



EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms KE Richards MP—Chair
Mr MA Boothman MP (virtual)
Mr N Dametto MP (virtual)
Mr J Lister MP (virtual)
Mr JR Martin MP
Mr JA Sullivan MP

Staff present:

Mr R Hansen—Committee Secretary
Ms R Duncan—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL 2021

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Brisbane

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The committee met at 11.39 am.

PALUPE, Mr Charlie, Principal Adviser, Legislative Services, Department of Education

RYAN, Ms Kateena, Director, External Relations and Services, Department of Education

CHAIR: Welcome. Before I turn to questions from the committee, would you like to respond to any of the points made by our hearing witnesses earlier?

Ms Ryan: Thank you, Chair. I would like to make a brief opening statement and maybe provide some factual information about the voluntary code which was referred to. I thank the committee for providing the Department of Education with the opportunity to brief the committee following the public hearing on the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021 (the bill). As you are aware, there were three public submissions on the bill received by the committee. Two supported the bill—Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT)—and the National Tertiary Education Union did not support the bill. The NTEU raised concerns in its submission regarding the evidence to support a reduced council membership, the bill representing the preferences of QUT management and not having broad community support, and the bill diminishing public transparency and accountability. The Department of Education has provided a written response to the committee in relation to the concerns raised in the NTEU's submission.

CHAIR: Thank you for that written response. It was very comprehensive.

Ms Ryan: The NTEU also separately raised with the minister a potential issue with the transitional provisions of the bill which they have outlined to the committee as well. In summary, as part of the reduction of the size of the council, the elected professional staff member and the elected academic staff member who received the least number of votes in the most recent election will cease. That is new sections 77 and 78 of the bill. However, the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998 (the Act) provides that if a casual vacancy arises in the office of an elected member the council must appoint the person who was not elected but who received the highest number of votes of all candidates who were not elected. That is section 20A. The ceased members were of course technically elected, so they may be ineligible to be appointed should a casual vacancy subsequently arise. It is not the intention to preclude persons who cease to be an elected member under the new sections 77 and 78 of the bill from being eligible to be appointed should a subsequent casual vacancy arise. The department would support the committee recommending to the minister that a clarifying amendment be made to address this matter.

I would also like to provide the committee with some information about the voluntary code which has been referred to in the submissions today. Universities Australia developed the voluntary code in 2010. UA is the peak body for the sector and advocates for the social, economic and cultural value of higher education and research to Australia and the world. The University Chancellors Council, UCC, endorsed the voluntary code in 2010. The UCC comprises chancellors of all universities within Australia that are established under their own act of parliament. It is a body to discuss key issues and current events surrounding the tertiary education sector in Australia. Then the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment as it then was, MCTEE, endorsed the voluntary code in 2011. MCTEE is the predecessor of the current Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment, the ministerial council. In 2018 the voluntary code was amended at a joint meeting between UA and UCC. That is just to provide the committee with a bit of a history of the endorsement of the voluntary code. I am happy to take questions from the committee.

CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Southern Downs?

Mr LISTER: No, nothing from me, but I thank the departmental representatives who have come to see us today.

CHAIR: Member for Hinchinbrook?

Mr DAMETTO: I concur with the deputy chair. I have no questions, but I appreciate the department spending the time on briefing us this morning. I have been listening intently and have taken a fair bit from your commentary, thank you very much.

Mr SULLIVAN: I was going to ask about the transitional issue, but you have answered that quite extensively, thank you.

CHAIR: I do not have any questions, either. Your briefing has been extraordinarily comprehensive and we are really grateful for all of the work you have put into responding to the issues that are raised. It has clarified anything outstanding in my mind. Thank you very much.

Ms Ryan: I thank my colleagues and I thank the committee.

Mr SULLIVAN: In terms of that transitional issue, you recommend to the committee to make a recommendation. Would that be a pretty simple amendment and be pretty easily done?

Ms Ryan: It is a matter for the drafter; however, I would suggest it would be considered a technical deeming matter to amend an unintended consequence.

CHAIR: Thank you for the information you have provided. Thank you to our Hansard reporters and parliamentary broadcasters for their assistance. A transcript of these proceedings will be available in due course. There were no questions taken on notice. I declare this briefing on the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill closed.

The committee adjourned at 11.45 am.