



## Office of the President and Vice-Chancellor

### Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics Inquiry into the Medicare Levy Amendment (National Disability Insurance Scheme Funding) Bill 2017 and 10 related bills [provisions]

Last updated: 8 September 2017

#### Executive Summary

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1. Monash University welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee regarding the provisions of the Medicare Levy Amendment (National Disability Insurance Scheme Funding) Bill 2017 and 10 Related Bills.
2. Monash University confines its comments in this submission to the *Nation-building Funds Repeal (National Disability Insurance Scheme Funding) Bill 2017*.
3. Schedule 1 of the abovementioned Bill proposes to repeal the *Nation-building Funds Act 2008*. This legislation established the Education Investment Fund (EIF). Passage of this Bill has the effect of abolishing the EIF, which has been an invaluable source of funds that universities, including Monash, have accessed to contribute towards the development and refurbishment of critical research and teaching infrastructure.
4. To be clear, Monash University is supportive of the NDIS; our objection lies with the abolition of the EIF as a means to fund the NDIS.

#### Recommendation

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5. *Monash University recommends that the Committee oppose passage of the Nation-building Funds Repeal (National Disability Insurance Scheme Funding) Bill 2017.*

#### Education Investment Fund

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6. The Education Investment Fund (EIF) was one of the three 'nation-building funds' established in 2008 to stimulate the economy in the wake of the projected impact of the Global Financial Crisis.
7. EIF replaced the Higher Education Endowment Fund (HEEF). HEEF was established in 2007 as a perpetual fund to provide a guaranteed source of funding for capital works and research facilities to ensure Australia's universities continued to grow as first class teaching and research institutions<sup>1</sup>.
8. Similarly, EIF aimed to build a modern, productive, internationally competitive Australian economy by supporting world-leading, strategically-focused infrastructure investments that would transform Australian tertiary education and research<sup>2</sup>.
9. Both HEEF and EIF offered universities, via annual competitive rounds, the opportunity to compete for funds for priority infrastructure projects. Taken together, the HEEF and EIF

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<sup>1</sup> A Higher Education Endowment Fund - [http://www.budget.gov.au/2007-08/overview2/html/overview\\_05.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2007-08/overview2/html/overview_05.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Education Investment Fund - <https://www.education.gov.au/education-investment-fund>

funds have supplemented individual university contributions to develop world class research facilities infrastructure.

10. The Australian Government currently proposes to close the Education Investment Fund (EIF) and transfer the remaining funding to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

## Monash University

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11. Established by an Act of Parliament in 1958, one of the legislated objects of Monash University is:

*to undertake scholarship, pure and applied research, invention, innovation, education and consultancy of international standing and to apply those matters to the advancement of knowledge and to the benefit of the wellbeing of the Victorian, Australian and international communities<sup>3</sup>*

12. Over five decades, Monash University has emerged as a research and education institution of the highest quality and is currently one of the highest-ranked universities in the world.
13. Monash is committed to educational excellence and research that promotes innovation, responds to pressing societal challenges and enriches the lives of our students, staff and the general community. We have an optimistic and outward-looking spirit that is manifest in our operations across four continents.
14. Education is Australia's third largest export and largest services export. Monash contributes more than 9% of Australia's \$22 billion education export market (\$1.9 billion every year), and generates nearly six dollars for every dollar of government funding it receives. The University is one of the country's biggest employers and one of the biggest drivers of new jobs outside the Melbourne CBD.
15. Monash attracts the highest international competitive research income of any Australian university. This position was not reached by chance alone – it has been hard won by purposeful and long term strategic pursuit of in world-class research; fostering and encouraging collaboration between researchers, industry and community, and investment in the required accompanying infrastructure.
16. In coming years Australia's productivity and economic prosperity will increasingly depend on how successfully it is able to enhance a culture of international collaboration and innovation. This requires attracting international investment and talent, advancing a knowledge economy, and developing new economic opportunities for the community. Building research and teaching infrastructure that allows Monash to sustain its competitive international reputation is vital for this endeavour.
17. Schemes such as the Education Investment Fund have accelerated the realisation of our mission and have delivered benefit to the Victorian and Australian community.
18. Dedicated Commonwealth funding available for universities to invest in critical research and education infrastructure is exceedingly scarce. Without EIF funding, vital development and renewal of research and education infrastructure cannot occur. Closing the EIF will therefore directly impact Monash University's ability, as well as the ability of

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<sup>3</sup> Monash University Act 2009 - [https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/mua2009237/](https://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/mua2009237/)

other universities, to attract and sustain local and international research and teaching talent in an increasingly competitive international environment.

## **Case studies: the benefit of EIF to Monash and the communities we serve**

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19. Monash has received in excess of \$100 million in infrastructure funding from EIF and its predecessor, HEEF. This funding has supplemented other investment in research infrastructure, however there are two examples notable for the benefit realised by the community: the Green Chemical Futures building; and, the New Horizons building.

### **Green Chemical Futures**

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20. Opened in 2015, the Green Chemical Futures (GCF) building is a benchmark, 9,500 m<sup>2</sup> multi-level collaborative teaching and research facility located in the North West Precinct of Monash University, Clayton campus. It is dedicated to facilitating academic and industrial research within the chemicals and plastics sector. GCF was made possible via EIF funding.
21. In addition to housing state of the art facilities for students, GCF operates as a “hub for industry”. The facilities and infrastructure contained within GCF support targeted industry-driven research within the chemicals and plastics sector. The co-location of various related industry, research and student teams, provides opportunities for collaboration and innovation that would not occur otherwise.
22. A number of world-leading research and industry teams are currently housed within GCF; including:
- Chemicals and Plastics Manufacturing Innovation Network<sup>4</sup> – in which the PerkinEkmer Flagship Facility and the Axieo Centre for Innovation are embedded, enabling PhD projects to be undertaken in partnership with over 30 businesses and provides support to researchers in the form of industrial training and best practice.
  - Victorian Centre for Sustainable Chemical Manufacturing<sup>5</sup> – a consortium of academic, government and industry organisations including the Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), Monash University, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Plastics and Chemicals Industry Association (PACIA) and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA Victoria). The VCSCM takes a whole-of-life-cycle/whole-of-supply-chain approach, and provides manufacturers with the capacity and capability to innovate, to acquire new skills and improve their competitiveness, productivity and environmental performance.
  - Food Innovation Centre<sup>6</sup> – an industry shared world class facility operated by industry experts and researchers. Food innovation is immensely important for Australia’s economic future, and the Centre opens up new pathways to export markets for Australian food businesses, as well as providing food and agriculture businesses with the support and expertise to rapidly adapt and develop products for domestic and export markets. Since opening April 2016, the Centre has been visited and services accessed by more than 1500 businesses, with another 850 companies reached through external workshops, conferences and site visits. Its

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<sup>4</sup> Chemicals & Plastics Manufacturing Innovation Network - <https://www.monash.edu/cpmin/about-us>

<sup>5</sup> Victorian Centre for Sustainable Chemical Manufacturing - <http://vcscm.org.au/>

<sup>6</sup> Food Innovation Centre - <https://www.foodinnovationcentre.com.au/>

capabilities have also been used to support businesses in industries as diverse as cosmetics, paints and nappies.

23. The GCF building was funded by the Education Investment Fund.

### **New Horizons building**

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24. Opened in 2013, the New Horizons building is a multi-level collaborative technological innovation hub, located in the North West Precinct of Monash University, Clayton campus.

25. The New Horizons building is an integral element of the Clayton Innovation Precinct. New Horizons is a collaborative research environment creating new multi-disciplinary research opportunities for industry, engineers, scientists, researchers and government in the fields of future manufacturing, modelling and simulation, biological engineering and renewable energy. Over 400 CSIRO and Monash researchers are working with visionary industries and Australian manufacturers in areas such as advanced manufacturing, medical technologies, metal processing, aerospace and fibre industries.

26. A number of works-leading research and industry platforms are located within New Horizons:

- a. The Monash Immersive Visualisation Platform (known as the 'CAVE')<sup>7</sup>. CAVE is a platform available to researchers and industry to visualise data. By offering new ways of seeing connections within data, CAVE allows the emergence of new paradigms to visualise, manipulate and comprehend data such as engineering models, multi-dimensional images across the size scale from nanoscopic to cosmic, and the outputs of scientific, computational and engineering simulations across the physical and life sciences.
- b. Woodside Innovation Centre<sup>8</sup>. Opened in June 2016, the Woodside Innovation Centre forms part of Woodside's FutureLab network and is a transformational hub that accelerates advances in Materials Engineering, Additive Manufacturing and Data Science. Woodside and Monash's leading researchers in Materials Engineering and Information Technology are working together to research industry-wide technology innovation opportunities in the Australian and global oil and gas industry and are pioneering the use of rapid prototyping to deliver immediate benefits to the sector.

Woodside contributed \$10m over five years to establish and operate the Innovation Centre – then the largest philanthropic donation in Monash University's history. This would not have been possible without the New Horizons building.

27. The New Horizons building was funded by the Education Investment Fund.

### **Recommendation**

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28. It is recommended that the Senate Standing Committee on Economics oppose the passage of the *Nation-building Funds Repeal (National Disability Insurance Scheme Funding) Bill 2017*.

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<sup>7</sup> Monash Immersive Visualisation Platform - <http://www.monash.edu/mivp>

<sup>8</sup> Woodside Innovation Centre - <https://woodside-innovation-centre.monash.edu/>