

Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Inquiry on the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Australian National University

Question No. GIQ 25-027

Senator Faruqi provided in writing.

UniForum and benchmarking data

Question

1. Does Nous advice rely on UniForum data?
2. Given widespread concerns about the opacity and reliability of UniForum benchmarking data, including recent media scrutiny, why is ANU relying on this tool to justify major restructuring decisions?
3. Has the underlying UniForum data and methodology been made available to affected staff, academic units, and the broader university community?
 - a. If not, how can the decisions based on that data be considered transparent or credible?
4. How does ANU respond to criticisms that the benchmarking data selectively supports pre-determined outcomes, such as job cuts and centralisation, rather than genuine evidence-based reform?

Answer

1. Advice provided to ANU from Nous is informed by many sources, including UniForum data.
2. The primary driver for Renew ANU is the need to return ANU to a financially sustainable footing. A key element of this involves realigning services to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of our service delivery. UniForum data is one of several inputs informing decisions about future delivery models. In addition to this data, ANU has also conducted a university-wide consultation about possible models for service delivery and principles for change. Further information is available in the [Implementation Plan: Change Principles as at 16 April 2025](#).
3. The University has made UniForum data available to the community via:
 - The ANU Data Hub – where staff can download benchmarking reports and presentations provided to the University on our results; and
 - A UniForum Explainer Video – published on the ANU Renew website in response to questions from our community.
4. We reject the premise of this question. The University has engaged in a range of consultations with its community regarding change and community feedback has continued to shape the outcomes. This information is available on [Renew ANU: Change Proposals and Consultation](#).

UniForum data can be used to provide insights into the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery compared with other institutions and build an understanding of the operating models under which the services are being delivered.

The model data does not prescribe any university take a particular approach to the delivery of its services, nor does it suggest a course of action to increase effectiveness or efficiency. The data is a tool to help universities better understand the resources being allocated the delivery of any particular service, how this compares to peers delivering that service and how the organisation's staff perceive the effectiveness of that service.

**Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Inquiry on the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers**

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Australian National University

Question No. GIQ 25-028

Senator Faruqi provided in writing.

Renew ANU

Question

1. Can you confirm how many jobs will be lost under 'Renew ANU'?
 - a. If a confirmation cannot be given, please provide an estimate

Answer

Please refer to previous Question on Notice, GIQ 25-012.

Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Inquiry on the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Australian National University

Question No. GIQ 25-029

Senator Faruqi provided in writing.

ANU Council discussion

Question

1. According to the ANU council meeting minutes from March, a discussion was had about correspondence regarding confidence in the leadership of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor at the meeting. According to the minutes, the council expressed confidence in the leadership, apart from one member. I understand the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor did not participate in that discussion but were they in the room for it?
2. Have further discussions been had by the council about the leadership of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor?
3. At the March meeting, the “Socially Responsible Investment Report” was on the agenda but discussion was postponed till the May meeting. Was the report discussed in the May meeting? If so, what was the outcome of the discussion?

Answer

1. The ANU Council meeting on 28 March 2025 was held on Zoom and not in a physical room. The Chancellor vacated the Chair for the Pro-Chancellor to lead the discussion on recent correspondence received by Council regarding University Leadership. As noted, neither the Chancellor nor Vice-Chancellor participated.
2. No.
3. Yes, the ANU Socially Responsible Investment Report for 2024 was discussed and approved at the Council meeting on 30 May 2025. Please see Council minutes attached where this is noted.

**THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL MINUTES**

The 493rd meeting of the Council was held at **8.00am (AEST) on Friday 30 May 2025** in the Mills Room, Chancelry.

Members present

1. Chancellor, the Hon Julie Bishop
2. Pro-Chancellor, Ms Alison Kitchen
3. Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor Genevieve Bell
4. Dr Larry Marshall
5. Ms Padma Raman PSM
6. Dr Anne-Marie Schwirtlich AM
7. Mr Rob Whitfield AM
8. Professor Juliana Ng
9. Professor Lyndall Strazdins
10. Ms Megan Easton
11. Dr Francis Markham
12. Ms Brenna Barker-Lamb
13. Mr Will Burfoot
14. Ms Tanya Hosch
15. Professor Tony Connolly

Apologies

There were no apologies.

In attendance

16. Provost - Professor Rebekah Brown
17. Chief Operating Officer (COO) - Mr Jonathan Churchill
18. Chief Financial Officer (CFO) - Mr Michael Lonergan

Secretariat

19. University Secretary, Mr Phillip Tweedie
20. Manager Corporate Governance & Policy, CGRO - Ms Leslie McDonald
21. Senior Administrator, CGRO – Mrs Monica McGrath

PART 1 – PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1 PROCEDURAL ITEMS

Announcements and Apologies

- Council noted that Mr Larry Marshall was joining the meeting remotely from the Kimberley and would not remain for the full meeting.
- The Chancellor reminded members that, following Council, they would be meeting with a North American delegation from the First Nations Financial Management Board and First Nations Finance Authority as well as representatives from the Harvard Project. This meeting will be hosted by the Vice-President (First Nations).
- The Chancellor noted the re-appointment of Minister Clare and that, following the caretaker period, we are anticipating updates on the approval of the Annual Report and the nomination of Mr Wayne Martin KC as a member of Council.
- Council noted that this would be the last meeting for Dr Anne-Marie Schwirtlich and expressed its thanks for her contributions and service to the University since 2017, including as the Chair of the Campus Planning Committee and a member of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. It further noted that Dr Schwirtlich has agreed to stay on as Chair of the Campus Planning Committee for a few months while a new Chair is identified.
- Council welcomed Dr Francis Markham as the new internal staff member on Council. Dr Markham is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Indigenous Policy Research.

Leave of Absence

- There were no additional requests from members for any leave of absence.

Disclosure of Material Personal Interest

- The Chancellor advised Council that she had approved the receipt of two gifts which had been notified by the Vice-Chancellor. Both were valued at less than \$1000 and related to speaking arrangements where it is the usual practice for the conference organisers to contribute to accommodation costs.
- No members declared any material personal interests in matters on the agenda.

Arrangement of Agenda

- Council noted that Items 1-12, 14 and 16 were starred for discussion.

Resolved:

Council **approved** that the unstarred items be dealt with as proposed in the agenda.

Minutes

Resolved:

Council **approved** the minutes of the previous meeting on 28 March 2025.

2 MATTERS ARISING

- Council discussed each of the items on the Matters Arising list. There were three matters, with none proposed for closure at this stage.
 - The Chair of the Finance Committee noted that the Committee held a detailed discussion in March and May on options for the medium-term note maturing later this year, and that the Chief Finance Officer's Report also includes an update for Council consideration.
- The Chancellor noted again the request that for Meeting 1/2026, Council receive a consolidated report on Renew ANU alignment with University's KPIs, budget and forward estimates.
 - Members discussed the fact that the report must be multidimensional and should touch on staff wellbeing issues including the implementation of the Nixon Report recommendations.

Resolved:

Council:

1. **Noted** the Matters Arising as updated since the meeting of 28 March 2025; and
2. **Approved** closure of matters as proposed.

PART 2 – KEY BUSINESS ITEMS

3 CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

- The Chancellor provided an update on activities undertaken since the previous meeting including that:
 - The Secretariat has been asked to set up a Nominations Committee meeting as soon as possible to find a replacement for Dr Schwirtlich.
 - The Remuneration Committee met on Tuesday and will meet again shortly to discuss the Vice-Chancellor's KPI's.
 - The Exceptional Business Committee met to discuss progress with the response to the Nixon Review Report.
 - The lease on the Perth Office will be up next year and an early release from the lease is being investigated. Council discussed how we maintain our impact as the 'national university' without a physical presence outside of Canberra.
- The Vice-Chancellor noted that an open letter from several staff had been received and that it will be provided to Council members via Convene.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Chancellor's Report.

Larry Marshall joined the meeting part way through the Chancellor's report.

4 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

- The Vice-Chancellor spoke to the paper provided, and added:
 - An Accord analysis will be prepared for Council and a copy is available on Convene.
 - The Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) has commenced interim operation, aiming to be fully operational by 2026, subject to the passage of legislation.
 - The change plan implementation and ongoing negative news cycle has put pressure on several areas of the University that work in this space, and the Vice-Chancellor noted that management may need to see external resourcing to support what is being provided.
- In relation to the paper on Reputational Risk:
 - Council had a wide-ranging discussion that included potential impacts on the National Institutes Grant.
 - The difference between academic freedom and freedom of speech was discussed at length, including the balance between the academic freedom to comment on one's own institution versus the psychosocial risks posed by social media commentary, backlash and potential Code of Conduct breaching behaviour.

- Council asked that an education piece be undertaken around these matters with the University community.
- In terms of the proposed next steps to address reputational risk, the step to ensure there is sufficient capability and capacity in place to support a new approach should include capacity to restore and/or repair reputation.
- Council discussed the update and thanked the Vice-Chancellor for her efforts.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Vice-Chancellor's Report.

5 PROVOST'S REPORT

- The Provost spoke to the paper provided and gave a presentation on rankings, noting the imperative for the University to work hard on research performance.
- Council noted her points around supporting high performing researchers, whilst at the same time understanding and supporting low performers to reach their potential. The importance of retention of high performing and promising staff was also noted.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Provost's Report.

6 COO'S REPORT

- The Chief Operating Officer spoke to the paper provided.
- Council asked for a report to be provided on how the University responds to feedback received in consultation processes. It was noted that this is an important area of accountability and that effective consultation processes can be key to successful implementation.
- Council noted actions being undertaken to address the areas of 'red' highlighted in the DISP Annual Security Report.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the COO's Report and **endorsed** the DISP Annual Security Report.

7 CFO'S REPORT

- The Chief Financial Officer spoke to the paper provided, noting that the debt proposal has been discussed and developed through the March and then May meetings of Finance Committee, who looked critically at the University's debt position. It was agreed that the \$100 to \$150 debt placement proposed was a good balance.
- Council discussed the Debt Strategy at length, noting:
 - That the University has been working closely with the Australian Government Actuary to reach an estimate on CSS overfunding and that it is critical that this valuation is correct.
 - Repaying some of the \$200m debt will deliver interest savings and put us in a better financial position.
 - The opportunity costs of repaying the debt rather than leaving the money in the LTIP.

Resolved:

Council:

- **noted** the University's financial performance to 30 April 2025;
- **noted** the Finance Committee's endorsement at its meeting on 16 May 2025 of the proposed debt strategy including refinancing of a \$100m to \$150m Medium Term Note (MTN), subject to further consideration and approval by Council;
- **approved** delegation to the CFO to authorise the withdrawal from the LTIP (Long-term investment pool) CSS Reserve Account to partially redeem the MTN, size and timing to be determined by the CFO, not to exceed \$100m;
- **noted** that the CFO will provide progress updates on the arrangement of the withdrawal to the Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Chairs of FC and ARMC, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer; and;
- **approved** the ANU Socially Responsible Investment Report for 2024.

8.1 STUDENT SAFETY & WELLBEING REPORT TO COUNCIL: ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO UPDATE

- The Chair of the Student Safety & Wellbeing Committee and the Director of Residential Experience spoke to the paper provided.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the updates from the Academic Portfolio.

8.2 STUDENT SAFETY & WELLBEING REPORT TO COUNCIL: RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE - PORTFOLIO UPDATE

- The Chair of the Student Safety & Wellbeing Committee, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Director of Residential Experience spoke to the paper provided.
- Council noted the need to keep an eye on disclosure rates as low numbers may be attributable to lack of trust.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the updates from the Residential Experience Division.

9 WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

- The Chief People Officer spoke to the paper, noting that people are seeking interventions more proactively than before.
- Council discussed the update and noted the importance of planning to address the risks associated with the change plans, including support services and EAP surge capacity.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Work Health & Safety performance reporting for the period 1 January to 30 April 2025.

10 2025 CORPORATE PLAN Q1 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

- The Director of the Planning and Service Performance Division spoke to the paper provided.
- Council noted that success measures will be included in the report for Q2.
- Council thanked Ms Hilton for her outstanding work on the University Corporate Plan.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Quarter 1 performance report against the 2025-2028 Corporate Plan.

11 RENEW ANU

- The Chief Operating Officer spoke to the paper, noting:
 - The change plans for the Information Technology Division, Information Security Office and the Planning and Service Performance Division will be released shortly for consultation and meetings with affected staff members are taking place.
 - Numerous contracts have been executed to date in the Voluntary Separation Scheme.
 - Efforts to progress non salary savings continue, with progress in some areas, but complexities in others.
 - Council discussed mitigations for any unintended consequences of non-salary savings, such as the availability of lecture theatre capacity if the lease on Barry Drive was exited.
- The Chancellor acknowledged how difficult the process has been for the community, expressing her hope that Renew ANU would see the University emerge more resilient.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the update on the University's ongoing Renew ANU program.

PART 3 – STRATEGIC ISSUES AND DISCUSSIONS

12 ANU COLLEGE OF SYSTEMS AND SOCIETY PRESENTATION

- The Dean of the College of Systems and Society, Professor Stephen Eggins, and General Manager, Mr Matt Cousins gave a presentation on the College.
- Council noted the College's work which has contributed to a boost in Category 3 funding, and that although the current savings drive has been difficult, it has meant an imperative to use their resources better.
- Council thanked Professor Eggins and Mr Cousins for their presentation to Council.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the presentation from the College of Systems and Society.

13 FIRST NATIONS PORTFOLIO – PROGRESS UPDATE

Resolved:

Council **noted** the First Nations Portfolio's progress update.

14 COUNCIL COMMITTEE CHARTERS REVIEW

- The University Secretary spoke to the paper, noting that, in developing the proposed changes, the Secretariat took guidance from the last two Council papers, reviewed proposed changes against the PGPA and has engaged with Chairs, individually, and Committees.
- Council noted the support of the Chairs of impacted Committees and thanked all involved for their work.

Resolved:

Council:

1. **approved** the revised Charters for:
 - a. Council;
 - b. Council Standing Committee;
 - c. Campus Planning Committee;
 - d. Audit, Finance and Risk Committee; and
 - e. Investment Committee.
2. **noted** further development and consultation to be undertaken on the Safety and Wellbeing Committee Charter.

PART 4 – OTHER MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

15 ANU BOARDS AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES – MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Resolved:

Council:

1. **approved** the reappointment of Mr Josh Chalmers to the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee (formerly ARMC) for a further three-year term commencing on 1 July 2025;
2. **approved** the membership transfer of Dr Larry Marshall from the former Finance Committee to the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee for a term in line with his membership of Council;
3. **approved** the continuation of membership of existing external appointed members in the updated Audit, Finance & Risk Committee (formerly ARMC) and the Investment Committee (formerly Finance Committee);
4. **approved** the appointment of Professor Katherine Daniell and Professor Julian Barbara to the Honorary Committee for a term of 3 years from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028;
5. **noted** the appointment by the Vice-Chancellor of Professor Joan Leach as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to the Honorary Committee for a term of two years until 14 April 2027;
6. **approved** the appointment of Ms Cath Ingram as Deputy Chair of the ANU Foundation Board for the remainder of her term, concluding on 1 July 2027;
7. **approved** the reappointment of Mr Terry Weber to the Campus Planning Committee for a further 1-year term commencing on 1 July 2025;
8. **approved** the reappointment of Dr Anne-Marie Schwirtlich as Chair of the Campus

Planning Committee after the completion of her membership of Council, for a further five months to 31 December 2025;

9. **approved** the appointment of Professor Vinh Lu to the Nominations Committee for a term of three years to 30 June 2028; and
10. **approved** the appointment of Professor Joan Leach as a Director of the ANU Enterprise Board for a term of 3 years to 31 May 2028.

16 ANU MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT 2024

Resolved:

Council **approved**:

1. the ANU Modern Slavery Statement; and
2. the signing of the Statement by the Chancellor in accordance with the requirements of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*.

17 FRAUD AND CORRUPTION CONTROL POLICY AND PLAN

Resolved:

Council **approved** the updated Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and the new Fraud and Corruption Control Plan 2025-2027.

18 INTERNAL AUDIT WORK PLAN 2025

Resolved:

Council **approved** the 2025 Internal Audit Strategy and Plan.

19 CLOSURE OF ANAO AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS #4

Resolved:

Council **approved** the closure of the ANAO performance audit Recommendation #4.

PART 4 – OTHER MATTERS FOR NOTING

20 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (ES) REPORT 2024 AND ES PLAN FRAMEWORK 2026-30

Resolved:

Council **noted** the 2024 progress against the goals of the EMP 2023-2025 and the development of a framework for the ES Plan 2026-2030.

21 COSTING AND PRICING POLICY AND PROCEDURE UPDATES

Resolved:

Council **noted** the status update on the costing and pricing policy and procedure.

22 VICE-CHANCELLOR EXPENDITURE OVER \$10 MILLION – REPORT 1 OF 2 2025

Resolved:

Council **noted** occurrences of expenditure over \$10 million authorised by the Vice-Chancellor during the period December 2024 – April 2025.

23 PERTH OFFICE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Resolved:

Council **noted** the report on the activities undertaken by the Chancellor and the ANU Perth Office in the 2024 calendar year.

24 INTERNAL AUDIT – ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2024

Resolved:

Council **noted** the report on the performance of internal audit activity from 2022 to 2024.

25 COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND ACADEMIC BOARD – EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Council Committee and Academic Board Executive Summaries from March and May 2025 meetings.

26 UNIVERSITY SEAL REPORT

Resolved:

Council **noted** the documents to which the University Seal has been affixed.

PART 6 – OTHER BUSINESS

26 OTHER BUSINESS

- In summing up discussion at the meeting, the Chancellor asked for the following:
 - That more material be developed providing direction and talking points for Council members in their communications with the University community.
- Council committed to a period of engagement across campus, noting that engagement should be common practice and not just for hard times. It was suggested that external stakeholders should be engaged to understand and help support the University, including philanthropists.

Resolved:

Council **considered** any other business raised.

27 NEXT MEETING

Council **noted** that the next meeting will take place on Friday 1 August 2025.

The meeting closed at 2:00pm (AEDT)

**Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Inquiry on the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers**

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Australian National University

Question No. GIQ 25-030

Senator Faruqi provided in writing.

TEQSA report

Question

Please provide the self-assurance report that the ANU has been required to provide to TEQSA?

Answer

We have published this report for our community on the publicly available University website.