




Speech By  
**Corrine McMillan**

**MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD**

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### **QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (3.33 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021. Whilst I am not a graduate of the Queensland University of Technology, as are many of my teaching colleagues, I am a proud educator with 24 years experience as both a teacher and school administrator and I am committed to lifelong learning as evidenced by my tertiary education at the University of Queensland, the University of Newcastle and Harvard University, Boston, USA.

The importance of strong leadership and a solid vision driven by our university councils is vital to ensuring student achievement as well as both state and national prosperity. Strong university councils achieve objectives and outcomes that benefit all stakeholders within the tertiary education community. Our new global environment, impacted by the pandemic, requires a swift adaptability and flexibility from leaders to provide effective governance, including from tertiary education councils.

The objectives of the University of Queensland Technology Amendment Bill 2021 are to implement governance reforms for the Queensland University of Technology to reduce the size of the QUT Council from 22 to 15 members and to enable an appropriate balance between the number of members and the mix of necessary skills and expertise required for effective governance by the council.

Queensland has seven public universities, each established under their own act, collectively referred to as the university acts. Under the university acts each university is governed by a governing body. Queensland public universities are primarily funded by the Australian government, albeit not to the extent that they should be funded. It is well accepted that the LNP federal government does not acknowledge the contribution of research to the future prosperity of the country, unlike countries such as Singapore, Finland and other Scandinavian countries where governments value the investment in minds in the absence of natural resources.

As I mentioned, Queensland's public universities are primarily funded by the federal government and the Queensland government does not provide recurrent funding to universities, neither public nor private. However, various Queensland departments may provide one-off non-recurrent funding to universities through targeted programs or research. Public universities also derive income from non-government sources, including from student contributions, endowments, industry investments, bequests and donations.

QUT is a statutory body established under the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998. The QUT Act establishes the council as QUT's governing body and gives it overall responsibility to ensure the sound and effective governance of QUT. The QUT Act confers powers on the council to appoint QUT staff, manage and control QUT's affairs and property, and manage and control QUT's finances. Under the QUT Act, the composition of the council is 22 members, made up of four categories: official, appointed, elected and additional.

Following consultation with its university community stakeholders, QUT proposed reforms to its council and provided a new governance model for the changed composition that is similar to the current governance structure of the James Cook University Council, which followed a similar process to

determine its size and structure. The QUT model has a prescribed number of members and set numbers in each member category, while the JCU model determines membership numbers by council resolution, which may change, and prescribed percentages of member categories. QUT's 22-member council is one of the largest governing bodies of Queensland's public universities. The proposed reduction in size is intended to allow the council to be more flexible and responsive in its operations and is in line with Universities Australia's voluntary code of best practice for the governance of Australian universities, which states that a university governing body should desirably have no more than 15 members.

The bill amends the QUT Act to streamline the QUT's governance by reducing the size of the council from 22 to 15 members. The bill makes no changes to the numbers of elected student members or official members, but provides for changed numbers in other member categories as follows: three GiC appointed members; five elected members including two members of the academic staff of QUT, reduced from three, and one member of the professional staff of QUT, but no elected QUT alumni members; and four additional members.

The bill also introduces requirements to assist the balance of representation upon the council including at least two additional members being alumni of QUT, which ensures representation of the QUT community given the removal of the QUT alumni class from the elected member category. Of the two elected student members, one is to be an undergraduate student and one a postgraduate student. Changing the requirement in the elected student class is considered by the council as pertinent having regard to QUT's objects in research and is consistent with current arrangements for other Queensland universities, for example, sections 15(2)(d) and (e) of the University of Queensland Act 1998.

The bill makes consequential amendments to the QUT Act on matters relating to the proper constitution of the council and the removal of a member from office as a result of reducing the size of the council. The bill includes transitional arrangements to enable an ordered and timely transition from the current structure to the proposed new council membership, with as few additional processes and as little disruption to the council as possible. The bill also makes minor editorial amendments consistent with drafting best practice.

In relation to gender parity, it is the view of the QUT Council that reducing its membership and changing the composition will achieve a well-balanced membership in terms of skills, experience, gender and diversity. It will facilitate efficient and effective governance, enable faster decision-making and improve the effectiveness of council meetings and operations while maintaining QUT's key public sector responsibilities. The bill will not impact the government's gender parity targets. Gender parity will remain a matter of importance on the council composition, as we would expect it to as the university council.

In making nominations for appointment by the Governor in Council, the minister takes into consideration the expertise and skills of proposed nominees and of factors relating to the overall skills mix including the government's policy on gender parity on government bodies. The council is also asked to consider gender parity when recommending suitably qualified persons for the minister's consideration of nomination for appointment by the Governor in Council. I commend the work of the Minister for Education, her department, the chair of the committee and all committee members. I commend this bill to the House.