




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.23 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998 for particular purposes. I table the bill and explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Education, Employment and Training Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021 [1306](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021, explanatory notes [1307](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021, statement of compatibility with human rights [1308](#).

I am pleased to introduce the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021, which amends the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998 to introduce a new streamlined governing council for the university. The Queensland University of Technology, QUT, is a Queensland public university established under the QUT Act.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms GRACE: Those of a certain vintage may even remember it under its previous name—thank you to the member for Nanango for her interjection—the Queensland Institute of Technology, or QIT. The act also establishes the governing body or council which is responsible for the proper and effective management and operation of the university. With 22 members, the current QUT Council is one of the largest governing bodies of Queensland's public universities. As we know, the higher education sector has changed a lot over the years, with Queensland universities now operating in a highly competitive and fluid environment within the state as well as nationally and internationally. Of course, we know that the sector has also been heavily impacted by COVID-19 and universities have had to act quickly to respond. Against this backdrop, QUT has identified the need for a governance structure in place that supports a more flexible and responsive way of operating.

This process has its origins in 2017 when my predecessor Kate Jones oversaw the passage of the University Legislation Amendment Act 2017, which modernised the Queensland public university establishing acts as well as enabling changes to the governance structure of the James Cook University, JCU, Council. The Queensland government invited other public universities to consider their governance arrangements and whether they would like to pursue similar reforms. Following consultation with its university community stakeholders, QUT proposed reforms to its council and provided a new governance model for the changed composition, similar to the reforms undertaken by the JCU Council.

The bill amends the QUT Act to streamline the governance of QUT by reducing the size of the council from 22 to 15 members. The amendments are aimed at supporting effective governance while maintaining an appropriate balance of skills and experience on the council. Specifically, the bill provides

for changes to 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 members of the academic staff of QUT, reduced from three, and one member of the professional staff of QUT, reduced from two; alumni members will be removed as elected members, reduced from two; and four additional members will be appointed by the council, an increase of two, with at least two of these four members to be alumni of QUT. There are no changes to the number of elected student members—that is, two—or official members—that is, three. The bill also introduces requirements to assist with the balance of representation on the council, including that one elected student member is to be an undergraduate student and the other a postgraduate student.

The reduction in the number of council members 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 be no more than 15 members. The bill makes consequential amendments to the QUT Act on matters relating to the proper constitution of the council and removal of a member from office as a result of reducing the size of the council. The bill also establishes transitional arrangements to enable an ordered and timely transition to the new council membership with as little process and disruption to the council as possible. These arrangements include provisions for reducing the numbers of appointed and elected members, increasing additional members and introducing requirements for the composition of the elected student member and additional member categories. The terms of remaining members will continue as per their current term. The bill will provide a contemporary governance structure for QUT as it looks to continue its goal of providing quality higher education in an increasingly challenging and complex environment.

First Reading

Hon. G GRACE (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.29 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to Education, Employment and Training Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Education, Employment and Training Committee.