University Council Minutes

University Council met in Room 241, Field Building, Cradle Coast Campus and by Zoom on Friday 3rd May 2025 from 9.30am.

Members: The Chancellor (Ms Alison Watkins AM) as Chair, Vice-Chancellor (Professor Rufus Black), Associate Professor Aidan Davison, Professor Emeritus Peter Dawkins, Mr Garreth Dent, Ms Karina Groenewoud, Mr James Groom, Ms Sarah-Jayne Hall, Professor Kristyn Harman, Ms Tara Howell, Ms Alicia Leis, Dr Tania Price, and Ms Sheree Vertigan AM.

In attendance: Mr Craig Barling (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Services and Operations), Professor Natalie Brown (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic - Interim), Ms Kristen Derbyshire (Chief People Officer), Professor Anthony Koutoulis (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research) and Ms Kate Huntington (Executive Director, Strategic Communications) attended for all items other than members only.

Ms Sally Paynter attended as University Secretary.

By invitation: Ms Kate Clark (Financial Projects Lead)
Mr Rick Inglis (Executive Director Strategy)
Mr Ben Rose (Chief Financial Officer)
Mr Mark White (Engineering Services and Systems Manager)
Ms Susannah Windsor (General Counsel / Executive Director Legal and Risk)

Apologies: None

1. * MEMBERS ONLY

The Chancellor welcomed members to the meeting and to the Cradle Coast Campus, acknowledging that this year was the first time that new Year 1 and Year 3 medical students were able to complete their full-degree programs on the North-West Coast and recognising the high proportion of Indigenous students represented in this group.

Members discussed the recent College of Arts, Law and Education change proposal and the psychosocial hazards flagged by some college staff, and noted that the Audit and Risk Committee would continue to provide oversight of the safety and wellbeing management system and framework to support Council in their responsibilities under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas)* and that this would include appropriate reporting on psychosocial risks. Members discussed the importance of having this information shared with Council through the agenda papers. It was further noted by Council that the need for change to the organising structures of the University had been the result of ineffective and complicated structures rather than the staff working within them and that members were mindful of the impact of the ongoing work towards becoming 'right sized'.

The Chancellor invited members to reflect on the Report provided at item 1.1.1 on the Vice-Chancellor's Performance and Objectives for 2025, noting that she had undertaken the annual performance assessment of the Vice-Chancellor based on detailed reflection on performance against agreed objectives and feedback gathered from conversations with Council members. Members acknowledged the Vice-Chancellor's outstanding leadership through the ongoing complexity and challenges facing the higher education sector and the State and his ability to lead the University through adaptive change to meet these challenges. Council recognised the strength of Professor Black's national reputation and his ongoing contributions to higher education policies nationally. It was noted that planning around future succession for the role of Vice-Chancellor was being led by the Remuneration and Nominations Committee including the development of a success profile to agree the characteristics, capabilities, experiences, and knowledge essential for the next Vice-Chancellor and to serve as a framework to identify and develop internal leadership talent, ensuring the cultivation of successors capable of leading the University with distinction.

The Vice-Chancellor joined the meeting at 9.29am.

The Chancellor provided an update on her appointment to the University Chancellor's Council (UCC) Executive Committee and on discussions from the recent meeting of the Committee, noting that following the establishment of the Expert Panel on University Governance, the UCC would be contributing to the development of the University Governance Principles and Recommendations from the Panel based on 10 priority areas. Members noted that the UCC had released a new *Code of Governance Principles and Practice for Australian Public Universities,* and that an assessment of the University's alignment against the 20 principles had demonstrated compliance. The breakdown of the University alignment against the principles of the code was also included in the 2024 University of Tasmania Annual Report.

Council members and ministerial appointees, Sheree Vertigan and Tara Howell provided an update on their recent meeting with the Minister for Education, where discussions had focused on the importance of partnerships across all areas of the sector to improve educational outcomes for Tasmanians.

*** Items to be starred / Motions on Unstarred Items**
The motions relating to the remaining unstarred items were passed in a block:

- Item 1.2 Report from the Ceremonial and Honorary Degrees Committee
- Item 1.3 University Council Workplan for 2025
- Item 4.8 Vehicle Fleet Data Update
- Item 5.4 Australian Charities and Not for Profit (ACNC) Compliance Report for 2024: University of Tasmania Charitable Trusts
- Item 6.3 University Foundation Committee Report
- Item 6.4 UTAS Holdings Pty Ltd Minutes

In referencing the University Council Workplan for 2025, members requested the addition of an item for the June meeting on the future direction of the University's philanthropic strategy and that the six themes for focus in 2025 highlighted in the Executive Report would be addressed throughout the remaining meetings for the year.

Action: *The Secretary to update the University Council Workplan 2025 to add an item for the June meeting of Council to consider the future direction of the University's philanthropic strategy.*

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1
University Council **adopted** the recommendations and reports presented as unstarred items without discussion.

1.1 * Report from the Remuneration and Nominations Committee

1.1.1 Vice-Chancellor's Performance and Objectives 2025
University Council discussed this item in the Members Only section of the meeting.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.1.1
University Council **considered** the Vice-Chancellor's 2024 Performance Feedback and **endorsed** the 2025 Priorities.

1.1.2 University Council Remuneration Consumer Price Index (CPI)
University Council considered and unanimously supported the proposal to apply a CPI increase of 3.4 per cent to Council and Council committee members remuneration from 1 July 2025, an increase equal to the University Staff agreement rate, and to have this rate remain for further 3 years at which time a comprehensive review of renumeration increases and overall rates applied to remuneration for Council and Council committee members would be undertaken.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.1.2
University Council **approved**:

- CPI increase to Council and Council committee members equal to the University Staff agreement rate of 3.4% to be payable from 1 July 2025.
- CPI increases to remuneration to remain matched to the University Staff Agreement rate for the next 3 years.
- A commitment to review renumeration increases and overall rates applied to remuneration for Council and Council committee members, including the formulars used to determine amounts, to be completed by 2028 with recommendations to be considered by the Remuneration and Nominations Committee.

1.1.3 University Council Committee Membership
University Council resolved as recommended in relation to the appointment and re-appointment of members to the Audit and Risk Committee, Strategic Resourcing Committee and University Foundation Committee. The

Chancellor reminded members that they each had a standing invitation to attend Council committee meetings should they wish too.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.1.3(1)
University Council **re-appointed** Emeritus Professor Peter Dawkins to the Strategic Resourcing Committee for a term ending 31 March 2027.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.1.3(2)
University Council **appointed** Dr Tania Price to the Strategic Resourcing Committee for a term ending 31 October 2026.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.1.3(3)
University Council **re-appointed** Associate Professor Ashley Townsend to the Audit and Risk Committee as an external member for a term ending 28 February 2026

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.1.3(4)
University Council **appointed** Professor Tracey Dickson to the University Foundation Committee for a term ending 31 December 2027.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.1.3(5)
University Council **re-appointed** Associate Professor Ashley Townsend to the University Foundation Committee for a term ending 31 December 2027.

Craig Barling, Professor Natalie Brown, Kristen Derbyshire, Kate Huntington and Anthony Koutoulis joined the meeting at 10.00am

1.2 Report from the Ceremonial and Honorary Degrees Committee

1.2.1 Inclusion of Academic Title Emerit
This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.2.1
University Council **approved** the inclusion of Professor Emerit as a formal title that can be conferred to nominees (according to their preference).

1.2.2 Nomination for Professor Emeritus – Professor Craig Johnson
This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.2.2
University Council **conferred** the title of Professor Emeritus to Professor Craig Johnson.

1.2.3 Nomination for Professor Emeritus – Professor Martin Grimmer
This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.2.3
University Council **conferred** the title of Professor Emeritus to Professor Martin Grimmer.

1.3 University Council Workplan for 2025
This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-1.3
University Council **noted** the University Council Annual Planner for 2025

2. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

2.1 * Introductory Items

Declarations of interest
No additional interests were declared.

Minutes
The Chancellor queried a reference in the February minutes relating to future University of Tasmania financial audits, which the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee confirmed was accurate.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-2.1(1)
University Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meetings held on 28 February 2025 and via circular on 21 March 2025 as true and accurate records.

Actions
University Council noted the status of all action items.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-2.1(2)
University Council **received** the report showing progress on all outstanding items from previous Council meetings.

3. CURRENT OPERATING POSITION

3.1 * Vice-Chancellor's Update
The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the higher education sector broadly, noting the continuing challenges facing the sector including a diminished social license for higher education nationally and internationally, the ability of universities to appropriately adapt to the end of a growth-based model and domestic demand for higher education decline, resulting in growing competition for quality students across the sector. Members discussed the degree of challenge being experienced by Australian universities and the varying responses by many, noting that some universities were experiencing these impacts more acutely than others. The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the University's progress towards adapting its own size, structures and ways of working to meet the challenges and highlighted the importance of strong leadership through the roles of the Heads of Academic Units and that continuing to lift the University's performance and impact in areas such as student experience remained a priority.

Resolution 02-052025-UC-3.1
University Council **noted** the update from the Vice-Chancellor.

3.2 * University Executive Report
University Council noted the Executive Report and discussed the timing of the staff engagement survey noting that there would be a full survey undertaken every two years and a pulse survey annually. Members noted that the timing enabled there to be more systemic change between surveys and that it was an appropriate balance to avoid over surveying of staff. Council discussed the five Tasmanian Transitions and requested that the leads for each Transition be asked to attend a future meeting to discuss with Council the specific areas in depth.

Action: *Secretary to add discussion of the five Tasmanian Transitions to the workplan in 2025.*

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-3.2
University Council **received and noted** the University Executive Report for May 2025.

4. STRATEGIC FOCUS

Ben Rose, Susannah Windsor, Mark White and Kate Clark joined the meeting at 10.55am

Item 4.1 – Renewable Energy Supply - *redacted due to commercial in confidence content***.**

Ref: Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.1

Susannah Windsor, Mark White and Kate Clark left the meeting at 11.25am
Rick Inglis joined the meeting at 11.25am

4.2 * 2025 Federal Election – Funding outlook for Higher Education (WORKING DISCUSSION)
A working discussion was held to consider the significant impact of national higher education policy and associated funding on the financial sustainability of the University. Council discussed the respective policy positions of the two major political parties for the 2025 Federal election and the potential implications for the University of these policies.

4.3 * Finance Update- *This item has been partially redacted due to commercial in confidence content.*
Management provided an overview of the operating financial forecast for March and updates on the capital and investment portfolio and set out the proposed changes to the University's budget model for 2026. Members noted that the March Forecast projected a $1.2m favourable variance to budget for Earnings Before Interest,

Tax, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) as international revenue was expected to be slightly better than anticipated and expenses continue to be tightly held, including through vacancy control. Council discussed the reduction in the EDITDA target following the impacts of international student policy and subsequent impact on international revenue and confirmed the commitment to adjust the EDITDA target upwards to ensure long term financial sustainability.

Council considered proposed changes to the 2026 budget model including moving from a one to three-year budget model to better inform actionable plans for achieving strategic objectives and enabling schools to better manage and deploy their resources in alignment with their strategy. Members noted that these changes meant that the budget process better aligned to these new academic structures and that decision-making was at the appropriate level.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.3
University Council **noted** the March operating financial forecast including update on capital and the investment portfolio for 2025 and changes to the budget model for 2026.

4.4 * Financial Outlook
University Council considered the update on the University's financial outlook and that of the sector over the short and medium terms, with members noting the unprecedented levels of uncertainty, largely driven by the complexity of the financial and policy environment facing all universities and how this critical context-setting would inform decision about the 'right size' model for the University and targets for the 2026 budget.

Members discussed the University's response to this complexity in the higher education sector and its lack of economic stability and supported the proposal for management to utilise the same sort of framework strategy under conditions of uncertainty which was used successfully during COVID. The framework would map out the main alternative futures and their financial implications for a risk-based decision about the approach to the budget. Further work, in response to the Federal election outcome, would be undertaken in the lead up to the setting of the budget context and targets for 2026 that will be brought to Council at its June meeting.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.4
University Council **noted** the financial uncertainty facing the sector and the scenarios that will inform the 2026 Budget.

Ben Rose and Rick Inglis left the meeting at 12.05pm

4.5 * Academic Unit Empowered Model
University Council was provided with a progress update on the three major change programs in the Colleges of Health and Medicine, College of Sciences and Engineering and the Academic Division and noted the revised timeline for institutional organisational changes and to the university operating model. Members discussed the inherent risks in the change programs including psychosocial risks to staff and questioned whether accumulatively the risks were significant enough to slow the process, with management advising that pausing the process would create more uncertainty and that this would not be in the best interests of impacted staff. Members noted that the focus was on securing leadership positions needed to make these new models work well and that the next emerging phase of work would be on service design guided by deep engagement with academic units and refining ways of working in the new Academic system.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.5
University Council **noted** the update on the Academic Unit Empowered Model.

4.6 * Revised Academic Delegations Ordinance
University Council considered a newly drafted Academic Delegations Ordinance to replace the existing Ordinance and Schedule which were no longer fit for purpose in their current state and could not readily respond to organisational change because amendments to any academic delegation in the Schedule required Council approval. The new Ordinance reflected a revised model that provided for academic delegations to be established through appropriate governance instruments which would be quality assured and maintained under the Governance Instruments Framework. Members noted that academic delegations for decision making about the student and curriculum lifecycles would then be collated in a *Directory of Academic Delegations* with supporting processes to ensure that the directory remained current. Delegations supporting academic capability functions would also be included in the directory where the responsibilities for decision making for these academic functions would be detailed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.6(1)
University Council **approved** the new Academic Delegations Ordinance to commence on 2 May 2025.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.6(2)
University Council **approved** the academic delegations in the Academic Delegations Ordinance Schedule to be in the first Directory of Academic Delegations.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.6(3)
University Council **noted** that academic governance instruments will be reviewed and updated to support the new structures and ways of working, and the directory updated in accordance with the new ordinance as those changes are made.

4.7 * University of Tasmania response to the Australian Government Strategic Examination of Research and Development
As noted by University Council at its February meeting, the Australian Government Department of Industry, Sciences and Resources had released a discussion paper as part of the strategic review of the nation's Research and Development (R&D) system and had invited contributions. Members noted the University's submission which had offered several recommendations that aligned with the University's strategic goals. Council further noted that it was in the University's interest to be at the forefront of discussions that would inform the strategic national R&D system, to help deliver on its strategic objective of contributing to commercial and societal benefits in Tasmania and from Tasmania to the world.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.7
University Council **noted** the University submission to the Strategic Examination of Research and Development

4.8 Vehicle Fleet Data Update
This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-4.8
University Council noted the update on transitioning the University's vehicle fleet and the UniHopper service to electric vehicles or very low emission vehicles.

5. GOVERNANCE

5.1 * 2024 Review of University Annual Modern Slavery Statement
University Council unanimously approved University's Annual Modern Slavery Statement for 2024.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-5.1
University Council **approved** the *University of Tasmania Modern Slavery Statement 2024*.

5.2 * 2024 University of Tasmania's Annual Report
University Council considered the 2024 Annual Report and proposed several immaterial changes including highlighting more of the positive data from the Graduate Outcome Survey for inclusion in the institutional overview narrative; adding 'call out' boxes for 'at a glance' information; correction of names and a further tidy up and edits, and the inclusion of imagery. Members discussed potential improvements for future Reports, including highlighting key information and ensuring that relevant data to support the narrative was appropriately called out and easily referenced.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-5.2
University Council provided in principle **approval** of the 2024 University of Tasmania's Annual Report, subject to the completion of the agreed immaterial changes.

5.3 * Council Review Update
University Council considered the progress towards the implementation of the approved Council Review recommendations and associated actions and had no further feedback.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-5.3
University Council **noted** the update and progress on the actions in response to the 2024 Independent Review of University Council

5.4 ACNC Compliance Report for 2024: University of Tasmania Charitable Trusts
This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-5.4

University Council **approved** the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits (ACNC) Compliance Report 2024.

6. STANDING REPORTS TO COUNCIL

6.1 * Chair Academic Senate Report

The Chair, Academic Senate provided an update on the proposed changes to Academic Senate that had been considered at its March meeting and were set to be further discussed at its upcoming meeting on 18 May. These changes would likely see a smaller Academic Senate with an increased number of student representatives and more targeted ex-officio positions. The Chair explained that the Academic Senate Ordinance would require review to appropriately reflect these changes to its membership and that part of the process would be to agree a set of principles for future membership and introducing a maximum and minimum number of members in various categories, and that, due to the new organisational structures, further thought would need to be given to how many and from what constituent groups elected members would join Senate.. Members noted that revisions to the Academic Senate Ordinance would come to the June meeting of Council for approval and further noted that Senate would be discussing students as partners and would begin to use the five Tasmanian Transitions to guide the strategic sessions at Senate, the first of which would be held in May and focus on the Education Transition.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-6.1
University Council **received and noted** the verbal report from the Chair Academic Senate.

6.2 * Strategic Resourcing Committee Report

The Chair of the Strategic Resourcing Committee advised that the major items discussed by the Committee at its meeting on 11 April had been considered by University Council at this meeting under separate agenda items.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-6.2
University Council **received and noted** the report from the Strategic Resourcing Committee meeting held on 11 April 2025.

6.3 University Foundation Committee Report

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-6.3
University Council **received and noted** the report from the University Foundation Committee meeting held on 4 April 2025.

6.4 UTAS Holdings Pty Ltd Minutes

This item was unstarred and therefore not discussed.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-6.4
University Council **noted** the minutes of the UTAS Holdings Pty Ltd meeting held on 11 February 2025.

7. GRADUATIONS

7.1 * Graduations to be presented for Conferral of Awards

University Council conferred awards to the students listed in the agenda.

Resolution 02-05-2025-UC-7.1
University Council **reissued** the award listed before them and **conferred** the Shanghai Ocean University Transnational Education (TNE) program awards as provided to them in the meeting agenda.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Other Business

2025 Tasmanian Sentiment Survey Results

University Council reflected on the results of the 2025 Tasmanian Sentiment Survey, with improvement in confidence and quality metrics across regions, exceeding the 2024 institutional KPI target and on track to meet the 2028 targets. Members recognised the significant work involved in shifting the sentiment and congratulated management on the positive results.

May Council Meeting Summary
Tara Howell provided a summary of the meeting, reflecting on what had been achieved and identifying areas for further improvement. Council noted the following:

- The Annual Financial Statements 2024 had been approved, and University Council had endorsed the six strategic priority areas for focus in 2025, with members agreeing to use these priorities to guide strategic focus topics selection across the year.
- Progress towards adapting the University's organising structures and systems was being made and, whilst it remained a challenging time for many, there was a sense of building a stronger University that prioritised the developing culture and capability needed to meet the challenges of a new era.
- Members agreed that in future the Reports from the Council committees would be unstarred and taken as read with no need for a formal verbal update, with members invited to ask questions or seek clarification from the relevant Chairs as necessary.

The meeting concluded at 3.05pm.