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## IRU STATEMENT 05/2015

# CRC renewal first step to drive industry led research

The Government's endorsement of the review of the Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) is an important step to improving industry driven research.

Making industry the driver of the CRCs, which requires industry-led Centres with a clear focus on industry based problems, goes to the heart of the challenge - to get industry to take responsibility to identify research needs and pursue them, drawing in the breadth of university research capability.

The creation of a new stream, CRC Projects, widens the scope of the program, recognising that the industry research needs can be of various size and complexity, with smaller enterprises needing some simpler options.

The Government focus on the national science priorities and the five Industry Growth Centres can work as long as there is scope for other industry areas to make the case for support to ensure we do not neglect emerging industries and opportunities. As the report says "the programme should continue to be available to all industry sectors" including those not considered areas of existing comparative advantage.

The report's focus on approving CRCs to address a problem rather than to operate for a period may address the long standing problem of what happens once a CRC's term concludes. The receipt of Government funding is always helpful but if the link between researchers and industry has been productive, the capacity of industry partners to bear the necessary costs should be there.

The changes to streamline the selection and operational processes are useful but the programme will retain the current focus on identifying a small number of best applicants. This means rejecting many highly suitable applications. A Government committed to raising the level of industry driven research needs to support all high quality bids, for the resultant gain from more successful enterprises.

### Support for non-commercial research users

Focusing CRCs at industry needs is consistent with the IRU's call for the Government to target research support to industry distinct from research for public and nonprofit organisations.

However, the research needs of Government and non-profit research users should not be neglected. These address important economic and social issues which underpin our capacity to be a productive cohesive society, providing a secure base for enterprises to flourish. Support for such research needs to be part of the Government's long term research framework.

### Next steps to promote industry driven research

The CRC changes are a first step. Australia needs a fundamental change in approach to engender a significant increase in industry driven research while ensuring the existing academic research capability continues to develop.

IRU now awaits the Government's response to its consultations about the commercialisation of research to set the full suite of incentives to industry and business to seek out research that can improve their operations and commercial outcomes.

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As part of this we need to change the internal and external perception of university research that over emphasises investigator driven research. This requires a national assessment of the quality of university support for industry led research through a considered judgement based on analysis of relevant data.

The IRU's full agenda to support industry driven research is available at [here](#).

**END**

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