

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**31 January 2019**

**Regional Universities Network welcomes new chair**

Professor Helen Bartlett, Vice-Chancellor of Federation University Australia, will be the next Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN).

Professor Bartlett will take over from Professor Greg Hill, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Sunshine Coast, on 31 January 2019 for a two-year term.

Professor Bartlett said that regional universities gave students the chance to study, work and live in their local communities, helping to create stronger regional economies.

“Over the past eight years, RUN has been able to help governments better understand this important role and how regional universities contribute to both the higher education sector and the communities in which they exist,” Professor Bartlett said.

“I thank outgoing RUN Chair Professor Greg Hill for his work, and will build on this to achieve greater recognition, better resources, and increased access and participation in higher education at all of Australia’s regional universities.

“With a federal election looming, this year promises to be an exciting period for higher education, and RUN will continue to be an active player in policy development and funding discussions.

“We will be out there promoting the value of the sector, increasing opportunities for students of all ages and helping our regional communities thrive.”

Outgoing Chair, Professor Greg Hill, said that his term was met with higher education reforms not seen for more than half a decade.

“The release of the 2017-18 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook saw a disproportionate negative impact on regional universities with a two-year freeze on Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding,” Professor Hill said.

“The Halsey Review and Cathy McGowan MP’s Private Members Bill calling for a National Regional, Rural and Remote Higher Education Strategy have encouraged positive actions from Government to boost educational attainment in the regions.

“RUN partnered with Nous Pty Ltd and the Centre for Policy Studies to develop a performance framework that captured the significant contribution of RUN universities to their regional communities and Australia more broadly.

“We also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Kingdom’s MillionPlus Association to collaborate on strategy and place-based policy development.

“I commend and thank RUN’s Executive Director Dr Caroline Perkins for her continued commitment to raising the profile of regional universities in Canberra.

“There are still significant barriers to regional, low socioeconomic status, Indigenous and first in family Australians attending university.

“We have a lot of work to do as a network and with Government to reduce educational inequality between regional and metropolitan Australia.”

RUN’s Executive Director, Dr Caroline Perkins, welcomed Professor Bartlett to the role and thanked Professor Hill for his service.

“During Professor Hill’s time as Chair, RUN has advocated for, and made a significant contribution to, the recognition of regional universities in place-based policy,” Dr Perkins said.

“I look forward to working with Professor Bartlett during what promises to be an exciting year.”

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**Bio of Professor Helen Bartlett:**

<https://federation.edu.au/about-us/our-university/biographies/professor-helen-bartlett>