

Go8 Chair, Paul Greenfield, responds to Federal Budget

One week before the Federal Budget I summed up my expectations for higher education as “treading water”. Given the tough economic circumstances and some pre-budget nervousness about areas including health and medical research, universities might now be feeling a little more buoyant than I had expected.

The Government has honoured its commitments to fund expanding undergraduate enrolments, even though the growth looks to be more bullish than originally expected, and as part of this, it has delivered on a promise of improved indexation of the funding. It has shielded the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council from the razor gang, and enhanced funding for mental health research. It also gets marks for doubling the loading for regional campuses, and maintaining the Education Investment Fund for five years.

Ministers Evans and Carr and their staff deserve our thanks for safeguarding these long-term investments in advanced human capital at a difficult time.

Alongside the investments in universities, federal commitments on vocational education and training are significant for the creation of a more sustainable, diversified and cost-effective tertiary education system for the nation.

Sensibly, the Government has an eye to the capacity implications of the mining boom. But it needs also to think further out.

It is equally important to ensure that Australia can be competitive in the high quality stakes when we will have to rely on our minds as well as our mines.

Giving serious attention to quality in education and research must be our priority. It will not be good enough to increase only the quantity of participation in education and training; the quality must be of international standard.

The Government’s next big test on university funding will be the base funding review. This will give it an opportunity to assert that it will do more than keep its promises, and will in fact make the investment needed for a globally competitive universities sector.



Go8 National Press Club Address

New national ‘quality’ arrangements for higher education will lead to disappointment for students and the Australian community without international benchmarking, the Go8 Chair, Paul Greenfield, told a large audience during a televised address at the National Press Club in May.

Professor Greenfield’s speech argued that a defining issue for the future of universities is how to earn and maintain respect in an increasingly tough global marketplace.

“At an international level we are ‘off the pace’ in teaching and learning. The overall student staff ratio in Australian universities has risen from 12 to 1 in the mid-1990s to 20 to 1 today.

“Quality is not some minimum standard set by a group such as the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA)—important though that may be—but must be measured against international benchmarks.

“The Government’s new research rating system, ERA, at least attempts to compare university research on international standards, but there is no similar angle for learning and teaching in TEQSA.

“To continue to be a major economic earner for the country Australian higher education must obsess about being internationally competitive and cannot rely on any inherent comparative advantage.”

The transcript of Professor Greenfield’s speech is available on the Go8 website at: www.go8.edu.au/media/go8-leaders-statements

Go8 launches Australia's Knowledge Gateway

Last month leaders from the business community and university Vice-Chancellors were present at the launch of an innovative new tool designed to improve university/business interaction.

"World-class research and innovative activities occur every day in Australia's universities, but it can be difficult for individuals and industry to identify and access specific expertise," said Go8 Chair, Professor Paul Greenfield.

"The Go8 has developed a new search engine to raise the visibility of what universities can offer the business and wider community in addressing problems requiring advanced know-how.

"The Go8's Knowledge Gateway is a searchable database linking directly to researcher expertise. Not only will it assist industry and government in quickly locating experts in a particular field, but it will also help potential research students find a PhD supervisor," said Professor Greenfield.

Business Council of Australia Policy Director, Patrick Coleman, congratulated the Go8 for its leadership in this area. "I feel confident this initiative will enhance communication and collaboration between universities and industry," he said.

The Go8 is currently in discussions with other universities and research institutes about broadening the scope of the Gateway in order to promote the quality of Australian research to the rest of the world. gateway.go8.edu.au

CONFERENCE SUPPORT

Staff of Go8 universities will receive a discount on registration for the upcoming higher education conferences.

AFR Higher Education Conference 28-29 June in Sydney

The Role of Tertiary Education in Improving Australia's Productivity
afr.com/p/financial_review_higher_education_6cepRaeM8AK5Cq0pKebRUJ

International Education Strategy 19-20 July in Melbourne

To register email executive.director@go8.edu.au to receive the form or register online with the code CC*GO8. www.internationaleducationstrategy.com/index.php

Measuring and Enabling University Research and Innovation Capacity 26-27 July in Sydney

Quote CC*GO8 to receive the 10% discount. Call Criterion Customer Service on 1300 316 882 or book online www.uniresearchinnovation.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Go8 international directors meet in Sydney on 20 June
- Go8 DVCs International meet DVCs from leading Korean universities in Sydney on 20 June
- Go8 Deans of Medicine meet in Canberra on 21 June
- Go8 DVCs Research meet in Auckland on 24 June
- Go8 Social Inclusion Strategy Group meets in Perth on 27 June
- Go8 Deans of Graduate Studies meet in Sydney on 15 July
- Go8 Board meets in Canberra on 27 July

Go8 forms new partnership with Chile

The Group of Eight has signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with Chile's leading universities, represented by the Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities, (CRUCH).

The MOU commits the two groups of universities to cooperation and dialogue in a number of areas including research commercialisation, technology transfer and qualifications recognition.

"The Group of Eight is delighted to be strengthening its ties with Chile," said Go8 Chair, Professor Paul Greenfield, who signed the MOU for the Go8.

"For the past three years Go8 universities have welcomed an increasing number of high quality postgraduate students from Chile in disciplines such as Mining, Offshore Technologies, Agriculture Biotechnology, Energy, Environmental Issues, Health and Education—which are all priorities for the Chilean Government.

"Today's agreement is about cooperation and exchange. We look forward to working with CRUCH to build a positive relationship over the first five years of the Agreement and beyond," Professor Greenfield concluded.

The MOU is available at: www.go8.edu.au/university-staff/international-collaboration



ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The *Go8 Update* is published online to keep the Go8 network of committees and staff at Go8 universities informed about the organisation's activities.

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