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## Submission on the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund Consultation Process

### Recommendation for inclusion of service-learning as a specific focus of funding.

Service-learning Australia (SLA) is a network of practitioners specialising in service-learning or community-engagement within the broad range of approaches that comprise work-integrated learning (WIL) in Australia. The authors of this submission are leaders within the network and have substantial experience in WIL in general, and specifically in delivering **service-learning as a distinctive approach to WIL**. Service-learning Australia is also allied with The Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN).

Historical approaches to implementing WIL in Australia have commonly been instrumental in focus, primarily reflecting work-readiness agendas. However, there is a growing awareness that a focus on intellectual and work skills do not together constitute as **holistic an education** as graduates will need to face the challenges of the future.

Aristotle first pointed out that *“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”* More recently, Parker Palmer et al wrote in *The Heart of Higher Education* that *“What universities ... are mandated to make or to help to make is human beings in the fullest sense of those words – not just trained workers or knowledgeable citizens but responsible heirs and members of human culture. ... Underlying the idea of a university – the bringing together, the combining into one, of all the disciplines – is the idea that good work and good citizenship are the inevitable by-products of the making of a good – that is, a fully developed human being.”*

Service-learning, through internships with community and not-for-profit sectors, support students to develop important citizenship attributes which go beyond the professional skills and attributes normally associated with WIL.

Well-constructed service internships foster

- increased awareness of social structures, privilege and disadvantage,
- increased understanding of the causes and nature of social challenges,
- transformed world views,

- improved sensitivity and ability to interact with people in culturally diverse contexts, and
- a heightened awareness of advantage, well-being and purpose.

Equally important, service-learning approaches contribute to **enhanced capacity of community organisations** in enacting their mission, not only during the timeframe of students' internships but for the lifetime of students who tend to remain involved as volunteers, and even increase their volunteering over time.

A service-learning approach to WIL **is more than just organising internship in community sector organisations**. Specific curriculum approaches beyond normal WIL approaches are required to ensure students take advantage of the opportunities to develop the personal world-view transformations that occur during their internships.

We **commend the Federal Government** for its approach to increase the focus on WIL as part of university degrees, recognising the emphasis on STEM degrees to ensure future Australian success in terms of productivity and wealth. The authors recognise this as an opportunity for the Government to **forefront service-learning** in this approach for the value it brings in supporting community organisations to increase social capital among disadvantaged sectors in society, not just the profit-making industry sector.

## **SUMMARY**

We affirm the Federal Government for its approach to support WIL as a specific curriculum approach that fosters employability and work-readiness. We recommend that Government consider the broad range of benefits achieved by fore-fronting a service-learning approach to WIL in terms of

- student's personal development in addition to professional development,
- the encouragement it will provide universities to engage in community-building approaches to WIL, and
- the support provided through this approach to the wide range of community organisations in Australia.

Respectfully,

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