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Striking a better balance: supporting university research

Dr Ian Watt's Review of Research Policy and Funding Arrangements proposes a fundamental overhaul of the Research Block Grant programmes so that they support both fundamental research and that supporting industry and other end user needs.

"The Report gives the Government the basis to strike a better balance of incentives for universities to engage with business and other end users of research. We need to maintain our substantial fundamental research capability, whose world class standard has been shown yet again through ERA 2015, and strengthen the value of research for end users," said IRU Executive Director, Mr Conor King.

The Watt review comes at an important juncture for the future of Australian research.

"I hope the Government will endorse the thrust of Dr Watt's recommendations in its coming innovation statement and go on to ensure that business has the right incentives to in parallel take up the challenge to invest in research that supports its needs."

The Report's key themes are in line with the [IRU's submission to the Review](#).

The IRU welcomes in particular Dr Watt's proposal for an impact and engagement assessment framework which echoes [IRU's proposal](#) for a measure featuring panel-based judgements to complement ERA.

The proposal for an additional funding of \$50 million per annum from 2018 to further incentivise engagement through strategic investment is a step in the right direction – if the Government commits to this and other areas recommended for funding.

There is also much work to be done to flesh out the Watt proposals and test them for any unintended consequences. For example the removal of publications from the funding drivers might act against humanities and Social Sciences research, disciplines that have been less highly rated in each ERA assessment.

"In the past few days, IRU has showcased successful examples of '[Innovation in Action](#)'. Dr Watt's recommendations will enable IRU members to increase the number of successful outcomes with industry and other research end users."

IRU members look forward to continuing to work with the Government and with industry towards achieving the same level of excellence in supporting industry as we have demonstrated in our fundamental research.

The IRU Innovation in Action Series highlighting IRU policy and member's examples is available [here](#).

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For comment contact

IRU Executive Director, **Conor King** M: 0434 601 691

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