

# INNOVATIVE RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES **AUSTRALIA**

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Mr John Carter  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Mr Carter

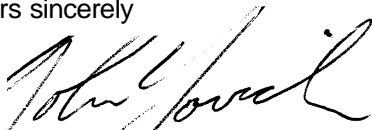
Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the provisions of the *Higher Education Endowment Fund Bill 2007*.

Innovative Research Universities Australia is an association of six Universities - Flinders, Griffith, La Trobe, Macquarie, Murdoch and Newcastle. And as such have a common focus and aims, principles and ideals. The group were established as universities with responsibilities for teaching and research across a comprehensive range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. They serve some of the fastest growing regions of Australia and the six universities are playing increasing important roles in developing the social and economic fabric of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The HEEF initiative recognizes the importance that Universities play in the development of the Australian economy, and the IRUA is pleased to part of that enterprise.

I would be pleased to provide further information if that would be useful.

Yours sincerely



Professor John Yovich  
Chair  
Innovative Research Universities Australia

21 August 2007

## **Committee Inquiry Higher Education Endowment Fund Bill 2007**

The Senate has referred to its Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee the Higher Education Endowment Fund Bill 2007 for inquiry and reporting by 7th September 2007.

Innovative Research Universities Australia put forward the following comments:

### **Policy on which the legislation is based**

The Bill gives effect to a Government budget commitment to establish a perpetual endowment fund—with an initial investment of \$5 billion—to generate earnings for capital expenditure and research facilities in higher education institutions. The IRUA welcomes this government initiative. The HEEF will offer real benefits for research and capital projects and will improve infrastructure necessary for teaching and research into the future.

Capital investment in Universities is essential as an on-going strategy to support the world class effort of Australian universities and recognises the Universities' role in Australian economic development.

While the HEEF fund is clearly an important step forward for the international competitiveness of Australian Universities, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) established under the Government's *Backing Australia's Ability* framework, also provides essential support specifically for Australian research infrastructure. The IRUA sees the continuation of this vital initiative as intrinsic to the sustenance of our national research capacity. The HEEF should not replace NCRIS.

In addition the DEST Capital Development Pool (CDP) is also a strategic tool which has a different focus than the HEEF fund, and should continue to offer national priority funds for university development.

### **The consequences of the legislation.**

A Higher Education Endowment Fund Advisory Board will be established to advise the minister on matters related to the making of grants to eligible higher education institutions. The IRUA look forward to providing input into the development of the granting policy and process. There are several clear principles that the IRUA see as essential to the effectiveness of the legislation:

The Higher Education Endowment Fund:

*Flinders University, Griffith University, La Trobe University, Macquarie University,  
Murdoch University, and The University of Newcastle*

- should provide for buildings and infrastructure only and not for operational funds;
- have a competitive annual application process where expenditure proposals must make clear how the planned investment supports the University's overall infrastructure strategy and strategic plan;
- matching funds should not be a requirement - some infrastructure cannot attract such funding;
- that applications should not need to address the discipline areas of national importance, that are an element of the Capital Development Pool (CDP). The focus instead should be to support each university's strategy in developing their distinctive profile.

In more detail, the IRUA sees the following matters (while not exclusive) important in the policy framework that will enable the HEEF to realize its objectives:

- funding should be for refurbishment as well as new projects;
- the enhancement of both teaching and learning spaces, and also social space;
- support should be shown for projects which provide community engagement;
- support should be shown for regional engagement;
- refurbishment of premises for research;
- new research buildings;
- replacement, renewal or upgrading of research equipment;
- teaching accommodation and facilities;
- support services, including libraries;
- collaborative projects involving, for example, the shared use of buildings, facilities or capital equipment.