




Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2021

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (12.30 pm): I rise to support the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021. I acknowledge the very hard work of our secretariat. They do a fantastic job supporting our committee. I thank the minister for referring the bill to our committee. I say on the record that our committee works very well together and it is pleasing to see bipartisan support. Thank you to the deputy chair, the member for Southern Downs, and the members for Rockhampton, Stafford, Hinchinbrook and Theodore. We do have a very hardworking parliamentary committee that works well together.

The policy objective of this bill is to streamline QUT's council and to adopt best practice under the university's voluntary code. The QUT Council is established under the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998 and it functions as QUT's governing body. The council has powers to do those things necessary with the functions as a governing body, including to appoint university staff, to manage and control the university's properties and facilities and to manage their finances.

The bill, as has been previously outlined, proposes to change the composition of the council from a membership of 22 to 15, with three official members, the chancellor, vice chancellor and chairperson of the academic committee; three appointed members appointed by the Governor in Council; five elected members consisting of two members of the full-time and part-time academic staff, one member of the full-time and part-time professional staff, one undergraduate student and one postgraduate student; and four additional members, at least two who must be alumni of QUT. The bill does not change the terms of office for those members of any category. While the bill replaces the category of student, as I said, it replaces that to provide more diversity in that student representation with one being an undergraduate student and one being a postgraduate student.

The inquiry process was rigorous in its approach. We had three submissions, one from Griffith University that supported the bill; we had one from the National Tertiary Education Union which raised some issues both in their submission and in the inquiry process; and then the QUT submission. I thank the department for its very comprehensive briefing and for attending the public hearing. I think their responses to the concerns raised were very detailed and well formed. I thank QUT Professor Margaret Sheil, vice chancellor and president, who attended our public hearing and Leanne Harvey, the vice president, administration, and university registrar. From the National Tertiary Education Union we had Michael McNally, the secretary, Dave Nielson, the QUT branch president and current QUT councillor, and Graham Dawson, the QUT branch committee member and QUT councillor elect.

There were some concerns raised by the NTEU in terms of consultation. We were informed that throughout the process there were limited responses, but I think that was because the bill is not controversial at all in nature. The broader QUT community was engaged with on three occasions over a substantial period of time: two years. Initially the proposal was that the council be brought down to a 13-member council. In the initial consultation with the QUT community in 2019 feedback was provided, which included a petition, and as a result of that feedback received in that initial consultation, when the draft was refined it was increased to a proposed 15-member council. There was a third consultation

with stakeholders on the draft bill in 2021. Eleven responses in total were received, which included two from staff and four from students. The department also undertook targeted consultation for the development of the bill with QUT and all other Queensland public universities and the NTEU on the exposure of the draft bill and no changes were made to the bill as a result of that consultation.

Our committee made two recommendations: that the bill be passed and that there be a minor amendment to clarify that transition process. Our recommendation was that the minister amends the bill to clarify that an elected academic staff member or an elected professional member of the QUT Council who ceases to be a member under the new sections 77 and 78 of the bill continues to be eligible to fill a casual vacancy under section 20A of the Queensland University of Technology Act 1998 during the current QUT Council term. The recommendation is to clarify the eligibility of elected academic and professional staff members.

While I am on my feet I too commend QUT for the resilience it has shown throughout this pandemic. I really hope that brighter days are ahead as we continue to journey through this COVID pandemic. In particular I want to single out the QUT facility operating in my patch out in the Redlands. Professor Ian McKinnon and Michelle Gane are doing incredible work in our Redlands research facility in the hydrogen movement. As was noted by the member for Moggill, QUT is doing amazing work in research, particularly out our way, in the renewable sector. I know how important its contribution is beyond its campus next door. Its contribution to communities is incredible. I thank QUT for its work and I really hope that brighter days are ahead and that we can all support QUT and other universities here in Queensland to keep creating the brightest minds for future generations. On that note, I support the QUT Amendment Bill and I commend it to the House.