

Media Release

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IRU welcomes R&D recommendations to drive a more innovative and equitable future for Australia

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) welcomes the release today of *Ambitious Australia*, the final report from the Australian Government's Strategic Examination of R&D (SERD). The IRU agrees with the SERD Expert Panel that policy and funding reform is needed and that decisions made by government now will be critical for setting Australia up for the decades ahead, to ensure increased productivity and intergenerational justice.

IRU Chair and Vice-Chancellor of Western Sydney University, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO, thanked the members of the Expert Panel and said that the IRU will work constructively with government on implementing the recommendations from the report.

"The Panel has set out a compelling case for change and we agree that national focus is needed on the important role of knowledge and innovation in driving productivity and improving living standards for our next generation," he said.

"The report is right to highlight the need for better coordination and increased investment to secure the future of our research system," Professor Williams said. "We welcome recommendations to increase PhD stipends and create a national R&D workforce strategy. Simple changes like extending the tax-free treatment to part-time PhD researchers would make a real difference for our current students and future leaders."

IRU analysis has clearly shown the expansion of high-quality research across Australian universities over the last 25 years, at the same time as increasing levels of R&D collaboration between universities and external partners in industry, government and the community sector.

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said that this provides a strong platform for reform to set the innovation system up for the future.

"The growth in research quality and productivity in universities right across the country is an Australian success story," he said. "Working together with government, our goal now should be to ensure that all Australian communities have a fair chance to share in the benefits of R&D."

"The final SERD report proposes a new approach to incentivise research specialisation in universities," Mr Harris said. "This will require consultation and careful implementation to ensure that it does not drive further concentration and make inequality worse. Done right, a more differentiated research system can support the inclusive growth that will benefit all communities."

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About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven public universities across Australia committed to inclusive education and research impact to 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.

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