




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2021

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (4.06 pm): I would like to acknowledge and commend all of my colleagues here today on both sides of the House who have attended QUT. I am sure the speech that the member for South Brisbane has just given would remind us all of our student union days. We have not progressed much further than that, according to the member for South Brisbane. Perhaps she might need a little lesson. I am sure we will all give her an update on the facts, as opposed to the incorrect statements in her speech.

The Queensland University of Technology is, as we know, a major Australian university with a truly global outlook. It is home to nearly 50,000 students. QUT is providing real-world infrastructure, learning and teaching and graduate skills to the next generation of change-makers. QUT is a public university, as we know, which was established under the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998. The QUT Act established the council as QUT's governing body and gives it overall responsibility for ensuring QUT's proper and effective management and operation. Under the QUT Act, the council comprises 22 members made up of four categories—official, appointed, elected and additional.

Official members—there are currently three—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—there are eight at the moment—are appointed by the Governor in Council for a term of not more than four years. Elected members—there are nine—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 QUT 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. Additional members—there are two at the moment—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.

In 2017, as part of public university reforms, the University Legislation Amendment Act 2017 included amendments to the governance structure of the James Cook University Council to allow the JCU Council to determine the size of its governing body by way of membership resolution. While the ULAA amended the governance structure of the JCU Council, broader governance reforms for the other six public universities, including QUT, were not considered.

In 2017 the government invited other public universities to consider their governance arrangements and whether they would like to pursue similar governance reforms. Following consultation with the university community stakeholders, QUT proposed reforms to its council and provided a new governance model for the changed composition similar to the current governance structure of the JCU Council.

QUT's 22-member council is one of the largest governing bodies of Queensland's public universities. While the council actively engages with best practice approaches to governance matters, the council notes that best practice corporate boards or large not-for-profit entities are generally considered to be eight to 12 members.

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 the Universities Australia's *Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Governance of Australian Universities*, which states that a university's governing body should desirably be no more than 15 members. This bill amends the QUT Act to streamline QUT's governance by reducing the size of the council from 22 to 15 members. The bill makes no changes to the number of elected students, member for South Brisbane—two—or official members—three—but provides for a change in numbers in other categories as follows: three GiC appointed members, reduced from eight; five elected members, reduced from nine, including two members from the academic staff of QUT, reduced from three; one member from the professional staff of QUT, reduced from two; no 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: firstly, that at least two additional members are alumni of QUT; and secondly that, of the two elected students, one is to be an undergraduate student and one a postgraduate student.

The bill includes transitional arrangements to enable an ordered and timely transition from the current to the proposed new council membership with few additional processes and as little disruption to the council as possible. These arrangements include provisions for reducing appointed and elected members, increasing additional members and changing requirements in the elected students and additional members categories. The terms of remaining members will continue as per the current term. The bill also makes minor editorial amendments consistent with drafting best practice.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Education, Employment and Training Committee and acknowledge their great work and the work of the secretariat. Thank you for undertaking that work and for engaging with stakeholders. I commend the bill to the House.