

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**17 August 2009**

**IRU supports the reintroduction of a Student Services  
Amenities Fee**

Innovative Research Universities (IRU) supports the reintroduction of a Student Services Amenities Fee and calls upon the Senate to support the Government's action.

The Senate is presently debating *the Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill* to reintroduce a levy on students that would provide funds for such areas as childcare, sporting, health, counselling and other services.

The amount of money available for these services was substantially cut when the previous Government introduced Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) and abolished the compulsory fee.

"A modest levy such as that proposed by the Government would be a boon for student life on campus", said IRU Chair, Professor Sandra Harding.

"It is critical for students to have access to support services which augment the student experience and significantly contribute to both student success and the development of well rounded graduates."

IRU is a network of seven comprehensive universities committed to conducting research of national and international standing and applying their collective expert knowledge, capabilities and resources to enhance the outcomes of higher education. The seven universities comprise; *Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University and the University of Newcastle.*

Since the abolition of the compulsory fee as part of the previous Government's Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) legislation, Universities have been extremely hard-pressed to provide essential student support services at a level enjoyed by students in the past.

Professor Harding said the reintroduction of a levy would provide the essential means by which an array of student support services can be provided without the need to divert University funds that are meant to support teaching and learning to this purpose.

Under the proposed scheme, the monies received via a levy could not be used for political purposes, but only to support student services across campuses and that necessary support goes well beyond sporting associations to include childcare, health, counselling and other important student services.

Reintroducing a levy as proposed by the Government will not involve any upfront financial hardship for students who can opt to cover the levy via a HECS style loan.

IRU urges the Senate to support students at Australian universities by supporting the reintroduction of a student levy as proposed by the Government.

ENDS

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