

IRU STATEMENT

Innovation and Economic Transformation - The Role of Universities

The Future for Industries: What Have Universities Got To Do With It?

Innovative Research Universities (IRU) leaders meet today (Wednesday 9th July) in Adelaide to discuss the role of Australia's research driven universities in supporting innovation and economic transformation.

IRU, a network of seven research intensive universities, is focused on improving industry driven research outcomes.

"Universities have a clear role in supporting our local, state and national partners in a changing economic climate" says Professor John Dewar, Vice-Chancellor, La Trobe University and Chair, IRU.

Australian businesses use of universities and public research agencies is currently among the lowest in the OECD. This means that Australian firms are not accessing the latest research produced in Australia's universities to increase their profitability. Further, they are not producing this research in-house. This puts at risk their long term success.

Professor Dewar says, "We must also consider the necessary contribution of government in stimulating industry driven research."

In that vein the IRU welcomes **The Hon Susan Close, South Australia's Minister for Manufacturing and Innovation** to open the forum, offering a unique perspective on the South Australian context. South Australia, similar to other parts of Australia, is confronting a significantly changed economic environment as traditional manufacturing continues to decline.

"It is appropriate that the IRU senior leadership meets in Adelaide to find ways in which we can support manufacturing revitalise, work better with industry to develop new specialist products and services as well as ensure industries leverage our considerable research capacity in other sectors," remarks Professor Michael Barber, Vice-Chancellor of Flinders Universities and host for the Forum.

The key findings of *The Role of Science, Research and Technology in Lifting Australian Productivity* ([ACOLA Report](#)) suggest universities have an essential role in maximising innovation and productivity across the Australian economy.

"We well know Australia's comparatively low levels of effective industry-university exchange. Today is about finding solutions to this vexing issue, determining how we can most effectively work with industries to develop the innovations they need to succeed and produce graduates best prepared for the future workforce," says Professor Dewar, "It is not enough for universities to simply state their commitment to working with industry, we must improve our approach and be prepared to change as the economy itself changes." **END**