



DISTINCTIVE BY DESIGN

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

via: pjicis@aph.gov.au

17 December 2020

Dear Secretary,

*Re: Inquiry into national security risks affecting the Australian higher education
and research sector*

University of Canberra is pleased to provide a submission to the Committee's Inquiry into the *National Security Risks Affecting the Australian Higher Education and Research Sector*.

The University acknowledges that the rapidly changing geo-political environment is bringing these risks into sharp focus, and with it an increasing awareness of the need for personal and institutional risk mitigation and practice.

Like a wide range of Australian businesses and institutions - and indeed government agencies - we operate in an increasingly connected global environment. International engagement is a core part of our approach and international collaboration with institutions is fundamental to the advancement of Australian based research and development – advancements that ultimately provide benefit to the Australian community and economy. Our institution is relatively small in scale, yet there exists a large range and array of arrangements that underpin our success as a university.

Nevertheless, we do have a strong understanding of the security risks that international connectivity brings and the potential fail points that exist across the spectrum of university activities. University of Canberra complies with its obligations under the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018 (FITS Act)*, the *Defence Trade Controls Act* and the *Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference* in the Australian University Sector developed by the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT). We have had a keen interest in the recent passage of the *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill 2020* and will work actively with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the new Foreign Arrangements Taskforce.

We agree that a collaborative approach between Government and the sector is the best long-term defence to the threats posed by foreign interference. Indeed, these matters have been at the forefront of Government to sector dialogue in recent years.

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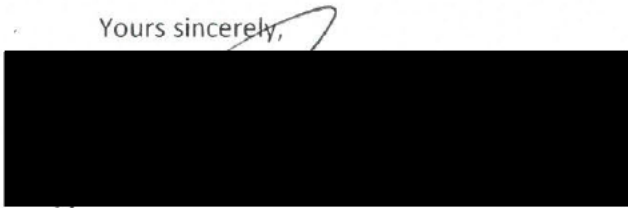
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It is our view that the responses to date from the Government and the sector have been significant. The focus now should be on effective implementation of these policies and initiatives within universities, so they become part of a business as usual approach to risk and interference management.

We do recognise that ensuring compliance, while essential, will require resourcing going forward, for both institutions and key portfolio agencies. Publicly funded universities have received no financial support to comply with a growing list of requirements. We urge the Committee to consider the cost of ensuring effective mitigation of national security risks.

The University of Canberra is a member of Universities Australia and supports the position set out in its submission to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Paddy Nixon

Vice-Chancellor and President



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