MEDIA RELEASE

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Redefining ‘research intensity’ – Quality must prevail over quantity

The Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRU Australia) is calling for a rethink of what is commonly meant by the term ‘research intensive’ in relation to universities.

This follows a series of outstanding results by its members in the latest ARC and NHMRC funding rounds which show that the IRU Australia universities are among the most research intensive in Australia when adjusted for size.

“There is a strong tendency to equate research intensity with size and therefore much of the attention is focussed on the large research intensive universities at the expense of the small and medium-sized research intensive universities, which characterises the IRU Australia group, said Professor Anne Edwards, Convenor, IRU Australia.

“Our assertions are backed up by recent rankings produced by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, and the Shanghai Jiao Tong Institute of Higher Education which provide evidence that at least 15 Australian universities can be considered research intensive by international measures,” she said.

Professor Edwards added, “The member universities of the IRU Australia feature prominently on the most widely used measures which measure true quality such as publication citation rates, highly cited researchers listings, and research income per staff member.”

“The IRU Australia universities look forward to engaging in discussions about research quality assessment and will encourage the Minister to consider measures that accurately assess true quality over simplistic measures of research activity,” she said.

“At the same time however, policy-makers should appreciate the value of public good research which benefits the local and regional communities in ways that cannot always be measured and quantified,” said Professor Edwards.

For instance, IRU Australia universities as a Group are performing research in more than 350¹ discrete areas. Groundbreaking research of local, regional and national significance is occurring comprehensively across the Group in every academic unit.

A Fact Sheet about IRU Australia Research Performance is attached.

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¹ Using DEST Research Field, Course and Discipline codes

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About the Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRU Australia)
The IRU Australia is a national group of student-focussed and research-intensive universities formed with the intent of promoting collaboration between members in areas such as research, education, resource and information sharing. Members of the group are Flinders University, Griffith University, La Trobe University, Macquarie University, Murdoch University, and The University of Newcastle.
Facts about the IRU Australia Group Research Performance

International Rankings

International Champions League of Research Institutions²
Four IRU Australia universities appear on the international Champions League of research institutions based on publications impact. Among 13 Australian universities, The University of Newcastle is ranked 2nd, Murdoch University 4th, Flinders University 5th, and La Trobe University 12th.

Top 100 Asia-Pacific Research Rankings³
Five IRU Australia universities (Macquarie, Newcastle, Flinders, La Trobe, and Murdoch) were among the 14 Australian universities listed in the Top 100 Asian and Pacific universities based on citations, research output, and academic performance.

National Rankings

Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research⁴
The Melbourne Institute publication The International Standing of Australian Universities provides the most comprehensive ranking to date of Australian universities. Table 6: International Standing of Australian Universities: Quantitative Results, places the IRU Australia institutions in the following positions:

9th La Trobe University
10th Flinders University
11th Macquarie University
12th The University of Newcastle
14th Griffith University
15th Murdoch University

Publication Citation Rates

ISI Highly Cited Researchers⁵
The ISI Highly Cited Researchers listing reveals the most highly influential scientists and scholars worldwide. Ten researchers from IRU Australia universities make the list, with three from each of The University of Newcastle and Macquarie University ranking them equal 6th amongst the Australian universities listed. Murdoch University, with two Highly Cited Researchers shares equal 8th position with two other institutions.

⁵ ISI Highly Cited Researchers as at 24th November 2004, http://isihighlycited.com/
Publication Citation Rates\(^6\)
In a recent study measuring the impact of Australian Research Council (ARC) funded research, La Trobe University (2\(^{nd}\)) and Flinders University (9\(^{th}\)) are shown to have some of the highest citation rates in Australia for publications resulting from ARC-funded research.

Total Research Funding
Research funding across the IRU Australia group from all sources totalled $161.9 million in 2003. The IRU Australia Group secures almost 40% of Australian Competitive Grants won outside of the Group of Eight universities.

Federation Fellowships
For total number of the prestigious Federation Fellowships awarded since their inception in 2001, three IRU Australia universities rank in the top ten universities for number received (Macquarie (6\(^{th}\)), Griffith and Newcastle (equal 9\(^{th}\)).

Australian Research Council (ARC) and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) results – November 2004
Refer attached summary.

Research Income per Staff FTE
In 2001\(^7\), Flinders University and Murdoch University were ranked 8\(^{th}\) and 9\(^{th}\) respectively in Australia for research income per staff full-time equivalent. Murdoch University increased its research income in 2003 to $49,536 per FTE academic staff member, placing it 8\(^{th}\) in Australia for that year.

Research Income from Industry
Griffith University (9\(^{th}\)) and the University of Newcastle (10\(^{th}\)) were positioned in the top 10 Australian universities for Industry funded research in 2003.

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