growing research profile; a \$1m grant under the Office of Learning and Teaching's Enhancing the Training of Maths and Science Teachers program for the project It's part of my life: engaging university and community to enhance science and mathematics education; and RUN delegations to the Republic of Korea and Vietnam at the invitation of the respective governments to enhance our collaboration with regional and other universities in those nations.

"I greatly look forward to working with Professor Thomas to address future challenges for our regional universities," Dr Perkins said.

Professor Lee said it had been a rare privilege to lead the RUN group over the past two years.

"All RUN members are committed to the vital provision of university education to those 7 million people who live outside the capital cities. The hallmark of the RUN group is the tight integration of our universities with the communities we serve. I look forward to continuing to work within the RUN group under Professor's Thomas's leadership," he said.

Professor Thomas said she was looking forward to her role as Chair. "I'm honoured to accept the position of Chair of RUN and am looking forward to building on the excellent reputation that Professor Lee has established for the regional network.

Professor Thomas said that in Australia's current higher education landscape, the role of the

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nation's regional universities has never been more important and that RUN will continue to push the boundaries to ensure that regional interests are at the forefront of government and industry decisions.

"One of the core values of RUN is the strong links it has forged with its communities and how the network of six regional universities has established a strong base from which they can support enrolment growth and access to higher education."

"As Chair I want to represent the interests of broad and diverse regions and bring to any discussion the absolute benefits that regional Australia has in terms of its economic, social and environmental capabilities," Professor Thomas said.

Photographs of Professor Jan Thomas available. Contact: 0422 536064

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