



**University of Newcastle Submission:
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public
Administration on Emergency Response Fund Bill
2019**

The University of Newcastle welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Finance and Public Administration on the Emergency Response Fund Bill 2019 (the Bill) and the Emergency Response Fund (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019.

We note the Committees' advice these Bills would enable funding for emergency response and recovery following natural disasters in Australia that have a significant or catastrophic impact. Our submission does not dispute the need to fund emergency response and recovery, only the proposed source of funds being used to do so.

The Education Investment Fund was the major source of competitive infrastructure funding available to universities to ensure they can serve their regions appropriately, growing higher education, research and innovation to meet the needs of the community, business and industry.

Without a source of funding for infrastructure, universities have very limited options to raise revenue, and provide major new region-building infrastructure. With plans to ease population pressures on our capital cities, it is essential to have a source of funding for tertiary infrastructure in regional centres to ensure non-capital regions have a pipeline of skilled workers, the capacity to upskill and reskill the workforce, and the capability to partner with industry and business on research.

The need for dedicated infrastructure funding is particularly important in non-capital city universities like the University of Newcastle, which have a relatively small cohort of full-fee paying international students when compared to major capital cities. Moreover, large regional centres like Newcastle, Geelong and Wollongong do not currently have access government scholarships to further encourage international students. International students bring cultural diversity, new perspectives and invaluable global connections to universities and their regions; and the investment they provide in universities is an important revenue source, among others, to reinvest in infrastructure and major capital works.

New tertiary infrastructure is particularly important to prepare for the projected uplift in the number of university aged students from 2024 onward, as a result of the early 2000s 'baby boom'.

As illustrated by the success of the University's landmark NeW Space building, university infrastructure can anchor a city, catalysing change and revitalisation. The University of Newcastle is also pursuing this aim in the Gosford CBD, with a \$250 million, long-term vision for a major university campus in the city centre. This vision aligns with government plans to create Gosford as the capital of the Central Coast, an area that has experienced significant population growth over the past 30 years, but does not have the infrastructure, jobs and economic opportunities to match. In particular, the Central Coast has one the nation's largest commuter populations, and also has significantly lower educational participation rates than the national average.

The Federal Government has made a significant and welcome commitment to investing in the first stage of the University's vision for the Central Coast, with an \$18 million commitment to a Health, Innovation and Education precinct in Gosford. However a nation-building fund such as EIF is

essential to achieve later stages of the plan, and partner in the full extent of the transformational vision.

When active, EIF formed the Federal Government contribution to two major capital investments in Newcastle and the Hunter, both of which have had significant social and economic returns to our region.

NeW Space

Through EIF, the Federal Government was a major funding partner in the University's landmark \$95 million NeW Space Building, which anchors the University's City Precinct in the Newcastle CBD. Opened to students in 2017, NeW Space houses around 3,000 students and staff from the Faculty of Business and Law and the School of Creative Industries.

EIF enabled the Federal Government, NSW Government and the University to invest in NeW Space in partnership, investing \$30 million, \$25 million and \$40 million respectively to create a precinct that contributed to each partner's goals for the city and the region.

NeW Space builds on and activates the University's other locations in the Newcastle CBD, including the Conservatorium of Music, University House, the I2N Hub Hunter St and the Watt Space Gallery. The University will be undertaking further development in nearby Honeysuckle Precinct, with an Innovation Hub and School of Creative Industries due to open next year. This presence delivers substantial benefits for the city and for the region. Independent modelling by the Hunter Research Foundation showed that UON is expected to contribute \$5.5 billion to the Hunter economy in the next decade, including \$1.3 billion from the Newcastle CBD campus development.

This has been delivered by transforming the Newcastle CBD, attracting students, business and community to use the building, and playing a significant role in revitalising the Newcastle CBD as part of the NSW State Government's Revitalisation NSW.

NeW Space includes state of the art collaborative learning and social spaces, and digital library services for students, staff and the community. It is viewed and used as a community asset, hosting many formal and informal community and business meetings on a daily basis.

Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources

EIF provided further benefit to the Hunter Region through the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER), which launched in 2011, and was established with the contribution of \$30 million of funding in Round 3 of EIF, with an additional \$2.2 million NSW Government funding support. The University contributed infrastructure to the NIER project through the purchase of the former BHP Newcastle Technology Centre, which was refurbished as part of the project. The New Research Building at NIER, funded through EIF was officially opened in 2015.

NIER was established with a clear agenda to provide a multidisciplinary model for transformational research in energy and resources. Driven by a vision of global leadership, through NIER the University addresses challenges of the rapidly emerging issues of resource sustainability, productivity and competitiveness associated with energy and resources infrastructure.

NIER is located on a 3.8-hectare site adjacent to the University's Callaghan campus, and is the centrepiece of the University's rapidly developing Energy and Resources Precinct.

EIF funding enabled the University to build major industrial pilot plant facilities for industry-led collaborative research at NIER, making it one of the most successful examples of industry collaboration in the country.

The research projects awarded to, and associated research funding generated by, the research groups under the NIER umbrella since the Institute's inception is valued at over \$150 million.

The Institute has developed into an innovative platform of research expertise in the area of energy and resources, with researchers addressing global challenges through the delivery of multidisciplinary solutions. It now has more than 19 University research centres and groups now located at NIER, 17 international partners, 167 active industry partners and nearly 250 PhD students supported by NIER centres.

NIER works in partnership with our local energy and resources industries and all levels of government to ensure our research and training expertise can help create genuine economic and social opportunities for the people of our regions. Examples of this include:

- The ARC Industrial Transformation Research Hub for Advanced Technologies for Australian Iron Ore, engaging with mining and mining services companies to unlock future value, grow markets and develop innovative technologies for the sector;
- The Doctoral Training Centre for Advanced Mining Equipment, Technology and Services, advancing fundamental knowledge and identifying key emerging opportunities in the sector through industry-embedded research training;
- Sector deployment of leading research innovations, including the Reflux Classifier and Jameson Cell, and full-scale demonstration of others including the Reflux Flotation Cell through the Global Innovation Linkages Program;

Through the collaboration of industry and academia, NIER continues to facilitate market-driven initiatives that enable our research community to drive innovation and impact that ultimately contributes to greater resilience for a better tomorrow.