




Speech By
Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (4.45 pm): I rise in support of the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021. This bill seeks to implement governance reforms for the Queensland University of Technology to modernise and streamline the university council by reducing the size of the council from 22 to 15 members whilst ensuring an appropriate balance between the number of members and mix of necessary skills and expertise required for the effective governance on the council. 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 be desirably no more than 15 members.

QUT's current 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 has noted that the best practice in the corporate sector or for large non-profit entities is generally considered to be between eight and 12 members.

QUT is a public university established by the QUT Act 1998. That act established the council as QUT's governing body and gave it overall responsibility for ensuring QUT's proper and effective management and operation. Under that act, the 1998 QUT Act, the council comprises 22 members, as I have mentioned, made up of four categories: official, appointed, elected and additional members. The official members, of which there are three, are members of the council due to their position at QUT and effectively ex officio. There are eight members appointed by the Governor in Council for a term of not more than four years, and there are nine members elected pursuant to the act. Those people who are eligible for election to the council are members of QUT's academic or professional staff, QUT students or alumni.

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 six other public universities, including QUT, were not considered at that time. In 2017 the government invited other public universities to consider their governance arrangements and whether they would like to pursue similar governance reforms.

The Palaszczuk government is proud to partner with our tertiary education institutions in Queensland and universities like QUT. As we have heard from other members, this is a sector that has been hard hit by the pandemic. Indeed, coronavirus is one of the biggest challenges we have ever had to face in modern history and Queensland researchers have been leading the charge in the fight against COVID-19. These researchers from the academic sector are working across a wide front in the battle against COVID—from developing faster diagnoses for patients to developing crisis management toolkits for small business or using artificial intelligence to help with illnesses that arise due to the pandemic.

Last year we were proud to support a QUT industry research fellowship to research a rapid, highly accurate and inexpensive test for detecting COVID-19. Being able to quickly diagnose and treat patients is obviously essential right throughout this pandemic, particularly now as we start to open up. The research conducted by the team at QUT shows real promise in helping in the future. Post COVID, these research projects will lay the all-important groundwork in helping us prepare for future pandemics.

A deal with our publicly owned CS Energy has resulted in a multimillion-dollar solar farm in south-west Queensland which has created 400 jobs at the 162-megawatt Columboola Solar Farm between Chinchilla and Miles. CS Energy is buying 100 per cent of the output of the solar farm and will then partner to onsell that renewable energy to industrial retail customers like QUT, Griffith University and Central Queensland University. QUT is partnering as part of our rapidly advancing pathway to our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030 and is part of our renewable energy future that is well underway in Queensland as we move to becoming an international renewable energy superpower.

QUT is also at the forefront of our renewable hydrogen supply chain in Queensland, with our government Redlands Research Facility hosting the QUT-led hydrogen pilot plant that the member for Redlands has rightly celebrated in her contribution to the debate on this bill. This facility led us to celebrating our first ever delivery of green hydrogen internationally to Japan and marked a significant step forward for Queensland's hydrogen supply chain. Exported by JXTG, Japan's largest petroleum conglomerate, the hydrogen was produced at QUT's solar cell facility in the Redlands. We proudly partnered to provide support of \$250,000 in funding for the establishment of that renewable hydrogen pilot plant at the facility. In addition, our first ever hydrogen powered cars have hit the streets in Queensland and are helping to rev their way towards a zero emissions travel revolution. Five hydrogen powered Hyundai Nexos can now refuel in the Redlands at this facility thanks to Sunshine Coast business H2H, which put together a refuelling station at the Redlands Research Facility. It is great to have a Queensland business take the lead in this space as part of our rapidly developing renewable hydrogen supply chain. These projects will see QUT produce renewable hydrogen and demonstrate how it can be used to refuel hydrogen cars.

It is important to note that the bill makes no changes to the number of elected student members or official members but provides for changed numbers in other member categories. The bill includes transitional arrangements to enable an ordered and timely transition from the current arrangements to the proposed new council membership, with as few additional processes and as little disruption to the council as possible. These arrangements include provision for reducing appointed and elected members, increasing additional members and changing the requirements in the elected students and additional member categories.

The bill was referred to the Education, Employment and Training Committee for consideration and inquiry and I want to place on record my thanks and appreciation to the committee for its work on this bill. The committee recommended that the bill be passed and also recommended an amendment to the bill to clarify that an elected academic staff member or an elected professional staff member of the council who ceases to be a member under new sections 77 and 78 continues to be eligible to fill a casual vacancy under section 20A of the QUT Act 1998 during the current QUT Council term. This recommendation was accepted and an amendment will be moved during consideration in detail. Since the introduction of the QUT Act in 1998, QUT has seen some remarkable change and it continues to grow and evolve. This 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. I commend the bill to the House.