

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

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## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- How can we best foster research and innovation in Australia?
- A question that recognises the importance of the knowledge economy to our economic future
- It assumes that research is key to innovation and both therefore to participation in this future
- Analysis shared by most nations and reflected in their national economic policy
- Global and ubiquitous, participation in the knowledge economy is a path seen as open to many

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- Australia has no inherent advantage in sustaining high level performance in a global knowledge economy
- Just a head start on some
- And faces challenges in terms of future development of research and innovation, in terms of scale and participation in global networks

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- Public policy to foster research and innovation has a clear (and internationally understood) framework
- The forces of organisational mimicry are strong at national and sub-national levels of government
- Underpinned by a desire to create innovation clusters

## Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

- The public policy framework
  - *Underpinning public support for research*
    - Funding for research infrastructure, for research institutions, and for researchers
    - Legal framework to protect private benefits of research

*Encouragement of collaboration*

*Support for technology or knowledge transfer*

## Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

- Australian research policy framework
  - Underpinning public support for universities
    - Performance-based funding as base
    - Peer-assessed competitive funding for projects
    - Infrastructure funding

Collaborative schemes

- Encouraging links between universities and industry

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- **Stocktake**
  - Research and innovation are key to our future
  - There is agreement on the broad policy framework to support this move
  - There is increasing expenditure on and attention to this framework around the world and in our region

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- **Question**
  - What would we expect to be the major policy concerns of our government for the next few years

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- Answer
  - Attend to whether we have sufficient underpinning public funding for research to be internationally competitive
  - Ensure that we have an environment that encourages closer collaboration between universities and industry in order to facilitate knowledge transfer

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- What are we doing?
  - Focussing on a research quality assessment exercise (RQF) that is worrying about a research funding allocation mechanism
  - This is a second-order policy issue
  - Continuing to emphasise the commercialisation and corporatisation of research

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- We have a research policy framework focussed on rewarding excellence, both through formula-driven block grant and peer assessed competitive project grants
- This ensures attention to international excellence and is important
- But

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- It is not balanced with attention to building research capability
- Current policy concentrates all forms of research funding
- There is no evidence or logic that suggests that alone this will build Australia's research at a rate that ensures an internationally competitive system

### **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- We run the risk if letting quality overrun the opportunity to build greater scale
- And without attention to increasing research overheads on peer-assessed competitive grants, success in this field is not a reward (except in reputational terms) since it diverts resources from other areas

### **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- Linkage grants and CRCs were a way of building collaborative relationships and balancing public and private 'goods'
- They require a different assessment or evaluation paradigm that explicitly recognises end-user or impact assessments
- They need longer time-frames
- We need to step back from focus on trapping private benefits too early

## **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer**

- We must bring capability building to the policy table
- We must increase the reward to excellence directly rather than approaching this indirectly through allocation mechanisms that further concentrate existing funding
- We must introduce impact into the evaluation of collaborative funding
- We must reduce the emphasis on creation of company structures in research to capture private benefit from research too early in the innovation process