



Media release

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Highlighting the impact of universities in their communities

As part of their 20th anniversary celebrations, the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) is hosting an international guest to put the spotlight on universities and their relationships with local communities.

Natalie Day, the Head of Policy and Strategy at Sheffield Hallam University and the Policy Lead for the Civic University Network in the United Kingdom, will be speaking at an event in Canberra that aims to highlight the ways in which universities can engage with their local communities.

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said the event, which is being held in conjunction with Engagement Australia, is timed so that universities can have community relationships in the forefront of their mind as the sector engages with the Universities Accord process.

“We want universities to get together to share best practices and to think about the policy settings that can maximise community impact into the future,” he said.

“Natalie’s expertise in the UK system will bring an international perspective to the discussion as we think about the future of the Australian system.”

Ms Day will be highlighting ways UK universities are pivoting to more place-based approaches and the implications that has for Australia.

“There are many great examples of civic activity but we don’t necessarily always see a strategic approach based on the real needs of the local community,” she said.

“The civic agenda provides us with an opportunity to reignite discussion and debate about the role and obligations of universities in the community. As Australian universities get ready to make submissions to the Universities Accord, there are many lessons they can learn from UK universities around driving positive societal change.”

IRU members are spread across the country and are all embedded in their local communities. By working together as a network of universities, we join the local, national, and international.

The event *Civic universities: a new accord between universities and their communities*, which is being run by the IRU and Engagement Australia, will be held on Friday 24 February at the National Convention Centre, Canberra. Registrations via <https://iru.edu.au/iru-events/>

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Interviews available via:

Bethany Keats, Marketing and Media Advisor: **M** 0481 092 635 **E** bethany.keats@iru.edu.au

iru.edu.au



About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven comprehensive universities across Australia committed to inclusive education and research with impact that advances our communities. Its members are Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.