

Media release

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Budget 2020: Invest in research, fix JRG

Next week's Covid-19 recovery Budget should include major investments in university research and sensible changes to the Government's Job-Ready Graduate (JRG) funding package, the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group says.

Ahead of Budget day on 6 October, the IRU is calling on the Government to use the opportunity to invest in Australian university research and to fix the remaining problems with the JRG legislation.

Investing in a Research Sustainability Program

University research capacity will be permanently damaged if long-term sustainable funding is not coupled with short-term support to bridge the looming funding hole left by Covid-19 and the collapse of the international student market.

Media reports this week suggest the Government will bring forward up to \$700 million of funding to shore up university research in 2021 and 2022. The money would be a much-needed investment to support universities' transition to the post-Covid-19 world. It would also recognise the extraordinary value of high-quality university research, particularly amid the hunt for a coronavirus vaccine.

However, the funding has been touted as future money being brought forward from 2024 and 2025 rather than additional funds. If so, the Government will need to back long-term proposals from its Sustainable Research advisory group to avoid a major funding hole in those two years and beyond.

The IRU is calling on the Government to provide a substantial two-year Research Sustainability Program to bridge the looming gap in research investment.

Fixing the Job-Ready Graduates package

The economic recovery is a further reason for the Government to see sense and reshape its Job-Ready Graduate proposals. No student should pay higher charges than currently, and universities must not see reductions in average student revenues.

The IRU has previously put forward alternative modelling showing how the Government can re-jig its changes to student charges to reduce the amount paid by those studying top-tier subjects while remaining cost-neutral overall.

The IRU has [consistently argued](#) Parliament should amend the Job-Ready Graduates legislation to make it fairer before passing it into law. The reforms have been controversial for their impact on student charges but provide welcome funding for new university places in future years.

iru.edu.au

IRU Executive Director Conor King said:

“Universities have a central role to play in Australia’s recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. But the Government must also play its role by making sure university research is sustained now and into the future.

“If the Government accepts IRU changes to the JRG package, it will be a clear improvement on the current arrangements and also better than what is currently on the table.”

- [Read the IRU’s full pre-Budget submission](#) (24 August 2020)

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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.