



27 November 2020

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**Murdoch University submission on the Security Legislation  
Amendment (Critical Infrastructure) Bill 2020**

Murdoch University is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into the Commonwealth's proposed reforms to protect critical infrastructure and systems of national significance; as detailed in the Exposure Draft of the Security Legislation Amendment (Critical Infrastructure) Bill 2020, associated Exposure Draft of the Intelligence Services Regulations 2020 and accompanying documents.

Murdoch University appreciates the need to protect national security and critical infrastructure. We are also mindful of the need to balance the national interest against our institutional commitment to openness, sharing of information, generation and sharing of knowledge, and internationally collaborative research.

As a member of the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group, Murdoch University has participated in the development of and supports the IRU submission to the inquiry.

It is our view that a case has yet to be made as to why universities need to be included under the auspices of the Bill. This is especially relevant as there are already numerous existing agencies and covering legislation that serve to manage such risks.

Murdoch supports removal of universities from the Bill and establishment of processes building on collaborative work with existing bodies to determine responses to potential attacks on critical infrastructure that reflect individual institutional exposure and risk.

However, if universities are not removed from the Bill, we seek further clarification and explanation from the Government as to how the changes will be implemented and precisely under what circumstances.

This Bill establishes far reaching powers and it is not clear how and when the government will use those powers. It also introduces additional risk for institutions with respect to their research and innovation work.

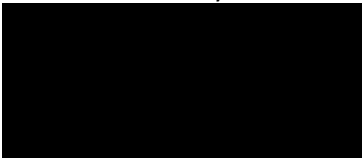
Government intervention is only justified in the worst-case scenario, with critical infrastructure at imminent risk of major interference/damage. Such intervention should, therefore, be the option of last resort, and require approval from the University's Vice Chancellor. It is unclear what extent of exposure would see the government intervene, again making universities susceptible to additional risk to their operations.

It is also critical to understand how this Bill and the regulatory framework aligns with other government and sector work. This includes:

- the University Foreign Interference Taskforce,
- the Australasian Higher Education Cybersecurity Service responding to Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2020, and
- TEQSA's Higher Education Integrity Unit established to identify and respond to emerging integrity risks within the sector.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further information or clarification on our submission is required.

Yours sincerely



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