

The government's Expert Council on University Governance does not include any representation from students, but it does say that NUS will have a 'strong and active role in the Council'.

1. Has the Expert Council allowed students to have a say in university governance reform?
 - a. I was the NUS's nominated representative to engage with the work of the Expert Council for University Governance, and I engaged incredibly enthusiastically and constructively in that process. I do feel that this was reciprocated by the government-nominated members of the council.

During the council's consultation period, I met weekly with the Chair, Melinda Cilento, and with Bruce Cowley and Sharan Burrow, the other two government-nominated council members. The council also convened a national roundtable of student representatives which included student union executives and student members of university councils, to hear firsthand about their experiences in governance. That roundtable was deeply appreciated by students, because it is incredibly rare for the student perspective to be proactively sought out in these types of discussion.

However, it's important to note that while the NUS and the NTEU were consulted by the council, we did not have formal membership on it. Also, whilst I met regularly with the three government-nominated members of the council, I never once met with the full council. I think that reflects a broader pattern in university governance where staff and student voices are often brought in at the end to "rubber stamp" decisions rather than being treated as genuine partners from the outset. So whilst I do believe that my engagement with the council was incredibly productive, and that's a testament to the government-nominated representatives, the absence of a direct seat for the NUS on the council is, in my view, a missed opportunity, and like I said, does reflect the broad attitude university councils have towards student representation.

2. Are you satisfied with the role students have played in the work being done by the government on university governance?

Students have helped shape the government's understanding of governance failures, but we have not been given the role we should have. The Council's leadership took the student experience seriously, and the access I had- weekly meetings and the national student roundtable - showed a genuine appetite to hear directly from those affected.

But consultation, no matter how meaningful, is not the same as participation. Students provided evidence and recommendations, but we had no formal decision-making power and no equal seat at the table. We influenced the conversation, but we could not help steer the process.

So while I am pleased that students were listened to - and I want to acknowledge the efforts of the government-appointed Council members - I am not satisfied with the structural position students were given. If governance reform is to be credible and durable, students must be partners, not observers.

Looking forward, I want to see students directly represented on all bodies undertaking governance reform, and for that to be enshrined in legislation. You cannot create a governance system that serves the public interest without including the people it ultimately exists for: students.