



Science, Technology and Education News from Australia, June 2018

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1. Science and Technology Developments

Australian unis ranked among world's best in pharmacology, mining and sport

Australian universities have been rated number two in the world for the way they teach pharmacology, mining and sport in the latest influential ranking survey. Monash University in Victoria is the global number two for teaching pharmacology, just behind Harvard University and ahead of Cambridge University. It's the second year in a row that Monash has hit the number two spot and its overall score went up compared to last year. The data comes from the latest QS World University Rankings – the ratings most widely used by international students. Overall, Australia has five universities in the world's top 50, the same as last year, and more than every other country except the United States and the UK. Of Australia's 37 public universities, 26 improved their score for citations – that is the number of times their research is quoted in other universities' work.

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Individual “Names” Reveal Complex Relationships in Male Bottlenose Dolphins

Male bottlenose dolphins retain their individual “names” well into adulthood. Similar to humans, this plays a central role in forming and maintaining complex social relationships, recent findings carried out by researchers at the universities of Zurich and Western Australia suggest. Dolphins form long-lasting alliances in which they give each other mutual support.

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ARC Centre of Excellence building the future of electronics

The ARC Centre of Excellence in Future Low-Energy Electronics Technologies (FLEET), led by Professor Michael Fuhrer, was officially launched at Monash University. Monash University is receiving \$33.4 million (over seven years from 2017) under the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme. The ARC Centre of Excellence will focus on addressing the global challenge of reducing the energy used in information technology and computation, to develop revolutionary electronics and communications technologies. The Centre of Excellence led by Monash University will work with six other universities in Australia — and partner organisations in Singapore, Germany, the US, and China.

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2. Education and Science Policy

Comp heats up over space agency

The competition between states and territories to host the Australian space agency is heating up, despite concerns the rivalries may undermine the agency’s national mission. The federal government recently revealed the details of the space agency, which will be operational from July. The federal budget allocated \$26 million over four years for the establishment of the body and a further \$15 million for investment in space ventures. The government didn’t decide where the agency should be permanently based though, with inaugural boss Megan Clark to tour the states and territories, and make a decision by the end of the year. The space agency will be temporarily housed within the industry department in Canberra until a formal decision is made.

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Funding freeze to hit unis, regions and suburbs hard: new Govt figures

Universities serving communities in regional Australia and the outer suburbs of capital cities face cuts of up to 15 per cent of their core funding by 2021, new Government figures show. The Government’s own data on its funding freeze, obtained by the ABC under Freedom of Information laws, shows which universities will be the hardest hit by the backdoor cuts made in the mid-year Budget update last December. Universities Australia Chief Executive Designate Catriona Jackson said these cuts would mean less opportunity for all and create greater barriers for regional students. These regions include central Queensland and the Sunshine Coast, Tasmania, the NT, Ballarat, the Latrobe Valley, NSW’s Northern Rivers and outer suburban belts across Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. The \$2.3 billion cut also risks the nation’s pipeline of skilled graduates despite forecasts warning labour market demand for university-qualified workers will continue to grow.

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Research sector strengthens commitment to research integrity

A new code of conduct will help safeguard the quality and integrity of Australian research. The 2018 Code provides a new principles-based approach to the responsible conduct of research. Both the 2018 Code and the Investigation Guide are jointly authored by Australia’s premier research funding agencies, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC), as well as Universities Australia (UA). The 2018 Code will be supported by a series of guides for researchers and institutions that provide further detailed advice on a range of integrity matters such as authorship, data collection and management and collaborative research ar-



rangements. The Investigation Guide will help institutions to identify breaches of the 2018 Code and determine necessary corrective actions, and will promote greater consistency in the research sector for managing any departures from the principles of responsible research conduct. Chief Executive-Designate of Universities Australia, Catriona Jackson, said the 2018 Code and its accompanying Investigation Guide demonstrate the research and university sector's commitment to upholding Australia's reputation for world-leading and ethically-sound research.

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Government listens and acts on foreign influence legislation

The Government has announced it will make amendments to its proposed foreign influence legislation that would safeguard global-facing Australian academics and their research. This follows strong advocacy from Universities Australia and its concerns about the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Bill's potential to stifle innovation and valuable academic research. Universities Australia's Chief Executive Designate Catriona Jackson said researchers could have faced jail time for failing to register any global research partnerships with a policy-focus.

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Science grants get an increase

Government has won bipartisan support from Labor for an increase in the spending cap for the Australian research grants scheme. The opposition will support the increase from in the scheme from \$758 million in 2017-18 to \$771.93 million in 2019-20, via the the Australian Research Council (ARC) Amendment Bill 2018. Under the amendment, the ARC will be able to continue to administer financial assistance as part of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). The NCGP comprises of two programs –Discovery and Linkage – under which the ARC funds a range of schemes that provide funding for basic and applied research, research training, research collaboration and infrastructure. Last year, the government announced 117 new collaborative research projects under the ARC's Linkage Projects program. The projects totalled \$46.5 million and supported collaborations with 274 partner organisations, which have separately pledged to provide \$79.7 million to support those research projects. The new linkage projects were selected under the new continuous application process introduced as part of the government's National Innovation and Science Agenda.

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Brains add brawn to national prosperity: record international student enrolments

Australia's growth in international education has set another new record, with more than 548,000 overseas students studying here in the latest official numbers from April. New Government figures show a jump of 12 per cent from the same time last year. More than 50 per cent of these students are enrolled in higher education institutions. Australia's international education sector generates more than \$30 billion a year for the Australian economy. Universities Australia Chief Executive Catriona Jackson said Australia's universities were key drivers of economic growth and this export income made a big difference to Australian prosperity.

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