Vice-Chancellors call on Government to scale back funding cuts

Swinburne Vice-Chancellor, Professor Linda Kristjanson, joined the Vice-Chancellors of eight Australian universities in criticising the Australian Government's higher education funding cuts.

The nine Vice-Chancellors signed the following statement:

“Australian universities, attended by more than 280,000 students, jointly condemn the decision of the Federal Government to cut its Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding scheme by 5 per cent and to put a further 7.5 per cent at risk.

The $2.8 billion reduction in funding would hit hardest the universities that do the heaviest lifting in terms of social equity.

These are the universities that admit the greatest proportion of regional students, students who are the first in their family to go to university, Indigenous students and disadvantaged students.

These are also the universities that derive the greatest proportion of their revenue from the funding stream the Government proposes to cut.

The Government has pointed to university surpluses to suggest that universities have more money than they need, however such surpluses are not stockpiled in bank accounts. They are necessary to fund investment in new laboratories, upgraded lecture theatres and essential campus facilities, such as technology.

By definition, an ‘efficiency’ dividend demands that the more financially inefficient – or unprofitable – operations of an organisation be cut. At a university, the sorts of operations that are often least profitable include small or regional campuses, foreign languages, student support and research.

As a result, these funding cuts raise the question of the Government's vision for the future of the sector.

We call on the Government to scale back its inequitable funding cuts and to support the role that higher education plays in providing opportunity and making Australia a more egalitarian society.”