



## Media Statement

27 November 2024

# IRU welcomes passage of legislation to enact key Universities Accord recommendations

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) welcomes the passing of the *Universities Accord (Student Support and Other Measures) Bill 2024*, with its focus on key recommendations from the Universities Accord to better support students.

The Bill enacts new higher education programs that are in line with IRU recommendations to the Universities Accord, such as the new Fee-Free Uni Ready courses to help prepare students for university study, and the new “paid prac” program to provide financial support to students undertaking mandatory placements as part of their degrees.

Quotes attributable to IRU Executive Director Paul Harris.

“The IRU strongly supports the government’s goal of lifting participation in higher education, with a particular focus on students from under-represented backgrounds. The new programs in this Bill will be an important part of supporting student participation and success. Through the Universities Accord, we called for an expansion of the enabling programs that help prepare students for university, and a more equitable allocation of funding for these programs – the new Fee-Free Uni Ready initiative represents a step-change that will benefit students across the country.”

“We also welcome the significant new financial support to help students with the cost of undertaking mandatory placements. While there is still work to do on implementation, we are committed to working constructively with government to make these programs a success.”

“The IRU also supports action by government to reduce student debt, and targeted reform of HELP loans in line with Accord recommendations, but these must be paired with urgent reform of the Job-Ready Graduates (JRG) policy. The primary driver of student debt is the cost of doing a degree and the cost to students is still rising.”

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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. 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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