



FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH TRAINING INQUIRY

In late June, the Group of Eight (Go8) presented evidence to the House of Representatives inquiry into research training and research workforce issues in Australian universities. Professor Mandy Thomas, The Australian National University's PVC Research and Mr Tim Payne, Go8 Deputy Executive Director, appeared before the committee.

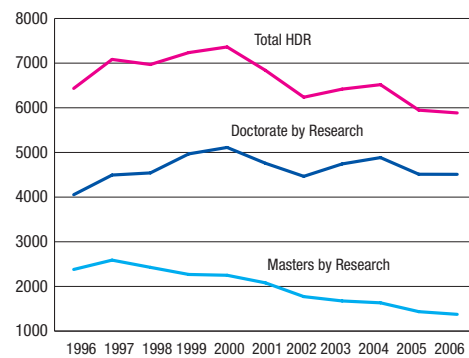
Go8 universities are responsible for 60% of all Australian university research and in 2006 accounted for 55% of all Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students who graduated from Australian universities.

The Go8's submission to the inquiry emphasised the importance for Australia's future as an innovative country of increasing the number of PhD trained graduates. It drew on Go8 data released during the 2007 election campaign, showing that:

- total HDR domestic commencements have declined by 20%—from 7,362 in 2000 to 5,885 in 2006 (see graph);
- Australian PhD student commencements are precariously low in a number of fields that are critical for Australia's sustainability and competitiveness;

- the number of PhD trained graduates in the Australian workforce is very low compared to other OECD countries.

Commencing student load for domestic Higher Degree by Research students, 1996–2006



Source: DEST, Higher Education Student Statistics, various years

"The decline in Australia of domestic enrolments in PhDs has been significant since 2005," said Professor Thomas. "... We will need to recruit international PhD students more vigorously... Only about 17% of our PhD enrolments are international students compared with much higher numbers in the US and the UK," said Professor Thomas.

Professor Thomas recommended solutions for attracting more international PhD students including increasing the number, length and value of scholarships and providing more

flexibility such as allowing international students to complete a PhD part-time.

"If they were working while there were doing PhDs they could benefit our industries and, at the same time, gain training for their PhDs."

The Go8's evidence also highlighted the fact that Go8 universities are currently working collaboratively to improve the quality of PhD training in areas such as leadership, financial management, public speaking and commercialisation skills, as well as providing for mobility and building international networks. Many of these elements already form part of PhD training in Europe and the US.

Other Go8 recommendations include:

- funding the full costs of research;
- ensuring that financial incentives for domestic HDR students are adequate to support a reasonable standard of living while studying;
- increasing the length of Australian Postgraduate Awards and funding for student training places under the Research Training Scheme to four years.

For further information on the research training inquiry: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/isil/index.htm>

Go8 LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

An exciting new Go8 website went live in June. www.go8.edu.au

The site caters for first time users through a menu based on audience groups. It also caters for regular users through a range of quicklinks.

New features include:

- a presentation about the Go8 and its member universities available for download from the homepage;
- a find an expert search facility to assist those outside the university sector locate information about research strengths in Australia;

- information to assist industry and business to communicate with Go8 member universities;
- information and useful links for students about the Australian higher education system;
- information on Go8 collaborative programs, agreements and fellowships;
- the Go8 international brochure is available for download in English and Chinese.

Feedback on the new site is most welcome. Visit the contact page at www.go8.edu.au and send us an email.



SYMPOSIUM ON UNIVERSITY COSTS AND COMPACTS

The Australian National University and The University of Melbourne, in conjunction with the Go8 and the Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, will host a two day symposium on university costs and compacts on 14–15 July in Canberra.

The symposium will draw upon the experiences of other countries, notably England, New Zealand and the United States, which have arrangements in place for recognising and funding research overhead costs and dedicated funding streams to encourage university–industry and university–community collaborations.

International and Australian experts will address key questions around identifying the actual costs of teaching and research and the expectations of government in return for funding the true costs of university activities.

Australian universities cannot sustain quality in teaching, research or community service if the full actual costs of activities are not met. For universities to participate at the frontiers of world knowledge it is necessary that the actual costs of research are known and funded.

Attendance is by invitation only. Senator The Hon Kim Carr will officially open the symposium. Full program and further information available at www.go8.edu.au.



Senator the Hon Kim Carr
*Minister for Innovation,
Industry, Science & Research*

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION FORUM

In collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, The University of Melbourne, The Australian National University and the Go8 will also facilitate a forum on higher education and social inclusion on 16 July in Melbourne.

The event is designed to bring together university leaders and senior policy makers to learn from international experiences and consider new options to fit Australia's circumstances.

The socio-economic mix of student enrolments in universities, as indicated by post codes, has not changed over the past fifteen years, despite growth in the size of the system and various programs designed to increase access and success.

It is time to evaluate previous efforts to widen participation, taking account of changing circumstances, and develop cost-effective approaches for the future.

Attendance is by invitation only. Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion, will officially open the forum. Full program and further information available at www.go8.edu.au.



Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens
*Parliamentary Secretary for Social
Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector*

Go8 GERMANY RESEARCH EXCHANGE

A reminder to all Go8 researchers that applications for the Go8 Germany Joint Research Co-operation Scheme are open and will close on 22 August 2008.

The scheme is now in its second year. It supports travel and living expenses for Go8 researchers to spend time at

partner institutions in Germany and for collaborating German researchers to spend time at Go8 universities.

Together, the Go8 and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) will provide a total of around \$2 million in the first three years of the scheme (2008–2010).

DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst German Academic Exchange Service

Exchange participants must be employed as academic staff members in a teaching and research or research only role at a Go8 university, or a PhD student involved in the research project submitted by an eligible staff member.

Further details and application pack are available at www.go8.edu.au.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Go8 Board of Director's meeting on 3 July, Melbourne
- Symposium on University Costs and Compacts on 14 and 15 July, Canberra
- Forum on Higher Education and Social Inclusion on 16 July, Melbourne
- Go8 Directors Research meeting on 31 July, Melbourne
- Go8 Directors International meeting on 8 August, Melbourne

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The Go8 update is published on-line to keep the Go8 network of committees and staff at Go8 universities informed about the organisation's activities. It is available at www.go8.edu.au

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