



## Media statement

29 June 2023

# IRU welcomes the appointment of next La Trobe University Vice-Chancellor

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) welcomes the appointment of Professor Theo Farrell as the new Vice-Chancellor at La Trobe University.

Professor Farrell will bring extensive leadership experience to the IRU, both through the insights he has in innovative teaching and learning and also through his vast experience in engaging with policy-makers.

IRU Chair Professor Paddy Nixon said that on behalf of the IRU he welcomes the appointment of Professor Farrell.

“Professor Farrell is a distinguished leader for La Trobe University and someone who will make an invaluable contribution to our ability to influence higher education policy at this crucial time for the sector,” he said.

“We look forward to seeing how Professor Farrell’s experience and leadership will enhance the important work of the group.

“I would also like to acknowledge Professor John Dewar, the outgoing Vice-Chancellor of La Trobe University. His measured and steady influence has been deeply appreciated both at IRU and also in the wider higher education community.”

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said he is looking forward to working with Professor Farrell and thanks Professor Dewar for his contributions to the IRU and the sector.

“The IRU is enthusiastic about working with Professor Farrell as we continue our work that values inclusive education and innovative research that advances our communities,” he said.

“Professor Dewar’s departure will be sorely felt by the group where he has served both on the Vice-Chancellor’s Committee and as Chair from 2014 to 2015.”

Professor Farrell comes to La Trobe University from the University of Wollongong where he served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice President (Academic and Student Life). He is a leading scholar of the Afghanistan war and previously acted as a strategic adviser to the Government of the United Kingdom and the US-led command in Kabul where he participated in peace talks with the Taliban.

A celebrated author, Professor Farrell’s latest title, *Unwinnable War in Afghanistan* (Penguin Random House 2017), was shortlisted for three national book awards and was selected by *The Sunday Times* as book of the year.

Professor Farrell will replace Professor John Dewar AO in February 2024 and will build on Professor Dewar’s legacy to deliver on an ambitious strategy of engagement with the La Trobe Community across their city and regional campuses.

[iru.edu.au](http://iru.edu.au)

Professor Dewar has led the La Trobe community for over a decade, steering the university through challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering success and impact across the sector

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## IRU contact

Bethany Keats, Marketing and Media Advisor

**M** 0481 092 635 **E** [bethany.keats@iru.edu.au](mailto:bethany.keats@iru.edu.au)

## About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven comprehensive universities across Australia committed to inclusive education and research with impact that advances our communities. Its members are Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.