

MEDIA RELEASE

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Government delivers on its vision for a world-class university system

Innovative Research Universities (IRU) Australia congratulates the government for holding firm to its vision for a world-class university system despite severe budgetary constraints.

IRU Australia Director, Lenore Cooper said the government recognises that investment in higher education will be critically important to building a strong and resilient economy for the future based on knowledge, skills and innovation.

“Last night’s budget addressed many of IRU Australia’s key policy and funding priorities”, Ms Cooper said.

“In particular, we are pleased that the government will be introducing a more appropriate method for the annual indexation of government grants and will be moving towards funding the full cost of research grants.

“Current funding approaches have served to seriously erode the real value of government grants for many years, posing a significant threat to the sustainability and quality of the university sector.”

“The additional funding of \$491 million over four years to underpin the new student centred funding system will also be vitally important if universities are to deliver on the government’s target of increasing national higher education attainment levels”, Ms Cooper said.

“As leaders in the provision of higher education to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the IRU Australia member universities also strongly endorse the government’s ambition to open the doors of higher education and increase participation by these students to 20 per cent.

“The additional funding of \$433 million over four years to support this goal will enable universities to develop new partnerships aimed at raising educational aspirations and enhance support for students once they are enrolled.

“IRU Australia also commends the government’s plans to overhaul the student income support system to increase access to, and better target, income support for students who need it most.

“The significant investment in tertiary education and research infrastructure of around \$3 billion will not only create jobs and provide short term stimulus to the economy, it will be required to underpin projected expansion in student numbers and to ensure

that students, researchers and the community have access to high quality university facilities.

“While we are yet to examine the detail of the government’s announcements, this budget package looks set to put Australian universities on a path towards revitalisation, innovation and growth that will serve the nation well for many decades to come”, Ms Cooper said.

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