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Media Release

The Senate has three choices not two: The Job-Ready Graduates Bill

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The choice is not between the two bad options of the JRG package as presented or continuation of the frozen system imposed from 2018.

The Senate can do what it has done many times on many issues. It can find a resolution that fixes the worst elements of the Government's proposal, giving universities and their students a solid, sure base for the coming decade.

It is not a Manichean fight between light and dark. It is the standard everyday political challenge to find a plausible grey outcome with flecks of colour on the horizon.

Senators can attempt to skewer Vice-Chancellors and other university representatives as much as they wish in the current hearings.

The reality universities face is to work with a thrice elected Government that is determined to contain its investment in the university education needed for the coming decade.

Of course universities think the investment should be higher. Yet we have to work with the continued decision of the electorate to return a Government committed to less funding and greater student payments.

The IRU has identified four major changes. The Group of Eight has proposed similar outcomes. Other university groups have proposed minor improvements. STA has a practical resolution for STEM funding.

Students now pay \$11,355 for many courses. The Labor Party accepts this. In six years in power it did nothing to alter the breadth or the top amount that students could pay. It targeted expansion in access and other improvements. The IRU charges proposal and the position of the Go8 is to keep that level as the maximum. The Senate can force the Government to do that as part of its role to improve, not just block.

The Government wishes to improve STEM outcomes through less funding for STEM courses. The argument is bizarre. The Government provides little funding detail for its proposed programs – this should be clear before any vote. The legislation should be explicit about the basis on which future Ministers will set university by university funding amounts but the Government does not propose more Ministerial discretion than several previous systems.

These issues can be addressed if senators force the issue, not limit themselves to the persiflage that only one of two bad outcomes is possible.

iru.edu.au

The Senate Education and Employment Committee members have clearly read the IRU's analysis, they cited it multiple times at the hearing yesterday. The IRU therefore calls on senators to use our options to improve and pass the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-Ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020*.

[See the IRU's full submission to the Senate Inquiry \(PDF\)](#)

IRU contacts

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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.