

## Public Awareness Campaign – Q and A

### **Q. Why has Universities Australia decided to run another universities public awareness campaign?**

**A.** During 2012 Universities Australia (UA) reached out to the public to elicit views and understanding of universities to assist in lifting awareness of the sector's contribution to contemporary Australia and its future; and in formulating a ground-breaking comprehensive policy statement.

Research commissioned for UA (by the Wallis Consulting Group and The Allen Consulting Group) found strong levels of support for the sector - 88 per cent of the general public would encourage their children or young people they knew to attend university.

It showed people supported universities but did not have a strong understanding of their contribution to the economy and a civil society and wanted to know more about them.

As a result, Universities Australia launched a public awareness campaign on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013 which included national television, radio, print, online advertising and social media including a dedicated campaign website comprising social media elements (Facebook and Twitter) and an e-petition to go to local members.

While the campaign was active, \$2.8 billion in cuts to universities and students was announced by the Federal Government. This announcement considerably changed the tone and focus of the campaign – including new advertisements (across all types of media) to directly address the cuts and highlight its potential impact on the country.

At its conclusion (when the campaign writs were issued for the 2013 election) the Smartest Investment campaign had resulted in an increase in general support for universities (including importantly for university funding) as well hardening already existing support.

The Smartest Investment and an associated sub-campaign, “Scrap the Cap,” supported UA advocacy against the 2012 and 2013 announced cuts in public investment in universities and students totalling around \$2.8 billion over three years.

The Coalition Government subsequently announced it would not go ahead with one element of the cuts, the cap on tax deductibility for self-education expenses.

However with a difficult budgetary environment foreseen for some years to come, it is prudent to seek to continue to lift public awareness of the vital role of university education and research in transforming the economy and ensuring Australia does not get left behind as other countries invest in their best resource – their minds.

Universities Australia is now looking to build on the Smartest Investment to further lift the profile of the sector, and its contribution to individual and national well-being, in the minds

of policy makers and the public in a way that can be readily modified to address specific policy issues as they emerge.

**Q. What is the theme of the campaign?**

**A.** The theme is “Keep it Clever, so we don’t get left behind”.

**Q. What will the campaign comprise?**

**A.** The campaign uses innovative creative concepts employing animations to maximise digital and social media including through a dedicated website as well as television, print, outdoor and online advertising.

**Q. What are the main campaign activities?**

- The campaign includes an engaging web film directing people to the Keep it clever Facebook site or website to sign a petition of support for university education and research;
- In this way a data base or community of supporters will be built up and we will keep them continually informed of issues affecting the sector;
- This will provide a platform for building sub-campaigns such as highlighting the importance of research.

**Q. How will it be funded?**

**A.** No taxpayer funds allocated to universities or students will be used to fund this campaign. It is instead financed from a donation from a related company established to promote higher education.

**Q. Who will run the campaign?**

**A.** Universities Australia is running the campaign with advice from consultants, McCann advertising and DeWintern Group.

**Q. When will the campaign run?**

**A.** It will run from the end of March to mid-May, initially but is likely to continue all year.

**Q. What are the themes of the campaign?**

**The themes include:**

- Building our higher education system is crucial for lifting national productivity and prosperity. This will involve meeting the growing demand for graduates by employers. High skilled jobs are expected to grow at 1.6 times the rate of low skilled positions.
- High quality university research is critical to Australia maintaining its competitive position in the export of university education services, for driving productivity, creating new jobs, companies, industries, for diversifying our economy and enriching our society.

- An investment in universities is an investment in Australia's future. But as a percentage of GDP, public investment in Australian universities ranks only 25<sup>th</sup> out of 30 advanced economies.