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IRU Media Release

IRU: Support Higher Education Legislation with Amendments

Australia's Innovative Research Universities (IRU) support passage of the *Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014* with amendments to ensure it best supports the future needs of Australia's students and universities.

"The Bill tabled in Parliament today sets the basis for a constructive discussion about the Government's reform package as it moves through the Parliament," said Conor King, the IRU's Executive Director.

IRU members support the direction of the legislation, which will provide a viable basis for universities over the next decade.

"Universities have long made the case that funding for each student needed to be greater to ensure an effective high quality future focussed education for our students," said Conor King, "It is clear that Governments from both sides of politics cannot find the Government investment to support this. Rather we continue to face major constraints on public investment."

The Government's plan as presented in the Bill is not without flaws. These should be addressed before the Bill is passed. The IRU will continue to work with all parliamentarians to achieve the required amendments.

The major 20% cut to base funding per student should be scaled back to retain reasonable levels of Government investment. The IRU supports the Government's changes to the funding tiers. These better distribute the available funding than the current dated grouping of disciplines.

The regressive nature of the proposal to index graduate's HELP debts by the ten-year bond rate is clear. This needs to change, with the CPI index retained for at least the debts of graduates not earning sufficient income to make repayments.

The IRU argues that the proposed Commonwealth Scholarships Scheme must align the funds for scholarships with the students for whom they are intended, through a national pool. Each student should decide the university they attend based on the educational value they will receive, knowing that each of the universities they consider will have available scholarship funds of a similar amount to support them.

The IRU remains concerned about the reduction in funding for research training, which puts at risk our future research workforce.

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For comment contact IRU Executive Director, Conor King M: 0434 601 691 **W:** iru.edu.au