

## Path to Treaty Bill 2023

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Friday, 17 March 2023

Committee Secretary  
Community Support and Services Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

By email: [cssc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:cssc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary,

**Call for Submissions: Path to Treaty Bill 2023 – Community Support and Services Committee**

QUT is a major Australian university with a global reputation and a 'real-world' focus. We are an ambitious institution, with strong research program which connect fundamental enquiry into societal outcomes. Our [Connections: QUT strategy](#) establishes QUT as 'the university for the real world', and charts our provision of transformative education, student experiences and research that is relevant to our communities. We teach more than 50,000 students across two inner-city campuses in Brisbane. Our five thriving faculties, along with QUT College, the Carumba Institute and more than 10 university-wide research centres, support academic programs in fields spanning business, creative industries, education, engineering, health, law, science and social justice. QUT is well known for our strong links to industry and government, and our interdisciplinary teams create high-impact research in areas as diverse as climate change mitigation, digital media, materials science and biomedical innovation.

QUT is committed to building, sustaining and celebrating a culture of excellence in Indigenous Australian education, research and engagement. Indigenous Australians make substantial contributions to QUT as leaders, researchers, innovators, educators, learners, collaborators and creators. As the oldest continuing culture in the world, Indigenous Australians bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, expertise, perspectives and insights to the university. The university has one of the highest Indigenous Australian student populations in the country, with more than 930 enrolments in 2022. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support centre – the [Oodgeroo Unit](#) – plays a vital role in supporting Indigenous Australian student success. We also have our own Indigenous Australian research institute – the [Carumba Institute](#) – where emerging Indigenous Australian researchers can access world-class facilities and resources they need to flourish.

Our strong connections to the Indigenous Australian community play a critical role in assisting us to achieve Indigenous Australian excellence and success. We have developed sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships with several peak Indigenous Australian community organisations in south-east Queensland that seek to address the needs of Indigenous Australians and deliver societal benefits. We are also embedding Indigenous Australian culture into everything we do by building the capacity of our staff to integrate Indigenous Australians' perspectives into their practices and transforming the physical environments of both campuses, guided by our award-winning [Campus to Country: Positioning Strategy](#).

QUT welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Community Support and Services Committee inquiry on the Path to Treaty Bill 2023 and makes the following comments/observations.

It is noted that a key function of the Treaty Institute is to undertake and promote research to (i) inform the development of the treaty-making framework; and (ii) support Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in treaty negotiations; and that the Institute may establish an advisory committee in support of this function. It is also noted that a function of the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry will be to conduct research into, and promote community awareness and understanding of, the impacts and effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

QUT strongly supports this research function of the Institute and Inquiry as a mechanism to support its own work and to support communities to undertake research on their own terms and aspirations. It would be important during establishment phase of the Institute and Inquiry that it recognise the historical and ongoing role research has played in the lives of Indigenous Australians where since colonisation Indigenous Australians have been positioned as objects of research. This research has a legacy of extraction, often undertaken without consent, invasive of Indigenous peoples' rights and contrary to their benefits.

As a university, we are committed to providing transformative research that delivers real-world solutions. Our [Indigenous Australian Research Strategy](#) empowers the university's Indigenous Australian leaders to leverage their research strength in a vibrant intellectual environment. QUT has a long history and is a recognised leader in cultivating Indigenous Australian research excellence and innovation. QUT has established the Carumba Institute to unify and empower its efforts to build a world-class Indigenous Australian research environment. The creation of the Carumba Institute clearly signals the high profile and priority QUT places on Indigenous Australian research within the university's overall research strategy and structure. The Carumba Institute research agenda has a primary focus on the rights of Indigenous Australians and on international research where it has a direct link or is relevant to Indigenous Australians and provides opportunities for cross-national comparisons.

A key function of the Institute Council includes supporting and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in treaty negotiations with the State. This may require funding to support communities and must be an important consideration of the Treaty-making framework going forward. Overall, funding for the Institute/ treaty making process and for the Truth-telling/ healing Inquiry, as well as funding for outcomes emanating coming from the Inquiry will need to be made clear and transparent to First Nations people to engender community support for both processes.

It is noted that the inaugural Treaty Institute Council membership will be appointed by the Governor-in-Council, Queensland Government, supported by an Independent Interim Body for a period of no more than two years. Given the importance of the Treaty Institute Council to be independent of Government and for it to be truly representative of First Nations people across Queensland, it is critical that mechanisms to directly appoint Institute council membership by First Nations representatives are in place by the end of the two year term.

QUT strongly supports the truth-telling and healing Inquiry as an important step on our path to treaty. It is noted that a timeframe of three (3) years is provided for the Inquiry process. In terms of the timeline for the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry - Is the three-year timeframe for inquiry sufficient and are there provisions within the legislation to extend timeframe if required.

As a university for the real world, QUT is uniquely placed to accelerate, deepen, and expand the ways in which Australia's future decision-makers respect and value the significant contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who have lived in this Country for countless generations. Through our learning and teaching, we also have a leading role to play in truth-telling about the history of Indigenous Australians, but also to understand how others may have inherited privilege from that dispossession. In March 2021, QUT's Carumba Institute developed and released two new university-wide electives aimed at increasing awareness of Indigenous Australian perspectives. *CIB101: Engaging with Indigenous Perspectives – Respectful Engagement* will provide students with an understanding of tools, knowledge, and language to engage confidently and respectfully with Indigenous Australians. *CIB102: Engaging with Indigenous perspectives – Understanding Rights* explores real world issues affecting Indigenous peoples globally, nationally and locally, situated in a rights-based framework. Through truth-telling about systemic racism students will begin to understand the need for Indigenous sovereignty. Both units are designed as university-wide units that provide opportunities to reflect on Indigenous Australian perspectives across all discipline areas.

The Learning and Teaching Unit and the Carumba Institute have developed a scholarly rights-based pedagogical model to support educators across QUT to integrate Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. This is implemented through a professional development module open to all staff titled, *Indigenous Perspectives in Learning and Teaching* and the subsequent opportunity to apply the world-first specialist award, Associate Fellow (Indigenous) of the Higher Education Academy. Applications are assessed by a panel that includes at least one Indigenous staff member and applicants must demonstrate successful engagement with Indigenous perspectives in their practice. Since its launch in late 2020 more than 800 staff members have completed the *Indigenous Perspectives in Learning and Teaching* module and 120 have been awarded Associate Fellow (Indigenous) of the HEA. Units listed as having the "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives" Real World Learning Design feature are growing (from 37 in 2020 to 267 in 2022).

Finally given the current national referendum on the First Nations Voice to Parliament and its focus on 'Voice, Treaty, Truth', it may be important to develop some communication material to inform communities on how the work of the Institute and Inquiry align, complement or differentiates. This would also be applicable to Native Title determinations/ process, given that Native Title is a Commonwealth and the treaty-making and negotiation process will be a State driven process.

QUT congratulates the Queensland Government and the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, on this landmark reform that will positively impact Queensland's future.

Should you require further details regarding this submission, please contact my office on telephone on [REDACTED] or by emailing [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of Angela Barney-Leitch.

ANGELA BARNEY-LEITCH  
**Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Australians)**