



Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment
Committee Office
Department of the Senate
By email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

**Re: Inquiry into the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers
Questions on notice**

The University of Melbourne appeared at a public hearing on 12 November 2025 and took questions on notice. The Committee subsequently forwarded further questions from Senators. The following information is provided to address the Questions on Notice.

1. Copy of the independent review of Meanjin

Melbourne University Publishing Ltd (MUP) is a subsidiary of the University of Melbourne, which operates independently to the University of Melbourne, with its own Board.

MUP has announced that literary magazine Meanjin will cease publication after the December issue.

The decision was made after the MUP Board found it was no longer economically viable to continue producing Meanjin in print and online.

The University of Melbourne Council was not involved in the decision to close Meanjin. MUP has not provided a copy of the independent review of Meanjin to the University.

The Council was only informed after MUP had made its decision, and the University accepts this decision.

The University gratefully acknowledges the editors, contributors, and readers who have played a role in Meanjin over many decades.

The University remains committed to supporting public discourse and Australia's literary and cultural sector in a range of ways.

2. Minutes of the Council – discussion of Meanjin

The only record of mention of Meanjin ceasing in the minutes of the University of Melbourne Council, were in the Council minutes of 27 August 2025, in which the Chair of the Finance Committee advised Council members of MUP's decision to cease publication of the Meanjin magazine. There were no other references to Meanjin in the Council minutes from 1 January 2020 – 20 November 2025.

3. AI scrapping

Decisions regarding Meanjin are made by the MUP Board and not by the University.



4. Council Code of Conduct

Policies

The Charter of Responsibilities for Council Members governs Council conduct and is publicly available on the University of Melbourne's website [Standing-Resolutions-of-Council-V09-4-Dec-2024.pdf](#)

Council members, who are also staff of the University, are bound by the University's Appropriate Workplace Behaviour. Policy.

Council member's social media posts

Council has a strong and shared belief in the University's anti-racism commitment. While Council member Mr Leibler's social media tweets were made in a personal capacity and do not reflect the views of the University, the issues raised in complaints about this social media content were considered carefully in relation to the expectations of Council members set out in the Council Charter and Standing Resolutions of Council. The matter was brought to a full meeting of Council for resolution and dealt with to the satisfaction of Council.

5. Managing perceived or actual conflicts of interest

(i) Policies

Any external work undertaken by University of Melbourne employees is governed by our policies and processes. The relevant policies for our staff are the [Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) and the [External Work Procedure](#).

Any external work, including Board roles, that is undertaken by the Vice-Chancellor (paid or unpaid) is assessed and approved by Council.

Former University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Professor Duncan Maskell declared his board roles in his annual conflict of interest declarations. His roles were also disclosed in our Annual Reports and on our website.

Professor Maskell's approved board appointments were with entities directly related to the interests of the University of Melbourne. The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (WEHI) is formally affiliated with the University of Melbourne with University directors required on its Board. Professor Maskell was not remunerated for this role.

Professor Maskell's only remuneration related to his appointment on the external board of publicly listed company, CSL. His appointment to the CSL Board was considered by the Council and approved in advance of him taking up the role. As agreed with Council, Professor Maskell donated a sizeable portion of his CSL fees to the University in the form of a donation to the University's [Wattle Fellowship](#).



(ii) Jumar Bioincubator

Jumar Bioincubator was established by three of Victoria's most distinguished entities spanning industry, research and academia – CSL, WEHI and the University of Melbourne. Together, with backing from innovation investor Breakthrough Victoria, an initiative of the Victorian Government, and operator Cicada Innovations, it is embedded in the world leading Melbourne Biomedical Precinct. Jumar sets the tone for what's possible for the next generation of biotech startups. The University issued a [media release](#) on its launch.

Australia's newest biotech incubator Jumar Bioincubator officially opened its doors on 18 April 2024 and provides space for innovative early-stage ventures to take up residency in the much-needed Melbourne-based facility.

The state-of-the-art facilities, infrastructure, and support offered by Jumar creates a world-class hub for biotech innovation translation, research commercialisation, and talent development that will help to progress discoveries towards real-world patient treatments.

[Jumar](#) is vital for building a critical mass of scientists, here in Australia and throughout the region, who have the knowledge and confidence to run successful biotech companies. By connecting young companies to all the practical support they need to overcome early challenges, Jumar partners hope to steward the creation of a thriving biotechnology ecosystem. Jumar is bringing local talent, innovative ideas and commercial prowess together to solve real-world problems and deliver real-world impact.

Deep collaboration between academics, research institutes, industry, investors, government, and innovation ecosystem partners such as CSL, WEHI and the University of Melbourne is key to increasing our impact from research on a global scale.

When the University Council approved taking a 33% interest in the newly incorporated incubator in 2021, the Vice-Chancellor declared a conflict of interest and did not vote on the matter. The then Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) were delegated authority to execute relevant agreements.

(iii) CRP research agreement between CSIRO and UoM

Vice-Chancellor Professor Emma Johnston's external work comprises her membership of the CSIRO Board and the Board of the Ian Potter Foundation. Both board appointments were reviewed by Council and considered to be in alignment with the University's values and objectives. They were approved by Council and are disclosed publicly on the University website as well as in the Vice-Chancellor's annual conflict of interest declaration.

The CRP agreement between CSIRO and UoM, that appears to have been referred to in this question, was executed in 2016 by the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) under his delegated authority. This was years before Professor Johnston commenced at UoM. The Vice-Chancellor has no day-to-day involvement in this contract. Consequently, even if the agreement was put in place today, no conflicts would need to be declared or managed other than the standing conflict of interest already in place and approved by Council.



6. PhD supervision by staff members

Supervision is part of the performance expectation of academic staff members. It is a professional duty explicitly covered in the Enterprise Agreement.

The University is not familiar with the specific matter raised in the hearing. It can be explored to ensure arrangements align with the Enterprise Agreement and the duties expected of academic staff members if the Committee wishes to share further information.

7. UniForum

- i. *I understand that the University of Melbourne has previously subscribed to the UniForum benchmarking service. Do UoM still subscribe to that service?*

The University has not subscribed to UniForum since 2023.

- ii. *If UoM no longer uses UniForum services, can you please explain how UoM came to the decision to cease paying for UniForum? And what was the rationale for that decision?*

Since 2023 we have been undertaking a significant program to implement new technology platforms across our HR, Finance and Research Management Services. As a result, any participation in benchmarking would have been of very low value as our processes have been considerably redesigned. In addition, the University has also built an internal capability to measure service satisfaction across our shared services which we have deployed from 2023 onwards. This provides us with feedback on service performance. We have found this an effective replacement to UniForum.

- iii. *What steps have the UoM's leadership taken to assess whether UniForum benchmarking scores are meaningful, reliable and rigorous?*

When the University subscribed to UniForum, the results would be presented and discussed with University leaders. Those leading the operational teams would review benchmarking from UniForum against our internal organisational structures to identify relevant activities where the benchmarking data provided useful insights, discounting data that was not aligned with University activities.

- iv. *Has UniForum data ever been used to inform (directly or indirectly) proposals or decisions to disestablish positions or to make staff members redundant at UoM? If yes, please provide details of the positions impacted (or proposed to be impacted) and the role that UniForum data played in decision making.*

UniForum data was used for the Professional Services Redesign program in 2020/2021 when the shared services model at the University of Melbourne was extended. The UniForum data was not used exclusively as the service activity allocations used in UniForum across universities as a benchmark did not align with our internal (UoM) organisational structures.



- v. *Has UoM's executive ever cited UniForum data in presentations or statements to the university's governing council? If yes, please provide details of how and when the UniForum data was cited and the arguments it was used to support.*

Where data was presented to Council, it was one source of data, with other data sources often also noted. The data was used to help measure service effectiveness.

- vi. *Has any member of staff at UoM ever had KPIs that are linked to UniForum data? If yes, please indicate what positions they hold and describe the KPIs in question.*

There has been no direction from University leadership to set individual KPIs based on UniForum data.

- vii. *Does any staff member at UoM have full access to the underlying UniForum data and methodology? If not, does lack of access to underlying data and methodology inhibit your confidence in UniForum reports and benchmarking scores?*

A small data team had access to the curated UniForum dataset, including deidentified coded information for other universities. However, the methodology was a blackbox (UniForum IP). As previously noted, the misalignment of service activity descriptions from UniForum to our internal UoM organisational structure meant that relative benchmarking and trend information were discussed, but no decisions were based solely on UniForum data or analysis.

- viii. *In the absence of access to underlying UniForum data and methodology, what steps has UoM taken to validate the findings that UniForum provides?*

The UniForum benchmarking was reviewed when the reports were generated to identify overall trends where the service activities were aligned with the University, but it was not used as a single source of data to make decisions.

- ix. *For how long has UoM subscribed to the UniForum benchmarking service? Please provide a year-by-year breakdown of how much UoM has spent on UniForum services.*

The University spent a total of \$2.98M from 2010 to 2022 inclusive (13 years) for UniForum participation at an average spend of \$212K p.a. The University's final participation was October 2022, so no fees for participation in UniForum were paid from 2023 onwards.

- x. *Please provide a full list of documents, datasets and reports that UniForum has provided to UoM since the beginning of 2023. Please indicate which of these are available to all members of staff at UoM.*

The University has not subscribed to UniForum since 2023. There is one confidential report on service effectiveness in February 2023 which was for the University's participation in the October 2022 data collection.



8. Partnerships

As a public-spirited university, our purpose is to benefit society through the transformative impact of education and research.

Fundamental principle of academic freedom

In line with our commitment to academic freedom, staff and students of the University are free to engage in scholarly research and collaborative projects with other scholars and organisations, within the parameters of the University of Melbourne's research ethics and integrity codes, and Australian law. The University supports all our academic staff members and is strongly committed to their academic freedom.

The University has stringent processes in place to ensure our research complies with Australian law, is aligned with the national interest and is compliant with relevant research ethics and integrity codes. Our collaborations with partner organisations are subject to regular review and informed by guidance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other government agencies. All agreements go through a rigorous due diligence process. This includes compliance with regulations and legislation related to export controls, sanctions and countering foreign interference.

Our arrangements and joint activities with partners are subject to regular review and due diligence scrutiny. The University weighs the potential community benefits of research outcomes against any potential harm. These issues are regularly revisited to ensure alignment with community expectations and national priorities.

All University collaboration and research agreements go through a rigorous due diligence process before being finalised. The Gift Committee of the University Council assists Council in overseeing and administering philanthropic gifts and sponsorship income from donors and partners to any part of the University.

Tobacco

The University's Smoke-Free and Tobacco-Free Campuses policy specifies we do not undertake research funded by the tobacco industry. The University does not have partnerships, investments or links with tobacco companies. Further details are in <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1260/>

Gambling

The University has several contracts with companies that have an association with gambling entities. One example, the Equine Limb Injury Prevention Program (ELIPP) was funded by Racing Victoria, the Victorian Racing Industry Fund of the Victorian State Government, and The University of Melbourne. A major impact of ELIPP has been the introduction of mandatory screening and monitoring of all Melbourne Cup entrants and international horses visiting for the Melbourne Spring Racing Carnival. This has delivered better health and safety outcomes for



racing horses and personnel. The important work in this area continues through the Equine Orthopaedic Research Group, which is a multidisciplinary research group that brings together researchers from the University of Melbourne's faculties of Science (Melbourne Veterinary School), Mechanical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, the Melbourne Data Analytics Platform, and the CSIRO.

Extractive industries

The University has partnerships with and research projects with the extractive industries sector. For example, research with BHP has included research related to critical minerals extraction from mining activities and carbon capture.

In a First Nations-led partnership example, the University of Melbourne has joined with the National Native Title Council to establish the Mabo Centre, for the purpose of maximising the economic, social and cultural benefits of Native Title rights by building leadership skills and knowledge to advance successful agreement making. The co-chairs are the Chief Executive Officer of the National Native Title Council, Mr Jamie Lowe, and Professor Marcia Langton, Associate Provost of the University of Melbourne. Rio Tinto is a founding partner in the initiative. The Mabo Centre is guided by a Board of First Nations leaders and economic experts.

Another example is the Ngarrngga curriculum project which is supported by academics from the Faculty of Education, Indigenous Studies Unit and Indigenous knowledge Institute at the University of Melbourne who are developing innovative curriculum resources and professional development for educators. The University of Melbourne's partnership with BHP provides the foundation for a collaborative program between educators and academics to enhance how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is taught in schools. The University of Melbourne has received funding from BHP to develop the Ngarrngga program, which commenced in 2022 and will run for four years.

Defence and national security

Our academics have academic freedom to research topics in their areas of expertise, and this can include national security and defence-related research.

All research agreements go through rigorous due diligence processes. These processes and our alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research are designed to provide full confidence that our research in defence and national security complies with Australian law and our obligations under export controls, international sanctions and countering foreign interference legislation.

The University of Melbourne supports Australia's commitment to a whole-of-nation effort to increase its sovereign defence capabilities through research in the national interest. The University of Melbourne is playing its part in supporting Australia by sharing our expertise across disciplines and preparing our graduates with advanced technical and professional skills. The



University of Melbourne partners with the Australian Government, Defence agencies and industry partners on projects related to national security. This research helps to strengthen Australia's sovereign capabilities, support the Australian Defence Force, support stability in the region, and respond to natural disasters.

Defence research has resulted in many of the technologies that are now central to our everyday lives, such as the internet, GPS satellite navigation, microwave ovens and even super glue. Many of our research projects have dual-use potential, driving innovation in areas such as healthcare, environmental sustainability, and emerging technologies for the benefit of society. For example, as part of our commitment to national security, we help to improve emergency responses to Australian natural disasters including bushfires. This research can utilise satellite imagery and data analysis for risk assessment, weather forecasting, and post-fire monitoring or other dual use technologies. Researchers are also exploring AI-powered fire prediction models, community preparedness, and integrating Indigenous fire management knowledge.

Investments

The University's Implemented Consultant, JANA Investment Advisors (JANA), provides strategic investment advice, day-to-day management of the University's financial investment portfolio along with underlying investment manager appointments. The University's strategic investment decisions are implemented by JANA primarily via investment in pooled investment trusts. The University does not make individual investment decisions on whether to buy or sell specific company holdings, nor does it undertake direct activity with respect to corporate actions. Instead, our Implemented Consultant integrates ESG considerations into investment decisions. Our primary framework for responsible investing is documented in the University's Responsible Investment Guidelines (RIG), which is publicly available. The RIG is aligned with the University's values of academic freedom and that the world's greatest challenges are solved by collaboration (except in clear cut cases of no public benefit e.g. tobacco). At the investment implementation level, the University is supportive of engagement over divestment, and active shareholder engagement including the exercise of proxy voting rights, which is viewed as having an important and valuable impact on the decision making of the underlying investments of the University.

The University reports on its approach to responsible investments in its annual [Sustainability Report](#)¹ which includes a breakdown of investments in our top 20 equities holdings.

¹ <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/sustainabilityreport/domain-3-walking-the-talk-in-our-operations/responsible-investments>



9. Job Ready Graduates

The University's submission in September 2022 to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee Inquiry into the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-Ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020*, said the following:

It is altogether appropriate that our higher education system is responsive to Australia's labour market needs. There are, however, problems with the proposed approach to achieving this. There are well-documented methodological issues in the costing study that was used to inform the changes. There is also a lack of evidence that the changes will have the intended impact on enrolment decisions, and there are questions of fairness when significant increases in contributions for some students are used to explicitly offset reductions for others.

Our view has not changed and the foreshadowed impacts on the sector and students have come to pass. The federal government has effectively privatised higher education in many discipline areas for many students and has not returned the six per cent cut to research funding made when JRG was implemented. The University is concerned that high student fees for some courses act as a barrier to participation and work against the goal of the Accord to lift the tertiary attainment rate of the working age population from 60% currently to at least 80% by 2050 and increasing the proportion of university educated Australians aged 25 to 34 from 45% currently to 55% by 2050.

Yours sincerely

Professor Michael Wesley
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