




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2021

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.27 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill. I would like to thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee for its consideration of the bill and also for its report. I acknowledge that there were three submissions on the bill: from Griffith University, the National Tertiary Education Union—Queensland Division and also the Queensland University of Technology Chancellery Division.

QUT was founded in 1989 and it has up to 50,000 students. QUT offers academic programs in fields spanning business, creative industries, education, engineering, health, law, science and social justice across five faculties. It does not take very long when you are out in the professional world to find people who have actually studied at QUT. I know that they are very highly regarded graduates. It has been a huge undertaking for the university during COVID to continue learning and teaching and working with very different delivery models of higher education.

I have no doubt that the challenges during COVID had an impact. We are right next door to QUT and often we see the students streaming down to their lectures. It has been disappointing to see that students were unable to participate in university life during COVID. The council did a very good job during that challenge. QUT did well to ensure that they continued to deliver higher education during that very challenging time and also the subsequent lockdowns that have occurred in the south-east corner. It was a very new model of delivery for higher education for many universities not only right across Queensland but also across our country in the face of the challenge of COVID.

I know many university students. At that time quite a lot of their parents would ring me to tell me that they were very worried that it would take longer for their children to complete their degrees. The students worked very hard to get through their work in a very different environment. The changes to the delivery model have made the students much stronger and more adaptable. I hope that the COVID experience has set them in very good stead for later in their careers.

QUT is one of Australia's major universities. It has a global reputation for a real-world focus. The *Times Higher Education* 2020 ranked QUT in the top 180 universities in the world and the best young university in Australia. I think that is a real credit to QUT.

The policy objectives of the bill are to implement governance reforms for QUT to enable an appropriate balance between the number of members and the mix of necessary skills and expertise required for effective governance by the QUT Council. The LNP supports the bill, as outlined by the shadow minister for education and member for Moggill. The bill proposes to reduce the size of the QUT Council from 22 to 15 members and to change its composition.

Some concerns were raised in the submission of the National Tertiary Education Union. The NTEU rejected the proposal in the bill, which is quite an interesting view. They stated that the bill represents the preferences of the QUT management and does not have broad community support. They drew that information from the response numbers during the consultation process, which they said were low. The NTEU claimed that the consultation process fell well short on the following basis: there

were three rounds of nearly 65,000 emails distributed, providing an opportunity for feedback, but only 11 responses were received. They also said that, while opportunity for feedback from the community was provided, the uptake was low. The NTEU stated that they believe that the current council serves the community well and responded to the COVID-19 crisis effectively and that there was no evidential case to reduce the numbers on the council. In response to those concerns, QUT noted that the 22 member council is one of the largest governing bodies in Queensland's public universities. It is proposed that the model will align QUT with other modern university councils and we see that those universities are functioning well.

I commend QUT for providing higher education to the many students who have passed through the university and for their ongoing commitment to higher education. I invite QUT students and graduates to consider job opportunities in regional Queensland and regional Australia. Their skills and their education levels are very highly regarded in the regions. I ask them to consider particularly the south-west region. We would dearly love more QUT graduates. We have good jobs for them. They can have very successful careers in the region. I encourage them to consider job opportunities in the regions.