MEDIA RELEASE
14 October 2011

Formation of Regional Universities Network Announced

Six of Australia’s regional universities have announced the formation of a collaborative university network to boost the profile of regional tertiary education.

The foundation members of the network are CQUniversity, Southern Cross University, University of Ballarat, University of New England, University of Southern Queensland and University of the Sunshine Coast.

Inaugural Chair of the Regional Universities Network and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ballarat, Professor David Battersby, said that the members of the network all shared a deep understanding of regional Australia and played a vitally important national role in contributing to the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of their regions.

“The recent Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) report, Higher Education and Community Benefits, confirmed what our communities tell us on a regular basis. That is, regional universities are vital to the sustainability of communities in regional and rural Australia,” Professor Battersby said.

“Without the regional universities, many regional students would be deprived of the opportunity to undertake higher education. They are more likely than metropolitan students to be caring for dependants and to come from a low socioeconomic background.

“Two thirds of graduates from regional universities remain in regional areas for employment, with a significant percentage filling critically important professional roles in education, health and community services.

“It is in the national interest to work towards reducing the current significant gap in higher education participation rates between regional and metropolitan Australia. The links between education, innovation and productivity are well established and the country needs to tap the creativity, talent and potential of all Australians no matter where they live.”

Professor Battersby said the member universities also played a lead role in enriching the social and cultural life in their communities and in stimulating regionally relevant innovation and business development through their research activities.
“The Regional Universities Network has been established to provide policy advice to government, to strengthen and promote the contributions of regional universities to regional and national development, and to build the institutional capacity and sustainability of its members by sharing best practice,” Professor Battersby said.

“By leveraging our collective resources and capabilities, the member universities can achieve even more for their regional communities with flow-on benefits to national prosperity and development.”

ENDS

Contact:
Professor David Battersby
Chair, Regional Universities Network
03 5327 8500
0448 382 973
d.battersby@ballarat.edu.au

Matthew Freeman
Senior Adviser
Media and Government Relations
University of Ballarat
03 5327 9510
0408 519 674
m.freeman@ballarat.edu.au