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**Baffling move will leave students ‘all dressed up with nowhere to go’**

“The Federal Government is making a baffling move by planning to cut university funding at the same time as it enhances investments in schools,” Group of Eight (Go8) Chair, Professor Peter Høj said today.

At the National Press Club, Professor Høj said last week’s passage through Parliament of Gonski 2.0 was a “good start”, and must now be accompanied by a responsible enhanced investment in higher education and research. The \$2.8 billion cuts to higher education would, if passed, dampen the positive impact from the school reforms for individual students and for Australia as a whole.

“It would be like being ‘all dressed up with nowhere to go’ for students graduating from the improved school system,” said Professor Høj, who is also Vice-Chancellor and President of The University of Queensland.

He endorsed the view of the Minister for Education and Training, Senator Simon Birmingham, that Australia should have “a fair, equitable and high-performing education system – from high chair to higher education” but questioned whether the proposed cuts to higher education sit well with this ambition.

In his presentation Professor Høj sketched some of the enormous benefits to the nation from Australia’s public universities, and the risks inherent in the government’s myopic proposals for the sector. The Government is already among the smallest investors in higher education as a proportion of gross domestic product in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

“Since 2011, \$3.9 billion in commonwealth funding has been sliced from universities and the \$3.8 billion Education Investment Fund has effectively been closed to universities. The government’s current proposals would remove a further \$2.8 billion of direct commonwealth funding from universities.”

The Go8, representing Australia’s most research-intensive universities, is urging the Senate to block the proposals for further cuts.

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