



30 October 2020

Professor Attila Brungs
Chair
National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund
Working Group
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
50 Marcus Clarke Street
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via email: JobReadyGrads@dese.gov.au

Dear Professor Brungs

Swinburne University of Technology submission to the consultation on the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF)

Swinburne University of Technology welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's consultation on the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF).

Ensuring our graduates are truly future ready learners equipped with the broad capabilities and digital proficiency required in a rapidly evolving labour market is core to Swinburne's mission as a leading, public, dual-sector university.

Swinburne believes that the establishment of the NPILF is important recognition and support of the vital importance of collaboration between public universities and industry. A dedicated funding stream to support universities to develop industry-informed and relevant course materials and to promote the teaching of STEM subjects is most welcome and fully supported.

Our strong commitment to work with industry partners to ensure our graduates are highly employable has never been more important, as Australia begins to emerge from the biggest economic contraction since The Great Depression.¹

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the design of a program which will increase the number of internships, practicums and other approaches to Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), will increase the number of STEM skilled graduates, and which will support universities in developing collaborations and partnerships with industry.

Job-ready graduates

Swinburne concurs with Universities Australia (UA) that given students should be equipped with a broad range of capabilities to suit a range of careers, it would be a mistake to focus on narrow skill sets. We further support the assertion that the vast majority of employers are satisfied with university graduates.²

Swinburne is supportive of the Australian Technology Network's (ATN) recommendation that a broad view be taken of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) through a wide range of technical skills and capabilities. We further agree with and welcome the strong support for undertaking STEM units in non-

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, September 2020

² Social Research Centre, 2019 Employer Satisfaction Survey

STEM disciplines.

Swinburne agrees that a broad view of WIL is important; one which encompasses the wide range of industry engagements beyond placements and internships. Swinburne concurs with the ATN that innovative and transformative practices should be encouraged and rewarded, without undue concern for metrics focussed on compliance.

Indicators

Swinburne is supportive of the wide range of indicators suggested in the consultation paper and the flexibility this affords, however we echo concerns raised by the ATN and UA that indicators and targets should be separated, and that a program based on continual improvement needs to recognise and acknowledge optimal achievement in priority areas.

We concur with UA that with respect to employment outcomes, measuring this with sufficient accuracy will present a significant challenge for universities, and that data concerning local and national economic conditions which influence employment should be considered by Government.

We caution the Government against creating an excessive reporting burden for universities, and that reusing data sets where possible should be permitted.

Swinburne supports UAs recommendation that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Data Quality Framework be considered in the design of the program, to ensure efficiency, accessibility and accuracy in data collection.

Incentives for employers

Swinburne strongly recommends involving industry in the design and pilot phase of the NPILF, and that Government consider how industry might be better incentivised to engage with public universities.

Swinburne concurs with the ATN that partnerships with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) should be supported by the NPILF, and that program design should consider the vast range in scale of such partnerships.

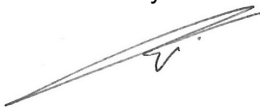
Work experience in industry (WEI) unit

Swinburne fully supports the adoption of a WEI unit which will attract Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) funding. We do however share concerns raised by UA regarding the narrow definition of WIL and the narrow scope of activities eligible for the WEI.

Swinburne looks forward to engaging with DESE on the further design, development and piloting of the NPILF, and we reiterate our strong support for this important, dedicated fund for industry engagement.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission. Should you require further information, please contact Mr Chris Hennessy, Director, Government Relations at chennessy@swin.edu.au.

Yours sincerely



Professor Pascale G. Quester
Vice-Chancellor and President