




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2021

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (4.36 pm): I rise to voice my support for the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021. Like so many speakers before me here in this House, I am a very proud alumnus of QUT, the ‘university for the real world’. I like to tell my children and try to influence any schoolchild, if they are choosing to go to university, to go that way. I am not getting paid by QUT, but I am very proud of the opportunity that QUT gave me. I do love the term ‘university for the real world’. It drives my kids insane. It has taken me three children to get one enrolled into the ‘university for the real world’. My eldest daughter, Isabella, has graduated from UQ, and we are very proud of her. My middle daughter has just finished her last element of prac at ACU doing nursing. My third daughter, Elke, whom I note the member for Surfers Paradise has just mentioned, was just put onto the dean’s list at QUT.

This bill is very important because it really streamlines the QUT governance board and structure for the real world. That is why we are here today. It might seem like a simple thing, but it is important that QUT is streamlined and heads into the future like other universities. It is effectively reducing the council from 22 to 15. As many other members in this chamber have noted, it brings the council to a more realistic number.

The council has a very important role, and I note that in principle the QUT’s powers are to do anything necessary or convenient to be done for or in connection with its functions. It appoints QUT staff, it manages and controls QUT’s affairs and property and, importantly, it manages and controls QUT’s finances.

As the Attorney-General just mentioned, it is pleasing to note that the minister has taken up the committee’s recommendation—and I do thank the committee for thoroughly looking into this bill—regarding the unintended consequences that were noted, and I note the minister has foreshadowed she will move that amendment. That does tidy up that little unintended consequence.

I also want to mention that I had the honour of going to USQ, the University of Southern Queensland, first up. I was disappointed to hear a member of this House actually shine a light on a member who previously spoke for the fact that they would talk on this bill and they had not even gone to university. So many people do not get the opportunity to go to university whether due to distance or the simple fact they cannot afford it. I am very pleased to say in this House that I have a bursary for a student every year. It is \$1,000 and the bursary winner this year is Olivia Almond. She is studying a Bachelor of Vision Science at QUT. I will note that I do choose other universities or other trade schools for this bursary. This year it is Olivia Almond. I still recall the day that I met with her outside this great place and she was in tears. She was so excited because of what receiving that money meant to her. Along with other bursaries she had been applying for, it allowed her to go to university.

I went to USQ. Whilst I was pregnant with my second child, Lucy, I decided that I should study a law degree. I was very fortunate to be able to enrol in QUT and I studied my entire law degree externally. I was very concerned that the first word of my eldest daughter, Isabella, would be ‘assignment’ because I used to always say, ‘Can you stop annoying me? I’m doing an assignment.’ I did get through that

external study. I ended up having my third child by the time I finished. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to be able to do it externally, and QUT offered that. I only had to do one semester on campus, and that was a summer semester, but the rest I did externally.

The majority of the time I was in New South Wales, so I was a long way away from the university. It was wonderful for a regional student to have that opportunity. That is what these universities—and not just QUT—offer for regional students. They offer an opportunity that those people would not have otherwise. I know the member for Mount Ommaney was very kind in her words in relation to regional students and how difficult it is for them. I was pleased to hear that.

As I mentioned, I am very proud of my youngest daughter, Elke, who has followed in my footsteps in going to the ‘university for the real world’. I do want to give a shout-out to the university’s education program into high schools, and I know the Minister for Education is also very supportive of this. Elke had the opportunity at the end of year 11 to do a first year university subject in IT and she jumped at it. She got a seven and she has obviously made the dean’s list, so she is doing very well. She is in the School of Science doing IT. It is really tough because there are not many young girls there.

I do encourage the university to continue with this great program. Whenever I get the opportunity to speak to the vice-chancellor, Margaret Sheil, she is very supportive of this program because she can see a few of these girls who did it at the end of year 11 and they are following the path through QUT in IT. It is important that universities do offer these pathways, particularly for young girls, into STEM degrees because, quite frankly, we need more of them to go into these subjects. My daughter and her one friend who is left in IT first year would love more females to be in that course, so let’s hope that happens.

Like many other members in this House, I want to acknowledge the difficulty that COVID has placed on our universities. It has been difficult. Unfortunately, it has taught the students to go from campus into the world of online learning. Whilst universities such as QUT have been offering this for many years to regional and external students, it is very difficult. However, it is wonderful to see how these universities have played in that space.

I do acknowledge the impact that the lack of international students has had on universities. Certainly all Queensland universities have suffered greatly because of the lack of international students coming into their universities. We look forward to welcoming those students back and the relief that will bring to those universities financially as well.

Like the members on this side of the House, I join with the government in supporting this bill. It is a sensible way forward. It certainly brings the ‘university for the real world’ into line with those other universities. I note that other universities such as Griffith support the intent of this bill as well. With that, I support the bill.