



GROUP OF EIGHT AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Shutting down research a dumb thing for a clever country to do – Group of Eight

The Vice Chancellors of Australia's eight leading Universities have, for the first time ever, co-signed paid advertising as a plea to the Senate.

Appearing in News Ltd and Fairfax publications today, Wednesday 11 March, the advertising describes as "dumb" the potential decision to cut vital research funding for the 'clever country'.

The funding to the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) will be cut if the Senate does not pass the Higher Education fee deregulation legislative package that is currently before it.

"Australia's eight leading Universities formed the Group of Eight (Go8) in 1999. The fact it has taken 16 years for the eight Vice Chancellors to utilise paid media advertising in protest is an indication of how strongly they feel about the present situation. It is also an indication of how strongly they feel that the Senate **must** pass the deregulation legislative package as it is the only sustainable long-term solution for the sector," says Vicki Thomson, Chief Executive of the Group of Eight.

"The fate of deregulation is critical for the future of a quality university system, but NCRIS funding should not be linked to the success or failure of the deregulation package. It must be de-linked, especially in the face of the obvious damage to the economy if the cuts proceed. However, the fact remains that the Senate passing the legislation is what is required," she said.

The Go8 joins a long line of organisations and research bodies extremely concerned about what would occur for Australia should NCRIS funding be cut.

"Closing NCRIS down would cripple breakthrough research that strengthens some of Australia's key industries, and lays foundations for the industries of the future. Vital research that makes mining more efficient and crops more resistant to disease would not happen without NCRIS. Nanofabrication research, which will drive the development of new high-tech manufacturing, will have to close down.

"Critical research for Australian companies will be lost overseas. Researchers will lose their jobs. As just two pertinent examples; work as basic as our nation's weather forecasting that is critical to our airlines and to the public in ensuring early warnings of extreme weather patterns will be sidelined, while work on early detection and early treatment of Alzheimer disease will be adversely affected," said Ms Thomson.

"Our advertisement says it all. It's a dumb decision."

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