



## Media release

14 May 2024

# IRU response to the 2024-25 Federal Budget

## Student support welcome, but critical higher education reforms left undone

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) fully supports the government's focus on students, equity and the cost of living, but warns that the ambitious long-term goals of the Universities Accord will not be met without further policy and funding reform.

IRU Chair Professor Simon Biggs (Vice-Chancellor and President of James Cook University) welcomed the new measures announced in tonight's Budget and quick action on key Accord recommendations.

"The first stage of the government's response to the Universities Accord final report has delivered for students, and provides critical assistance with cost-of-living pressures," he said.

"Significant announcements such as uncapped Commonwealth-supported places for all Indigenous students, targeted reform of HELP loans to reduce student debt, a new National Student Ombudsman and the new Prac Payment for student placements are all in line with IRU recommendations to the Accord and prioritise affordability, equity and student wellbeing."

"We particularly welcome the announcement tonight of additional funding for fee-free Uni Ready preparatory courses, which are essential for increased participation and student success."

"Wise investments in education and research deliver the skills Australia needs today as well as the jobs of the future. We call for ongoing reform to enhance equity and innovation in higher education, as a key driver of future productivity and inclusive growth."

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said the announcement in tonight's Budget of a new Australian Tertiary Education Commission is a significant milestone for the university system but that urgent reforms cannot be deferred.

"We welcome the government's focus on equity and participation, setting a new tertiary attainment target for 2050 and committing to a new needs-based funding model. But the Accord's ambitious targets will not be met without follow-through and funding to match," he said.

"Equity and affordability for students depends on reform of the Job-Ready Graduates (JRG) package, and the longer we leave it, the harder it will get. We also need urgent research policy and funding reforms to provide the knowledge and innovation that will underpin A Future Made in Australia."

"We look forward to engaging constructively with government and the Tertiary Education Commission over the coming months, to maintain momentum and deliver on the promise of the Accord."

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[iru.edu.au](http://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. 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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