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Department of Education, Skills and Employment

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Dear Professor Brungs

National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund Consultation

On behalf of Engagement Australia please find attached a submission to the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund Consultation (NPILF).

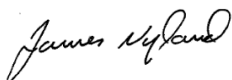
Engagement Australia (EA), a membership organisation of 22 Australian universities champions the unique role universities have with society to address contemporary global challenges and trends through teaching, learning, research and partnerships. EA achieves this by offering a range of leading-edge engagement programs and events, producing the peer reviewed journal *Transform: the Journal of Engaged Scholarship* and coordinating the sector's premier Engagement Excellence Awards (formerly Bher Awards).

EA welcomes the focus and investment by the Federal Government, through NPILF, in Work-integrated learning WIL, educational industry partnerships and the role this has to play in further enhancing work-ready graduates. In the submission attached EA suggests that there exists an opportunity to expand the definition of industry engagement to include interactions between universities and their communities (business, industry, govt, NGOs, and other groups) through teaching, learning and research, for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

This definition has been embraced by the 9 universities currently spearheading the Australian Carnegie Engagement Classification pilot group that is exploring how the Carnegie Tool might be used to both greater prepare universities to engage strategically and purposefully with wider communities/industry; as well as becoming an indicator to those communities/industries of how and why they should seek to engage with us.

I look forward to presenting evidence to the Working Group on Monday 2 November, and would be pleased to provide any further information upon request.

Yours sincerely



Professor Jim Nyland
Chair & President
Engagement Australia
Associate Vice-Chancellor – ACU Qld

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National priorities and Industry Linkage Fund: Consultation Paper Response

Introduction

The National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) consultation paper is a wide-ranging document covering many aspects of recurrent education and the role of universities in Australia in combatting uncertainty and challenges in the labour and skills market as we face the post-covid and ever-globalising world.

For the purposes of this submission and breadth of the issues raised in the consultation paper Engagement Australia (EA) has sought to describe an 'identified problem' that could be tackled through this new funding and proposes a solution. Through this approach EA is identifying specific priorities within the NPILF framework.

Foremost, EA welcomes the focus and investment by the Federal Government, through NPILF, in Work-integrated learning (WIL), educational industry partnerships, and the role this has to play in further enhancing work-ready graduates.

An identified problem

EA members are concerned that the concept of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) embedded in the NPILF framework is overly narrow in respect of graduate outcomes. The phenomenon of increasing graduate unemployment is now real in many western economies and post-covid, and as the Consultation paper indicates, may be growing. Although graduate status guarantees a significantly greater chance of life-time employment in professional settings, the notion of a graduate job for life has changed significantly in recent years, recognising the jobs of the future will be very different to those of today.

Many graduates are now threatened with job insecurity and are part of the 'precariat' who have serious challenges before them to gain meaningful and life-enhancing jobs. The situation has been exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic which has seen the relocation of many jobs to home-working arrangements, growing under-employment, and the loss of graduate entry jobs for new graduates. This is in addition to the heightened need for health and care workers, often poorly paid and under-trained historically.

For those in employment but faced with becoming part of the precariat, on-going learning is needed with inter-professional learning and a flexible framework for recognising achievement for specifically WIL outcomes.

The problem, however, goes further than graduates. What is missing in the overall picture is the facilitation of Lifelong Learning opportunities, including appropriate frameworks for access. The Consultation itself mentions this at more than one point and specifically at Question No. 16. It asks for responses to its own question – 'Does the framework address the lifetime learning challenge facing the workforce?' The answer is not at the present moment. All of which raises the question of what are the new and emerging WIL priorities? These are surely to enhance access and equity to all students for a WIL experience and thus to enhance employability, as recognised by the Consultation itself.

By not including alternative forms of experiential learning (i.e. service learning, community-based learning, civic engagement) in the definitions of WIL, STEM+ and University-Industry partnerships, there is a missed opportunity to bolster skills in the translation of degree-specific knowledge into a variety of workplace contexts throughout the multiple career changes graduates will navigate over their lifetime.

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Moreover, these types of experiential learning provide a richness to the skills of STEM+ graduates who will increasingly rely on core competencies developed through community engaged learning opportunities and techniques, and apply these in their work more broadly. These experiential opportunities further demonstrate to industry the value of graduates to their business beyond technical capability.

The NPILF framework is rightly focused on SMEs and the generation of work-related learning. However, the issue of work and how it is conceptualised, organised, shared and managed is a societal one. Work is the key to a fulfilling life for many, and labour, skills and enterprise generate wealth and capital as the basis for a shared 'commonwealth,' a shared identity and a sense of national and communal belonging. It recognises the social and community 'capital' which is an essential and intrinsic part of our social life. In the light of this, the notion of **SMEs could be extended to include** the recognition of the 'third' sector which embraces intermediate organisations, often rooted in communities of place, health and wellbeing, ethnic or faith affiliations. Not-for-profit, charity, voluntary, co-operative, gift-aided, and 'civic' associations of all shapes and sizes and compositions help make up a viable and civilised society. They help make up our civic society.

Work integrated learning is different from that required in conventional SMEs and yet is vital in these organisations which can be mobilised for the NPILF initiative. This will allow for greater access by our student precariat to experiential learning opportunities across a range of place-based organisations.

Proposed solution

The problem as defined above suggests the need for curriculum content which will help graduates into employment.

The FLIPCurric¹ Project, part of the Australian Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) National Senior Teaching Fellowship, looks at assuring achievement standards and the quality of assessment in universities and colleges and was undertaken in 2014-16.

This significant piece of work cautions against simply adding more WIL without attending to the need to flip the whole curriculum - not just the classroom. That is, adding more WIL experiences will not make the curriculum better positioned to meet the increased demands of industry and community. In this context, NPILF is challenging us to think systemically and this necessitates the recognition that a similar approach is required to how experiential learning is positioned within the curriculum in terms of appropriate forms of assessment, intentional use of context to ensure diverse learning outcomes – all in the service of avoiding a situation where the learning remains transactional and largely defined by the cultures of the host workplace.

NPILF is about transformation of how we prepare our students for their immediate step into the workforce but also to equip them to navigate and manage change throughout their working lives.

In this context, EA is well placed to play a role in building capacity in support of universities being able to complete their NPILF planning as proposed. How universities grapple with the requirements to position appropriate WIL, partnerships

¹ FLIPCurric, Professor Geoff Scott, 2014-2016, an Office for Learning and Teaching funded project involving 3,700 LT Teaching leading across multiple countries, <http://flipcurric.edu.au/>

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and then all the evaluative work required to meet a meaningful level of engagement with the scheme will all require support, and a community of best practice.

As Australia's peak body for university engagement, EA is well placed to support the NPILF initiative by disseminating best practice across the sector through leading-edge engagement programs and events, its peer reviewed journal *Transform: the Journal of Engaged Scholarship*² and the sector's premier industry Engagement Excellence Awards (formerly Bherf Awards). In particular, the following two major developments that have emerged of the sector, by the sector and for the sector can be utilised to support the NPILF initiative:

1. *Driving forward systematic and sustainable change within Australian universities in how they relate to business and community organisations by championing the role universities have within society to address contemporary global/local challenges and trends through teaching, learning, research and partnerships.*

In its first year of transition from the BHERT Awards to the Engagement Australia Excellence Awards, EA is pleased to advise that 2020 has been one of the busiest years for Award submissions, with 124 submissions from 35 universities. The EA Excellence Awards Judging Panel have commented on the exceptional quality of the submissions received this year consisting of impactful nation-building initiatives that demonstrate far-reaching impact and innovation in the Australian economy and community. There exists the opportunity to promote these excellent case studies across the entire sector to help build academic cultures that attach greater value to activities which are relevant to the needs of employers and business.

2. *Improved organisational arrangements and structures within institutions so that they are better able to capitalise on reciprocal partnerships based on mutual benefit through teaching, learning and research interactions with business, industry, government, NFPs and other groups.*

The Australian Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (see Appendix A) pilot project is being undertaken by nine Australian universities seeking to adopt and adapt this international 'gold standard' for benchmarking university engagement with business and community organisations.

The pilot process has involved extensive data collection, analysis and self-reflection by participating institutions, leading to a deeper understanding of the systems and rewards needed to 'embed mutual engagement in ... day to day operations' (Consultation paper).

The completion of this pilot project will result in the launch of the framework in Australia in 2021 under the auspice of Engagement Australia, providing the opportunity for all Australian universities to access and apply these standards for their own institutional growth and development.

Government endorsement of the Carnegie Engagement Classification in parallel to the NPILF indicators would not only provide the sector with a well-established framework as a tool to greater prepare universities to engage strategically and

² [Transform](#) is an open-access, peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary publication for engaged scholars and practitioners. It includes peer reviewed articles from research, conceptual, theoretical and practical domains from across the breadth of the industry and community engagement agenda in higher education, and case studies to inform and inspire innovation and continued improvement across the sector.

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purposefully with their wider community, but could serve as an indicator to those industries and communities of how and why they should seek to engage with universities. The pilot process has also highlighted areas of unique importance to the Australian context, such as engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities, which provides value to the proposed NPILF metrics.

Structural support request

Whilst EA recognises that this consultation did not call for grant applications, none-the-less it is an opportunity to provide the Working Group with an overview of the activities and value-add Engagement Australia could undertake for the sector. Therefore, this submission also requests consideration of an allocation of \$600k over three years to provide structural support to the sector through EA for the following:

- Post the Carnegie Pilot, establish in 2021 a Secretariat to support and maintain Carnegie Australia alongside a hub and spoke model for all Australian institutions. This would also provide expertise and support for those institutions who may wish to progress the Carnegie Framework;
- 'Community of practice' training and resources for Australian universities to embed community and industry engagement into their institutional practices;
- Repository of Carnegie Community Engagement Classification data from participating Australian universities, available for researchers, practitioners, public policy makers and the public through public access rules as part of a standard Data Sharing Agreement;
- Establish policy and secretariat support to play a role in building capacity in support of universities being able to complete their NPILF planning as proposed. This would provide a tangible and ongoing avenue of support for universities which may grapple with the requirements to position appropriate WIL, partnerships and then all the evaluative work required to meet a meaningful level of engagement.

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APPENDIX A: The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification

The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification allows universities to demonstrate their commitment to the communities they serve and to share good practice in the sector.

The definition of community engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

It is an elective classification. Participating universities conduct a self-study to capture a full picture of the various elements of institutional commitment to community engagement. This involves data collection and documentation of important aspects of institutional mission, identity and commitments, and requires substantial effort invested by participating institutions.

The classification framework represents best practices in the field and encourages continuous improvement through periodic re-classification.

A total of 361 institutions in the US are currently classified as Carnegie Community Engaged Campuses. Australia is now a part of the International pilot program, along with Ireland, and Canada.

The Australian Pilot – rationale for the Pilot

- Australian universities are highly engaged in the communities they serve. Considered an international gold standard, the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification allows universities to demonstrate this commitment to their communities and to share good practice in the sector.
- Our participating Australian universities have distinct institutional strengths and represent engagement with diverse communities and industries in metropolitan and regional centres across the country.
- The classification will shape a future Australian framework that will magnify impact nationally by supporting institutions and communities across the country in their partnership initiatives.
- Australian University campuses are hubs for their communities—contributing to educational achievement, community and industry engagement, and economic activity.
- Australian universities identify that their role is to embody the foundational principles and values of inclusion and diversity; mutual trust, respect and accountability; sustainable approaches; healthy relationships; equity; and knowledge creation.

Australian Pilot Process

- The Carnegie Classification Pilot in Australia is being run under the auspices of Engagement Australia.
- In August 2018, participating Australian universities attended an initial convening in August to learn about the history, philosophy, and logic of the existing US Carnegie Classification.
- By mid 2020, the Australian pilot institutions will complete and submit the existing US classification application and host individual campus site visits from the US Carnegie Classification Team in city and regional areas.
- The cohort will work together as a learning community to identify needed adjustments to the existing classification, recommend solutions and contribute to the development of an Australian specific version of the classification.

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Engagement Australia

- Leading The Engagement Agenda

Engagement Australia champions the unique role universities have with society to address contemporary global challenges and trends through teaching, learning, research and partnerships.

We do this by:


- Providing and inspiring leadership;
- Developing capacity and future leaders;
- Enabling peer-learning;
- Providing practical tools and tips; and
- Providing a platform for collaboration and knowledge creation.


Engagement Australia supports the wider contextual standard definition of community engagement, previously developed by the US-based Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which has succeeded in codifying the core characteristics and principles of community engagement.

It defines Community engagement as a method of teaching, learning and research that describes interactions between universities and their communities (business, industry, government, NGOs, and other groups) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

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