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### **Group of Eight advances national equity commitment**

Australia's leading universities are partnering with ACOSS as a gold sponsor of its national conference, Community: Leading the Big Debate, in a move aimed at working together to address equity in and access to Australia's university sector.

Go8 Chief Executive, Vicki Thomson said the Go8 has a significant number of successful equity programs in place across its membership but said more needs to be done to ensure opportunity and access to higher education.

Partnering with ACOSS as a gold sponsor of its national conference is the first step in what is hoped to be a long term relationship with the peak body which will include advocacy and research support, policy development and program support.

"Our commitment to excellence in education and research is "inseparable" from our commitment to equity," Ms Thomson said.

"Staff across the Go8 institutions – from the Vice Chancellors down – have a passionate belief in the transformative power of higher education to provide opportunity and fulfilment to those who participate in it. This belief informs the work of the over 50,000 staff across the Go8 every day as they foster the completion of over 90,000 graduates annually.

"Inseparable from this belief in transformation by education is the belief that it should be shared as widely and equitably as possible – where it can do the most good."

To pursue its equity agenda in 2017 the Go8 has formed a high-level equity working group from across the Go8, comprising experts in both equity research and practitioners implementing equity programs within Go8 universities.

"In 2017 the Go8 will also look to collaborate with organisations such as ACOSS, bringing the resources of our world-leading research into partnership with those who work at the coal-face of equity advocacy and programs, whether it be in the education space or beyond," said Ms Thomson.

"We know that there are significant issues of equity and access in higher education and we must have a system which ensures that people from disadvantaged groups are properly supported to have aspirations for and succeed in higher education.

"This is not only an equitable ambition but a smart one. If Australia is to prosper in the global economy, then we need to take full advantage of our natural human capital by removing barriers to higher education and education more broadly"

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