

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Thursday 19 August 2010**

#### **‘Savings’ hits students’ hopes**

The Coalition’s plan to cap funding to support enrolment of low SES students will make it harder for lower SES students to attend university.

The chair of the Innovative Research Universities, Professor Sandra Harding, said while some of the initiatives of the Coalition in the higher education area were very much welcomed, the cuts to the low SES Participation Program were regrettable.

“We welcome such initiatives from the Coalition as their commitment to increase funding for the International Science Linkages Scheme and the Research Training Scheme, and the widening of the Youth Allowance eligibility test,” she said.

“But the SES program is set up to help universities develop pathways and support services for students from low SES backgrounds going to university,” Professor Harding, who is Vice Chancellor of James Cook University, said.

“It is also to help universities work with schools and the community to prepare students for future university studies.

“The Coalition says it will cut this program back by \$227 million between 2011-2 and 2013-14, and this will reduce Australia’s ability to grow its skilled workforce,” Professor Harding said.

“If we are limited in our ability to develop the right pathways and provide the support services then we are limiting the opportunities for low SES students to achieve a tertiary education,” she said.

“I urge the Coalition parties to maintain support for students from low SES backgrounds, in line with their other positive initiatives.”

In its costing document released yesterday, the Coalition listed savings of \$56 million in 2011-12, \$84.6 million in 2012-13 and \$86.3 million in 2013-14 to be achieved by “capping the low SES Participation Equity programs”.

Under the arrangements put in place by the present Government, \$433 million was to be provided over three years to assist universities to meet the government’s equity targets, and \$325 million of this was for equity loading.

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expert knowledge, capabilities and resources to enhance the outcomes of higher education.

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