

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Date: WEDNESDAY 14 MAY 2008

Attention: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Federal Budget provides hopeful signs, but universities still face a long road

University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor Professor Daryl Le Grew has welcomed the immediate allocation of \$500 million for university infrastructure announced in last night's Federal Budget, but says there is still a "long way to go" to achieve the so-called education revolution.

The new "Better Universities Renewal Fund" will see \$500 million allocated between now and the end of the financial year for a range of university infrastructure projects, with UTAS expected to receive about \$11 million.

"This gives us the opportunity to address some of the most urgent infrastructure needs, and makes a dent in the \$1.5 billion backlog maintenance bill faced by the university sector," Prof Le Grew said.

The new \$11 billion Education Investment Fund (EIF), however, was a demonstration of good politics, but was not good for universities, Prof Le Grew said.

"The EIF establishes a larger funding pie, but the devil is in the detail," he said.

"The Federal Government has invited a very large number of institutions and organisations to share the pie, thereby spreading funds more thinly than its predecessor, the Higher Education Endowment Fund (HEEF)."

Prof Le Grew said the Budget overall provided a mixed bag for the higher education sector.

"It was pleasing to see additional support for higher education students, especially for undergraduate scholarships, but extremely disappointing that no provision had been made to

support student organisations and activities, suffering in the era of voluntary student unionism,” he said.

“It is also encouraging to see the Federal Government recognising the importance of investing in intellectual talent, and increasing the number of postgraduate scholarships is a good first step, but the issue of their low stipends still has not been addressed.”

Prof Le Grew said the new Future Fellowships for mid-career academic staff were an essential part of nurturing the next generation of academics before the wave of baby-boom retirements.

“This budget provides some hopeful signals for universities, and provides funding for the first step of the long march to real investment in the education revolution - but there is still a lot to do,” he said.

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