

## IRU factsheet

### Supporting problem-centred research

IRU universities undertake excellent research and find solutions to real-life problems in Australia and around the world.



Australia's university research is performing strongly by world standards. It has directly improved the quality of life of all Australians while the scholarly endeavours of our academics contribute to our international reputation for high quality teaching and student experience.

The focus of IRU universities is to translate and commercialise research on issues of critical importance to the communities in which they are based, addressing problems of local, national and global significance. Over time our members have developed their own research strengths, with multiple areas of research at and well above world standard.

### Partnerships with industry

The importance of universities partnering with industry is well accepted. The benefits are extensive, for industry, universities, students and the nation. IRU members have consistently made clear their commitment to effectively work with industry, leading to long-term collaborations in research and workforce development that power innovation, cultural and economic progress.

As an example, IRU member La Trobe University has partnered with Optus to create an integrated digitally connected campus and a state-of-the-art sports precinct as well as a market-leading Cyber Security tertiary degree.

Another IRU member, Murdoch University, hosts 15-20 research groups and companies at the WA State Agricultural and Biotechnology Centre (SABC), co-located at the university's Perth campus. The Centre provides world-class agricultural biotechnology research facilities to universities, state government and industry, enabling researchers to find new crop and animal improvement methods that underpin Australia's agriculture and veterinary sectors.

## What can the Government do?

### 1. Provide long-term funding for research

Australian universities produce excellent research but are increasingly dependent upon unpredictable revenue sources earmarked for projects and researchers. Of the \$6.1 billion in funding awarded to Australian universities in 2018, only 15% was what could be considered "open" funding that universities could allocate at their discretion.

**The Government should increase the value of research block grants to support breakthrough research and research careers, allowing universities more discretion in how they use those funds.**

### 2. A better geographical spread of research infrastructure

Australia's research infrastructure is based predominantly in Australia's major five cities and their inner suburbs. This means researchers based in Australia's regional or outer metro universities often need to access resources remotely.

**More research facilities should be based in outer metro Australia, making it easy for regionally based researchers to access the sites as well as city-based researchers.**

### 3. More focus on industry-driven and translational research

A distinctive feature of IRU research is its "translational" aspect – that is, being able to use research findings in practical, real world contexts to improve products and processes and then feeding the outcomes back into further research.

**The Government should strengthen incentives for industry-driven and translational research. This could include R&D tax incentives for industry collaborations, greater industry involvement in research training, and a dedicated fund for non-medical translational research.**

## IRU's research in numbers

- 7,800 postgraduate research students and 6,000 academic research staff at IRU universities (12% of such students and 13% of such staff) <sup>i</sup>
- 84% of IRU university research is world class or better, across 263 fields of research <sup>ii</sup>
- \$371 million in research income, spread across national competitive grants and support for industry driven research, representing 9% of all university research income <sup>iii</sup>
- \$140 million in Australian Competitive Grant Income across the IRU's seven universities (13% of all competitive grants) <sup>iv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Dept. Edu Stats 2018

<sup>ii</sup> ERA 2018 Report

<sup>iii</sup> Dept. Edu Stats 2018

<sup>iv</sup> Dept. Edu Stats 2018