Media Release
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Underwood Centre could play lead role in researching best use of Gonski funding

Tasmania could be used as a ‘laboratory’ to determine the best way to spend Gonski funding to schools, a leading Queensland academic says.

Professor Bob Lingard, a keynote speaker at the Education Transforms 2017 symposium in Hobart, said today:

“Tasmania would be the perfect place for a laboratory around all of this, with the Peter Underwood Centre at the centre of that,” Dr Lingard said.

“The reason I think that is the [small] population, and at the moment there seems to be the potential for collaboration across the department, schools, the community, political lines and the University of Tasmania.”

Dr Lingard, Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Education at the University of Queensland, said the injection of an additional $23.5 billion in needs-based funding to schools nationwide under the revamped Gonski 2.0 package was an opportunity that must be capitalised on.

“I am thrilled we have got the money but how are we going to make sure we spend it in the most productive way?” he said. “I don’t think we can squander the moment.

“I would like to see a research and evaluation structure around what happens with the money. I think Tasmania is a place where this can be done in a really powerful way.”

Dr Lingard said a holistic approach was required to address the issues around educational attainment, including complementary policies to address poverty and social services.

“We set ourselves up for failure if we think teachers and principals and schools can achieve everything,” he said. “Schools and principals can make a difference but not all the difference.”
“If you look at all the OECD data, background - socio-economic status - is closely aligned with performance in Tasmania.

“Let’s look at what the data tells us and then work realistically towards our goals. Tasmania could become a laboratory. Let’s put in place interesting collaborative ways of using the Gonski money, but let’s also have attached to that research and evaluation.”

ET 17 is the second international symposium of the Peter Underwood Centre and brings together key stakeholders to share and reflect on insights about the collective mission to raise aspirations for educational attainment.

Launched in February 2015, the Peter Underwood Centre is a partnership between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government in association with the Office of the Governor of Tasmania.

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