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Professor Attila Brungs
Chair, NPILF Working Group
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Dear Professor Brungs, *Attila*

Murdoch University response to the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund Consultation Paper

Murdoch University is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process on the new National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF).

The University recognises that there is scope for improvement in the way universities and business collaborate and partner to incorporate work-related content and experiences into the student learning experience.

As a member of the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group, Murdoch University has participated in the development of the IRU submission to the Working Group's consultation. We endorse the IRU's recommendations, along with the position that bringing employers into active engagement with universities and providing financial subsidies for them to do so will be critical to the success of NPILF.

As part of my role as a member of the Minister's NPILF Advisory Group, Murdoch University recently partnered with the peak business association in Western Australia, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to hold a roundtable conversation with a number of small and medium business owners to seek their views and ideas on how employers and universities can work together more effectively.

It was a constructive conversation which helped identify a number of new opportunities and areas for improvement. This feedback will be shared with the Government as part of the national consultation process. One issue that was raised by SME employers was the need for appropriate industry incentive payments to be made available to support them in taking part in work placement programs.

Employers also spoke about the importance they place on students having well developed “hard” and “soft” skills to ensure they are job ready. Communication, teamwork and work ethics are important transferrable skills that need to be developed and recognised, especially in the context of labour market uncertainty for graduates.

Murdoch University has a wide range of existing programs and initiatives to strengthen our performance in all areas of focus for NPILF. We are endeavouring to embed these practices in the academic structure of our courses and the broad engagement activities of the University. These programs take time to implement and grow to a point where they are self-sustaining and their benefits to our students and employers can be effectively measured. Therefore, we endorse the IRU recommendations of a three-year assessment period, and for further consideration of the use of metrics and the structure of NPILF plans to recognise the value and performance of current institutional programs.

Excessive accountability measures

While supporting the IRU submission, Murdoch also wishes to highlight what we consider an excessive reporting and regulatory burden imposed by the NPILF process. In addition to the new regulatory measures introduced in the Job-Ready Graduates legislation, universities have considerable and ever-growing reporting and compliance requirements. Murdoch University is concerned that universities will be subjected to a time consuming and administratively cumbersome mix of performance metrics and a need to highlight certain projects as a result of the NPILF. It would be counterproductive to the aims of the NPILF and Job Ready Graduates package if this administrative and regulatory burden were to divert resources away from the delivery of initiatives to support students prepare for the workforce.

It is our opinion that there is likely to be significant overlap between planning and reporting requirements for the NPILF and other information provided for mission-based compacts, funding agreements and performance-based funding measures. In addition, there will be a greater impact on smaller universities from the additional regulatory burden the proposed NPILF process will impose. It is our view that a simplified assessment process can be incorporated into the mission-based compact discussions that maintains the integrity of the NPILF scheme.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further information or clarification on our submission is required.

Yours sincerely



Professor Eeva Leinonen
Vice-Chancellor
Murdoch University