



## ***EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE***

### **Members present:**

Ms KE Richards MP—Chair  
Mr MA Boothman MP  
Mr J Lister MP  
Mr BL O'Rourke 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**

**MONDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**Brisbane**

## MONDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2021

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**The committee met at 9.30 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021. I am Kim Richards, the member for Redlands and chair of the Education, Employment and Training Committee. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. We are extremely fortunate to live in a country with two of the world's oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

With me from the committee are: James Lister, the member for Southern Downs and deputy chair; Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; Jimmy Sullivan, the member for Stafford; and Barry O'Rourke, the member for Rockhampton. We have an apology this morning from the member for Hinchinbrook.

On 1 September 2021, the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, the Hon. Grace Grace, introduced the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021 into the parliament. The bill was referred to this committee for examination, with a reporting date of 15 October 2021. The purpose of the briefing today is to assist the committee with its examination of the bill.

The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and subject to its standing rules and orders. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Those present today should note that it is possible you may be filmed or photographed by the media, and images of you may appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. The media rules endorsed by the committee are available from committee staff if required.

I remind committee members that officers appearing today are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions about government or opposition policy should be directed to the responsible minister or shadow minister or left to debate on the floor of the House. Before we proceed, I ask everyone present to please ensure mobile phones are turned off or switched to silent mode.

**PALUPE, Mr Charlie, Principal Advisor, Legislative Services Unit, Department of Education**

**RYAN, Ms Kateena, Acting Executive Director, Registration Services (International, Non-State and Home Education) and Office of Racing, Department of Education**

**CHAIR:** I welcome our witnesses from the Department of Education. Thank you for agreeing to brief the committee. I invite you to make an opening statement, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

**Ms Ryan:** I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues: Susan Masotti, who is the director of Legislative Services Unit in the department; and Penny Harrison, who is a principal policy officer in External Relations and Services. I would like to thank the committee for providing the department with the opportunity to give an overview of the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021. As you may know, the Queensland University of Technology is a public university established by the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998. The QUT Act also establishes the QUT Council as QUT's governing body and it gives overall responsibility for ensuring sound and effective governance of QUT. The QUT Act provides the council power to appoint QUT staff, manage and control QUT's affairs and property, and manage and control QUT's finances.

The QUT Act also provides that the council is to comprise of 22 members to be made up of four categories: official, appointed, elected and additional members. There are three official members due to their position at QUT. Those are the chancellor, the vice-chancellor and the chairperson of the academic committee. There are eight appointed members who are appointed by the Governor in Council for a term of not more than four years. There are nine elected members who are elected via council elections, including academic and professional staff, students and alumni. Staff and alumni

are elected to office for four years; students are elected to office for two years. There are two additional members appointed by the council for a term of not more than four years and who must not be a student or staff member of QUT.

As noted in the written brief that the department provided to the committee, the bill implements changes to the QUT Council membership in both number and structure in response to a request by QUT. The request by QUT is a result of an invitation by government in 2017 for universities to consider their governance structures following changes made to the James Cook University Council in 2017.

The bill amends the QUT Act to reduce the size of the council from 22 to 15 members by changing the number of members in the following categories: three Governor in Council appointed members, reduced from eight; five elected members, reduced from nine, including two academic staff of QUT, reduced from three, and one professional staff member of QUT, reduced from two; no elected alumni members, reduced from two; and four additional members, which is an increase from two. The bill makes no changes to the number of elected students or official members. They will remain at two students and three official members.

The bill introduces two new requirements to assist with the balance of representation on the council: first, a requirement that at least two of the additional members are alumni of QUT to provide for representation of the QUT community, given the removal of the alumni class from the elected members category; and, second, a requirement that, of the two elected student members, one is an undergraduate student and the other is a postgraduate student. This change was requested by QUT, having regard to QUT's research function, and is consistent with the current arrangements for some other Queensland universities—for example, the University of Queensland.

As a result of reducing the size of the council, the bill makes consequential amendments to the QUT Act on matters relating to the minimum number of members required for the proper constitution of the council and for removal of a member from office. The bill introduces transitional arrangements to enable an ordered and timely transition to the new council membership with as few additional processes and as little disruption to the council as possible. The written brief provides a more detailed explanation of those transitional arrangements. It is the council's view that this change in composition will achieve a well-balanced membership in terms of skills, experience, gender and diversity. It will facilitate efficient and effective governance, it will enable faster decision-making and it will improve the effectiveness of the council at meetings and in its operations while maintaining QUT's key public sector responsibilities.

In relation to the consultation undertaken on the proposed governance model, prior to the development of the bill, QUT undertook two rounds of consultation with its university community. In June to August 2019, QUT conducted its first round of consultation with its university community on an initial proposal for a 13-member council. In response to the feedback it received, QUT revised its proposal to a 15-member council. In August 2019 QUT requested the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations consider amendments to the QUT Act to reduce the size of its council from 22 to 15. The minister requested QUT conduct further consultation with its university community on the revised 15-member council proposal and provide the outcomes of that consultation. In August to October 2020, QUT conducted a second round of consultation with its university community on its 15-member council. QUT reported that the council reform proposal did not generate broad concern with the university community.

Similarly, QUT also consulted on an exposure draft of this bill with its university community. As noted in the written brief to the committee, while QUT undertook a wide consultation process with its university community, the department undertook targeted consultation on an exposure draft of the bill. That consultation focused on QUT and the six other public universities and the National Tertiary Education Union Queensland branch, or the NTEU. In relation to the consultation undertaken by the department, QUT and two other public universities responded and supported the bill. The NTEU did not support the bill, stating that there were not sufficiently compelling reasons for reducing the council membership and that the proposed changes would diminish council's transparency and public accountability. No changes were made to the exposure draft of the bill prior to its introduction into the Legislative Assembly.

In summary, QUT's 22-member council is one of the largest governing bodies of Queensland's public universities. The proposed reduction in size of the council is intended to allow the council to be more flexible and responsive in its operations. It is in line with the Universities Australia Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Governance of Australian Public Universities, which states that the size of a university governing body should 'desirably be no more than 15 members'. I thank the committee for your time and I and my colleagues are pleased to take questions in relation to the bill.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. You noted that these changes will assist in providing a better mix of skills and expertise. Could you drill down into that a bit further around what that skills and expertise enhancement might look like as the council structure is brought down to this new shape?

**Ms Ryan:** In general, the skills and expertise required in the act of all members is that they have particular skills and functions relevant to the operations of the act. The mix of skills and expertise goes to a better limitation of the breadth of skills and more concentration on those particular skills that are required in the act for members to have in making fast decisions and agile decisions of the council.

**CHAIR:** So some more efficiency within the structure.

**Ms Ryan:** More efficiency within a smaller and more responsive structure, yes.

**Mr SULLIVAN:** Can I follow on from that. Are you telling us that the definition of those skill sets is modified, or is it more that the additional members allows for those skill sets to be appropriately utilised?

**Ms Ryan:** The bill itself does not go to the specific skills required for each of the member categories. What the bill does is provide eligibility for those member categories. The reduction in size allows the council as a whole to operate in a more effective way with the skills and capabilities that the whole council has.

**CHAIR:** Do members have questions?

**Mr LISTER:** I do not have any questions but thank you very much for coming to brief us today.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** I am pretty much the same. It is quite a simple and straightforward bill.

**Mr O'ROURKE:** There is nothing from me either. It is very straightforward.

**CHAIR:** I have a question in relation to the consultation process. I noted in the explanatory notes that the rate of response was low but it was evenly spread between supporting, opposing and neutral positions. Do you have any more to share in regards to those who were opposing the changes that are set out?

**Ms Ryan:** Those who opposed the change did so on the basis that they thought that a particular member class may be disadvantaged.

**Mr SULLIVAN:** I have a question in terms of the change in definition for the two students appointed, one being an undergraduate and the other being a postgraduate. Did you say that is a similar structure to UQ and other public institutions?

**Ms Ryan:** Yes. I believe the majority of other public universities have that. In fact I can give you the exact universities. Griffith University, the University of Queensland and now QUT have a postgraduate and undergraduate prescription in their acts.

**Mr SULLIVAN:** Do those other universities have just one of each?

**Ms Ryan:** No. Central Queensland University has one. The Griffith University has two.

**Mr SULLIVAN:** When you say two, do you mean one of each?

**Ms Ryan:** The total number of students, so one of each. No university has more than two student members, four universities have two student members, and the rest have one. Where there are two members, only the University of the Sunshine Coast does not prescribe that there be a postgraduate and undergraduate student.

**Mr SULLIVAN:** Is the theory of prescribing that in the eligibility because the sheer weight of numbers means that in other circumstances postgraduate students would be unlikely to be elected—in terms of the varying numbers between undergraduates and postgraduates?

**Ms Ryan:** I cannot say how those provisions arose. I can say that QUT believes that it is appropriate to have the postgraduate represented because of its research functions.

**Mr SULLIVAN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The department's written brief on the bill will be available on our parliamentary committee's website very shortly.

**Mr SULLIVAN:** Your brief was very helpful.

**CHAIR:** We really appreciate your response and you taking the time to join us today. I thank you for the information you have provided today. I thank our Hansard reporters and parliamentary broadcast staff for their assistance. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's inquiry webpage in due course. There were no questions taken on notice so I declare this public briefing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 9.46 am.**