

Media statement

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No time to lose to commence urgent university reforms: IRU Pre-Budget Submission 2024-25

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the 2024-25 Federal Budget. This year's Budget comes at a critical time for government to respond to the final report of the Universities Accord panel and to commence the reforms that are necessary to maximise the contribution of universities to national productivity and inclusive economic growth.

The Universities Accord process is the most significant review of the Australian university system in 15 years, with the panel's final report completed at the end of 2023.

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said that the Universities Accord provides an opportunity that Australia can't afford to miss.

"The 2024-25 Budget should mark the beginning of a longer-term reform process that will set Australia up for the future," he said.

"Wise investments in higher education and research will deliver the skills Australia needs today as well as creating the jobs of tomorrow. Genuine partnership between universities and government, with critical funding reforms in key areas, can increase equity and participation, better support students and increase the economic and social impact of university research."

The IRU recommends a number of specific reforms that should commence in the 2024-25 Budget:

- A new funding model with a focus on equity
- Reform of the Job-Ready Graduates (JRG) package
- Measures to increase student income support, with immediate action on paid support for compulsory work placements (as outlined in the Employment White Paper)
- Reform of research funding, with changes to the Research Block Grant and whole-of-government agreement on support for the indirect costs of research
- Investment in Indo-Pacific partnerships, with the IRU proposing an initial program of engagement with Pacific Island Nations.

"We acknowledge the progress that has already been made on Accord reforms over the last 12 months and see the May 2024 Budget as a critical next step," Mr Harris said.

"The IRU Pre-Budget submission recognises the significant investments already made by the Australian Government in education and research and makes recommendations to increase the effectiveness of those investments to achieve our shared goal of a more equitable and innovative Australia."

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.

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