Former Treasury chief a SMART appointment

By GREG ELLIS

FORMER Treasury secretary Dr Ken Henry has been appointed chairman of the University of Wollongong’s SMART Infrastructure Facility Advisory Council.

The appointment is considered a coup for the university as Dr Henry is recognised as one of Australia’s most influential public policy experts.

His first official visit to Wollongong will be on November 11 for the official opening of the $62 million SMART facility.

SMART chief executive Garry Bowditch said it had taken three months to secure the appointment because Dr Henry had been on holiday and other organisations were trying to secure his services.

But Mr Bowditch said it was worth pursuing such an important national figure.

“The University of Wollongong always paints on a big canvas,” he said. “This is further confirmation UOW is working at a national level to address infrastructure issues.

“I used to work with Ken. We were in Treasury together. When I rang him and asked if he would be interested in the idea he already had a broad knowledge of the university and was aware of the quality of the SMART facility advisory board.”

During Dr Henry’s visit on November 11 he will chair a meeting of the advisory council which is responsible for guiding the infrastructure facility in its work to deliver integrated infrastructure planning solutions for Australia.

The council includes former NSW premier Nick Greiner and many influential infrastructure leaders from industry and government across Australia.

Dr Henry said he was aware of SMART’s standing as a world-class research and education centre.

He described it as an important national initiative and a highly relevant area of research that would have a positive impact on how Australia “considers, views, procures, designs and manages infrastructure systems”.

“Our ability to be economically productive and competitive in the future depends heavily on having infrastructure systems that are well managed and can support industrial and societal evolution and innovation,” he said.

“I think there is great value in further developing and championing the research at SMART.”

Dr Henry was secretary to the Commonwealth Treasury between 2001 and 2011.