



Media release

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IRU signs new partnership agreement with the University of the South Pacific

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) today affirmed its commitment to strengthening two-way mobility and collaboration with partners in Pacific Island Nations, with the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of the South Pacific (USP).

USP Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Pal Ahluwalia delivered the keynote address to open the second day of the IRU Senior Leaders Forum at Griffith University, followed by the signing of the MoU.

The new cooperation agreement will support dialogue between USP and the seven universities in the IRU with the goal of increased mobility for academic staff and collaboration in PhD programs and research, among other areas.

IRU Chair Professor Paddy Nixon (Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Canberra) welcomed the new partnership with USP and affirmed members' commitment to strengthening connections with institutions in the region.

"This MoU signals our commitment to work more closely with USP to build stronger links through education and research in the region," he said.

"This is a part of our *IRU Strategy 2022-27* to develop and foster key partnerships in the Indo-Pacific."

Professor Pal Ahluwalia said he is looking forward to cooperating with IRU members on research and education.

"This MoU signals a new phase in university partnerships between Australia and the Pacific," he said. "USP welcomes the IRU's invitation to work more closely, and with mutual cooperation, to strengthen all parties involved."

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said the IRU has a commitment to forging connections between international engagement and partnerships with local communities.

"International data collected by Universities Australia shows that the IRU has more partnership agreements with institutions in the Pacific than any other group of Australian universities," he said.

"Today, we presented the results of a project to map the wide range of our existing links with Pacific partners, to provide an evidence base for the development of new initiatives to strengthen collaboration.

"It is essential for the IRU that there is a genuine two-way dialogue with Pacific partners and Pāsifika communities, to shape the next phase of our collaboration. By working together across our universities and with key partners, we can all increase our impact."

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Interviews available via:

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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.