

IRU media release

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Student Coronavirus payments a good outcome: IRU

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group has welcomed confirmation that university students will be eligible for the Government's fortnightly \$550 Coronavirus supplement, initially available to jobseekers but not students.

Finance Minister Mathias Cormann confirmed yesterday evening that the special 'Coronavirus Supplement' would be extended to eligible Abstudy, Austudy and youth allowance (student) claimants, following pressure on the issue from student groups, universities and parliamentary Parties.

If students were excluded from the Coronavirus Supplement, it would create a perverse financial incentive for young people to cease study at university because they would receive more money as a jobseeker than as a student.

Students are also being hit as casual jobs shrink with the contracting economy.

The IRU welcomed the Finance Minister's announcement, saying that extending the payment to students will be a boost to universities and the wider economy, as well as to the individuals in receipt.

The \$550 supplement will be available for an initial six months, with the possibility of a further extension depending on how the Coronavirus situation evolves.

Eligible students will also receive the first \$750 one-off economic stimulus payments being provided to income support recipients, pensioners and other eligible concession card holders.

The IRU remains concerned that many international students, who are not eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement, may struggle to make ends meet during the current crisis, particularly as international students have few support options if they lose their part-time jobs.

IRU Executive Director Conor King said:

"This is a good outcome for Australian students, universities and the wider economy.

"Extending the Coronavirus Supplement to eligible students will remove the perverse incentive for young people to stop studying, during this particularly challenging time. Students have a lot to grapple with at the moment, so the extra support is essential.

"The IRU thanks the Government for quickly accepting the argument made in the Parliament and making the necessary changes to the rules.

"2020 is an extremely challenging year for the higher education sector. IRU will work with the Government to ensure that university education and research capability remain robust, and that universities remain major economic players in their regions and beyond."

iru.edu.au



IRU contacts

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

IRU Marketing and Media Advisor, William Summers **T:** 03 9479 5312

About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven comprehensive universities committed to inclusive excellence in teaching and research in Australia. Its members are Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University and Western Sydney University.