

# Research won't get funding boost

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**ANY hopes of a federal funding boost for the research sector are not realised in a major policy document to be released today.**

Initiatives to be announced at the research workforce strategy launch by Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Minister Kim Carr include \$200,000 in new money to cover three research education projects, but the biggest ticket item is a \$1 million allocation to a recently established doctoral training centre for mathematics doctoral students.

While postgraduate students are likely to be disappointed there is no mention of an earlier government proposal to extend Australian Postgraduate Awards to four years and there could well be some sharp reaction to the lack of funding tied to some other measures, others in the sector have played down expectations.

"I think it's as good as we would have expected, the federal budget is going to be tight," Australian Technology Network universities director Vicki Thomson told The Australian.

"My understanding is that the document has whole of government support, which we regard as significant.

"We would hope to see in the future that the budget is provided to underpin the initiatives."

Measures include review of the research training scheme to be carried out this year, an examination of the full cost of research training for universities and establishing and monitoring standards and quality benchmarks for research training.

Senator Carr's assessment of the document is that it "sets out the full range of research workforce issues we have in Australia, including the divide between research and industry".

But the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations is among stakeholders who hoped for more. "We are disappointed they are not going to be able to extend that offer," CAPA president John Nowakowski, said.

"We are aware the government is under tight funding constraints at the moment especially following the natural disasters, but it's important to invest in research."

Another research community insider said there was a belief the strategy had been a casualty of the federal budget process and the optimism of last year's consultations with the department had given way recently to misgivings following the cutting of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council funding and rumours of savage reductions in the National Health and Medical Research Council funding.

Senator Carr's blueprint includes a new advisory group to work on implementing the strategy and a "mapping" process to be concluded by the end of 2012, of skills needed within disciplines and industry sectors.

Conditions attached to the APAs will be loosened to allow institutions to top-up scholarships from within the existing funding.

It is also planning a web-based "research workforce communication platform" to showcase career opportunities and support for researchers.