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Preparing graduates well for the future

With predictions that up to 40% of jobs will change completely or no longer be in existence in the next 20 years, how are universities preparing graduates for the 'new economy'? Will graduates in WA be ready for the post mining boom economy?

That's the question being asked by The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) meeting today and tomorrow (Thursday) at West Australian member, Murdoch University, to discuss how best to ensure we create 'Globally Relevant Graduates'.

Jan Owen, CEO of the Foundation for Young Australians, tells us that the current generation of Australians will be the first to be less well off than their parents. Increased casualization of work, the need for multiple careers and periods of entrepreneurship are predicted elements of the future which graduates face.

In the 1980s Australia responded to the high level of youth unemployment by doubling completion of year 12, reaching 77% by 1992.

"It is now clear that a reasonable expectation for employment requires a higher education or vocational qualification following on from school. In response IRU universities have expanded since 2009 to provide the opportunity to all capable and interested applicants" said Conor King, IRU Executive Director.

"We need to ensure now that we support all those students fulfil their potential and are ready for the changing world of work ahead. This requires universities to integrate the disruptive technologies affecting all areas of work across the world."

The IRU Forum features external speakers from business, start ups and community giving their perspective about what is needed from university for future graduates.

IRU leaders will then use these challenges to identify ways ahead to meet graduate needs. This includes agreeing the priority areas to work together to improve outcomes led by the IRU Vice-Chancellors' Fellow, Dr Jessica Vanderlelie, how to work better with businesses in the communities around IRU members, and the next generation of integrating work based learning into curriculum.

The Innovative Research Universities group is a policy group positioned at the constructive centre of higher education and research policy in Australia. Existing in outer urban areas of their states' capitals and in major non capital cities IRU universities are committed to inclusive excellence in education for the communities they serve. Inclusive excellence is the IRU commitment to reach and serve local and global communities through an effective response for all who seek our services at the highest standards in teaching, learning and research.

IRU comprises Murdoch University, Flinders University, La Trobe University, Griffith University, James Cook University and Charles Darwin University.

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For comment contact

IRU Executive Director, Conor King M: 0434 601 691

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