

7 December 2015

Innovation – no slogan, instead a constructive pathway forward

Australia finally has a pathway forward that recognises the intrinsic value of university research and how it can be better embedded and utilised to deliver the nation economic growth and a productivity stimulus.

“The National Innovation and Science Agenda released today moves away from superficial ‘announceables’ and slogans to crystallised policy direction,” says Group of Eight (Go8) Chief Executive Vicki Thomson. “Today is the beginning, not the end of a dialogue. The Innovation Agenda is step one,” she said.

“We also welcome the bipartisan flavour of some elements of the Agenda, showing the Government is mature enough to recognise it does not have a monopoly on good ideas. It has put Australia not politics first and is to be commended for doing so.”

Ms Thomson said that “If Australia cannot get this innovation push realised then everyone loses - the community, the economy and most certainly universities”. The Go8 delivers \$6 billion of research each year, with 99% of that rated as world class. It already generates 80% of the sector’s commercialisation income and two thirds of the start-ups.

“While those figures indicate an ingrained commitment to excellence from the Go8, we have always said the best can always do better, and we will. Having Government policy direction in lockstep with us is a unique moment in time not to be wasted,” she said.

“Specifically, the Go8 is pleased to see long-term funding committed to National Collaborative Research Infrastructure, funding restored to university research block grants, a commitment to an assessment of research impact and funding for collaboration with international research industry clusters. Funding to connect university and industry based researchers is also welcome.

“The establishment of an Innovation and Science Committee of Cabinet, to be chaired by the Prime Minister, is a tangible and strong signal that the Government is backing up its policy agenda with action.

“However, it does need to be recognised that universities alone cannot deliver the National Innovation and Science Agenda no matter their commitment. Collaboration means all parties working together. That is paramount. The Go8 looks forward to discussing this and also consulting constructively with Government on the detail of aspects such as research impact. We must be careful with both the detail and the implementation of elements of the recently released Review of Research Policy and Funding to ensure we get the balance right.”

Contact: Vicki Thomson, Group of Eight Chief Executive on +61 417 808 472