

## Media Release

12 February 2026

# Universities support ATEC for improved stewardship of the tertiary education system

All members of the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) have committed to engage constructively to support the new Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), to improve stewardship of the tertiary education system in best interests of students and communities.

The seven members of the IRU have joined with colleagues across the university sector to endorse a joint statement released today (attached), as Federal Parliament considers the legislation to establish the ATEC. Twelve universities have come together to support the establishment of an ATEC that can deliver on the ambitious long-term reforms recommended by the Universities Accord.

IRU Chair and Western Sydney University Vice-Chancellor Professor George Williams AO said the ATEC is needed to increase tertiary participation and equity, and to ensure that all Australians have the skills they will need for the future.

“To achieve the Accord’s ambitious goals for 2050, we need a new model of stewardship and more collaboration and innovation across our system. Business as usual will not cut it,” he said.

“The establishment of the ATEC is a major reform for Australia’s tertiary education system and we need to get it right. We want the bill to pass and have put forward a number of specific amendments to ensure that the legislation is as strong as possible.”

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said that decisions made over the next five years will determine Australia’s ability to meet long-term targets for equity, skills and productivity.

“We agree with Education Minister Jason Clare that we should focus on breaking down the barriers that lead to persistent under-representation of particular student groups and communities in our education system,” he said.

“We know that a one-size-fits-all approach won’t work to improve equity and boost participation and skills. The ATEC can play a valuable role in improving collaboration between government and universities, and between different parts of the tertiary system, for the benefit of all students and communities.”

The IRU submission on the legislation ([link](#)) details proposed amendments, including to give the ATEC the ability to commission research and provide advice on its own initiative, and to advise on the cost of higher education to students, as well as to government.

Professor Williams and Mr Harris will appear before the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee on Friday morning at 8.45am as the Committee examines the legislation.

--END--

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

## About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven public universities across Australia committed to inclusive education and research impact that advance our communities. Its members are Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.

## IRU contact

Bethany Keats, Marketing and Media Advisor

**M** 0481 092 635 **E** [bethany.keats@iru.edu.au](mailto:bethany.keats@iru.edu.au)