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MEDIA RELEASE

University Research Critical for Australia's Future

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) says it welcomes the broad findings of the Productivity Commission's draft report into Public Support for Science and Innovation which recognises the critical importance of university research for the nation's future.

The ATN has also welcomed a finding that there may be a case for additional university funding to demonstrate promising technologies so that they can be more easily transferred to business. However, ATN Director, Vicki Thomson said there was concern with the finding that there is 'no reason to make large changes to the overall level of public spending'.

"The ATN believes that the case has been made through many studies that increased investment is needed for Australia's innovation system to be globally competitive," Ms Thomson said.

"Australian science is characterised by many islands of excellence in domains of relevance to Australia's future economic and social well being. However we are often unable to effectively build on our achievements in the face of the greater volume/higher critical mass typical of leading overseas institutions. Without a more comprehensive national innovation strategy, backed up by levels of investment sufficient to retain and build research capacity, Australia is unable to even keep up with the accelerating global pace of growth of new knowledge and the benefits so delivered."

The report also argues for a delay in the implementation of Australia's Research Quality Framework on the basis that there are considerable costs involved in the process.

"The ATN has worked closely with industry, business and Government to ensure a national research assessment landscape which values and consequently funds impact alongside quality. We would not wish to see the innovative work in this space jeopardised by unnecessary delays. However we do agree with the view that the RQF will bring significant implementation costs which need to be effectively understood to ensure they do not burden effective implementation of the RQF."

ATN Vice Chancellors will consider the report in detail when they meet on 13 November.

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