

Media Release

5 December 2021

Boosting participation in tertiary education will deliver major benefits for Australia

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) welcomes the announcement today by the leader of the Labor Party, Anthony Albanese, for an additional 20,000 university places over the coming years.

This announcement recognises the central role of universities in supporting the economic development of their communities and Australia's post-COVID recovery.

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris noted the focus on national skills shortages and on increasing the participation of under-represented groups in tertiary education.

"The IRU stands for inclusive excellence in both education and research. Our universities are spread right across the country, in major cities and regional areas, and are training future workers in critical sectors such as health, education and technology," he said.

The additional places proposed by the ALP would support the continued expansion of access to university, with a demographic bump leading to increased numbers of school leavers over the next four years.

"The IRU believes in broadening participation, which in turn delivers major economic and social benefits to the nation. Already 50% of all of our students are the first in their family to attend university and the IRU is proud to have more First Nations students enrolled than any other group of Australian universities. We believe that there is unfinished business in equity and participation and we welcome the prioritisation of under-represented groups in this announcement."

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About the IRU

The IRU is a network of eight 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, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.

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