



Media release

1 September 2023

IRU Accord response focuses on equity, research, diversity and innovation

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) has today submitted its response to the Universities Accord Interim Report, emphasising the opportunity for a new partnership between government and universities to deliver a more equitable and innovative Australia.

The group of seven universities has outlined its priorities and positions in response to the Interim Report, with key recommendations focused on improving student equity and success; research funding and impact; and placing First Nations at the heart of the university system.

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris welcomed the Interim Report's focus on equity and on the contribution of universities to the big challenges and opportunities facing the nation.

"We support the Interim Report's proposal to set targets to improve equity and success for students from under-represented backgrounds. Given the diversity of communities, student populations and universities across Australia, a one-size-fits-all approach will not get us to these targets."

"In order to meet the big national goals proposed in the Interim Report, it is clear that additional public investment will be required. The good news is that international evidence clearly shows that public investment in higher education and research drives greater productivity, social cohesion and wellbeing," he said.

Key points:

- The IRU supports the proposal to set targets to improve equity and access for students, with university-specific targets set through new mission-based Accord agreements.
- Broader reforms will also be needed to meet these equity targets, including reform of the Job-Ready Graduates (JRG) package and of financial support for students.
- Given the significant public benefits to the nation, further expansion of higher education should be primarily funded by government rather than increasing student contributions.
- Research Block Grant funding should be increased and included in mission-based Accord agreements, with accountability linked to measures of both research quality and impact.
- The IRU supports a First Nations-led review of access and outcomes, the establishment of a First Nations Higher Education Council and additional funding for First Nations-led research.
- The IRU does not support a levy on international student revenue, but it does support a mechanism for redistribution of public funding to areas of greatest need and impact.

--ENDS--

iru.edu.au



Interviews available via:

Paul Harris, IRU Executive Director

M 0497 439 867 **E** paul.harris@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.