

Media release

6 October 2020

Job-Ready Graduates or not, senators must unfreeze university funding

Federal senators must find a way to unfreeze university funding whether the Job-Ready Graduates Bill passes through Parliament this week or not, the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group has said.

As the JRG package is currently presented, universities face a choice between continuation of former Education Minister Senator Birmingham's frozen funding system, announced late in 2017, or implementation of the changes now brought forward by his successor Dan Tehan.

The university sector has been portrayed by some political commentators as supportive of the Job-Ready Graduates package, whereas it is more accurate to say the sector does not want the current system to continue.

Neither the Birmingham funding freeze nor the unamended JRG Bill works for the needs of Australia in the coming decade.

To provide a way through, the IRU has proposed four major changes to the proposed JRG package:

1. Rework the proposed student charges to maintain an approximate two-fold spread that supports all students pursuing their considered preference.
2. Work out a fairer level of university funding for each major discipline so universities do not receive less revenue per student on average than currently.
3. Provide an additional 10,000 National Priority places to meet the Covid-19 jump in demand for university education
4. Remove the pointless 'accountability' measures in Schedule 4, which include excluding students when they fail more than 50% of units.

The Minister's announcement of additional funding for places in 2021 is a step in the right direction to fix the IRU's third ask, but not enough for the rest of the package to be palatable.

However, the reported concessions to One Nation (inserting new regulations around academic freedom) only worsen the package.

The IRU is therefore calling on senators to continue to pursue major changes to the JRG Bill and then pass an improved package.

IRU contacts

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

IRU Marketing and Media Advisor, William Summers **M:** 0434 275 792

iru.edu.au



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.