




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2021

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.19 pm): I rise this afternoon to speak in support of the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021. Reflecting on the previous member's contribution in this place, I say with respect that if you do not have much experience in the inner workings of university then perhaps limit your contribution or perhaps enrol in a degree.

The Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021 is about the governance of a university. The member for Mirani spent most of his contribution criticising the governance of one of Queensland's largest universities. I would suggest that there are ways in which you can find out more about the inner workings of universities. Having said that, it is the first time I have heard a member from One Nation speak so passionately—well, one might not say passionately—in support of universities particularly given the partnership that they have had with the federal LNP at a federal level in our federal parliament to cut university funding. Perhaps a good place to start would be to look at university funding and the way in which deals have been done at a federal level which result in less funding and more expensive university costs for students across Queensland.

The member outlined what he considers are the policy objectives for this bill, though the explanatory notes make it very clear that the policy objectives of this bill are to implement governance reforms for Queensland University of Technology and to enable an appropriate balance between the number of members and a mix of necessary skills and expertise required for effective governance on the QUT Council.

I rise today proudly as a former member of the QUT Council. Whilst I have sought advice and am not required to declare that today, I think it is important that I was very proud to serve as a member of the QUT Council over several years and to observe the governance structures that are in place in one of Queensland's largest universities. We know our Queensland public universities are statutory bodies and they are each established by a relevant act, collectively the universities acts. The overall management of public universities is the responsibility of their governing body and the composition of the respective governing bodies is prescribed under their relevant university act.

I pay tribute to the members of the QUT Council: Dr Xiaoling Liu, the chancellor and chair of the QUT Council; Professor Margaret Sheil AO, the vice chancellor and president of QUT; Professor Nic Smith, the chair of the University Academic Board; members appointed by the Governor in Council Mr Mick Gooda, Mr Peter Howes, Mr Paul Lindstrom, Mr Dominic McGann, Mrs Jenny Parker, Dr Susan Pond AM, Ms Susan Rix AM and Mrs Karen Spiller OAM; the elected academic staff members, Associate Professor Yvette Miller, Dr David Nielsen and Associate Professor Eric Waclawik; the elected professional staff members, Mr Graham Dawson, Mrs Dianne Nilsson; and the elected student members, Ms Olivia Brumm and Mr Chris Drayton-Dekker.

QUT is a wonderful university and I was very proud to study there. I was excited to see a number of amazing innovations and awards presented to the university over the last couple of weeks, including for something that is quite important in my region. QUT's work involving scientists from QUT and the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences has actually found that damaged coral reefs show slower than

expected recovery for up to six years before switching to a faster phase of regrowth. This kind of research is really innovative and very much leading the way to help save our Great Barrier Reef. This two-phase pattern was observed in 60 per cent of severely disturbed reefs on the Great Barrier Reef, and it is amazing that this kind of research is coming right out of a university just down the road from this place.

I was also really pleased to see that a new QUT program for young aspiring high school students will see eight academics paired up with eight students in a mentoring immersion project. The partnership is between Mabel Park State High School and the School of Mechanical, Medical and Process Engineering in QUT's Faculty of Engineering. It kicked off in September and it is the first of its kind for QUT. The program aims to address the lack of gender equity and social diversity that exists in STEM focused careers and engages female high school students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The Queensland University of Technology requires a governance structure with a council that can oversee the university and the work that it is doing to make sure that it is steered in the right direction. I know that over the years the QUT Council has played an important role in helping steer this university into the university that it is today—a university for the real world and a university that is making a big difference to the lives of Queenslanders and, indeed, through their research, people right across the globe.

The composition of the council is defined in part 2 of the QUT Act with four categories of members. Official members are members of the council due to their position at QUT. The council's official members are QUT's chancellor, vice-chancellor and chairperson of the academic committee. Appointed members are appointed by the Governor in Council for a term of not more than four years. Elected members are elected pursuant to the QUT Act. Persons are eligible for election to the council if they are members of QUT's academic or professional staff or if they are QUT students or alumni. Academic and professional staff and alumni elected to the council hold office for four years. Students elected to the council hold office for two years, and additional members are appointed by the council for a term of not more than four years and must not be a QUT student or a member of QUT's academic or professional staff.

Over the years the council has attracted a diverse array of people with all sorts of skills and from all sorts of backgrounds. That diversity in skills and experience really helps make for a strong QUT Council that, as I said, helps steer that ship into the future. The bill achieves the policy objectives by reducing the size of the council from 22 to 15 members and providing for changes in the composition of the council as follows: three Governor in Council appointed members, reduced from eight; five elected members, reduced from nine, including two members of the academic staff of QUT, reduced from three; one member of the professional staff of QUT, reduced from two; no elected QUT alumni members, reduced from two; and four additional members, increased from two. The bill also introduces requirements to assist with the balance of representation on the council: that at least two additional members are alumni of QUT and of the two elected student members, one is to be an undergraduate student and one is to be a postgraduate student.

I thank the members of the Education, Employment and Training Committee who oversaw this bill through the committee process, in particular the chair of the committee, the member for Redlands. I thank them for their work in consulting and seeing this bill through to the second reading debate here in the parliament. I am very pleased to see the QUT Council progress. This bill helps align the QUT Council with other universities in this state. I am looking forward to seeing how QUT progresses into the future as one of the largest universities in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.