

The Armidale Express

University of New England announces redundancy program and organisational redesign

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Vice chancellor Brigid Heywood has announced a restructure at UNE.

With the University of New England facing a \$25 million loss this year, and a similar forecast for next year, it has announced a massive restructure.

Vice-chancellor Brigid Heywood announced on Wednesday that the university would start a redundancy program to reduce its annual costs by \$20 million.

As part of the restructure, which is planned to be completed over the next six months, Professor Heywood outlined where money would be diverted to.

More than \$2 million will go towards a new precinct for science and technology courses at the Armidale campus, while money will also go towards getting its planned Tamworth facility operating, and some changes at its Parramatta campus.

There will be new portfolios in the organisational chart to focus on areas such as technology and working with businesses. Another portfolio will have the responsibility for finding savings in their operational costs.



The VC addressed the TV cameras on Wednesday.

Professor Heywood said there would also be a major investment in a new online learning platform.

The savings will start with the voluntary redundancy program and the VC said UNE would seek expressions of interest from academic and professional staff.

Professor Heywood said she had been working on a restructure since joining UNE 12 months ago to take advantage of other opportunities.

This had been fastracked by the financial difficulties caused by the effect of the drought, bushfires then COVID-19, she said.

The VC would not put a figure on how many jobs would be cut from the university's workforce.

"The outcome of the change has to be the \$20 million saving," Professor Heywood said.

If that saving is not reached by the end of the year, she said UNE would have to consider forced redundancies.

"We would prefer not to do that. We think we have a plan where we can achieve the majority of those savings."

NSW Shadow Minister for Tertiary Education and Innovation, Clayton Barr described the cuts as devastating.

"This is about saving jobs and livelihoods, particularly in a regional community like Armidale," Mr Barr said, adding it would have a big impact on the local economy.

"The University of New England plays a vital role in Armidale and surrounds. This is a devastating blow.

"There are people who won't be able to pay the rent or buy groceries because of this decision.

"Without employment, many people will be forced to leave town," he said.