



Professor Margaret Gardner AO
President and Vice-Chancellor

20 February 2015

Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Agostino,

Monash University is pleased to make this submission to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee inquiry into the amended Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 (the Bill).

Monash University supports the submissions made by Universities Australia and the Group of Eight.

Monash University welcomes the changes made to the indexation of the HELP debt and the provisions for scholarships included in these amendments. These matters were included in our submission dated 22 September 2014 on the previous version of the Bill.

Consistent with our previous submission, Monash University reiterates some areas for further consideration in the proposed Bill as follows:

1. Monash University strongly urges the reconsideration of proposed cuts to the funding of the Research Training Scheme (RTS). Graduate research students form a key part of Australia's research workforce and provide a significant contribution to national and institutional research outputs and to long-term strategic national interests.

Most RTS-supported students are provided with an Australian Postgraduate Award stipend which is below the minimum wage and which acts as a disincentive to some to undertake postgraduate research. It is our view that the low financial support for this group of students, if it is combined with the introduction of a student contribution, would lead to a downturn in those undertaking research degrees and will have a significant negative impact on the future of the country's research workforce.

2. We call on the Commonwealth Government to reduce, overall, the size and scale of the cuts to Higher Education.

3. Monash University does not support the proposed transition from the existing eight funding clusters to five funding tiers and would seek to have the current eight clusters retained at existing funding levels. Under the proposed five tier model, the 30% reduction in funding for Engineering and Science would be much higher than the proposed average reduction. Such a disincentive does not support Australia's future industry needs.

On a minor technical level, there are number of places in the Bill where implementation dates require review. Schedule 10 is an example where a January 2015 implementation date is not practical in terms of census dates and government reporting requirements.

The current funding situation for higher education is not sustainable and Monash University supports the reform goals to address this critical issue. Our nation's long term prosperity relies on today's education and research outcomes. Continued Government support for the vital role that universities play in developing the innovators of today's and tomorrow's economies is critical.

If you have any queries about this submission please don't hesitate to contact my office

Yours sincerely,

Professor Margaret Gardner AO
President and Vice-Chancellor