



**LAUNCESTON**  
**CHAMBER of COMMERCE**  
*The Voice of Business*

Hon. Rob Valentine MLC  
Chair, Legislative Council Select Committee  
Provisions of the University of Tasmania Act 1992 (Inquiry).  
Parliament of Tasmania  
HOBART TAS 7000  
via Email: [jenny.mannering@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:jenny.mannering@parliament.tas.gov.au)

24/02/2023

Dear Hon. Rob Valentine MLC and members of the Legislative Council Select Committee.

We would like to thank the Committee for allowing the Launceston Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) to contribute to the Inquiry into the **Provisions of the University of Tasmania Act 1992 (Inquiry)**.

From a business community perspective, a world class and connected university is critical to the competitiveness of Tasmania. A well-functioning university has the capacity to lift our economic output through both the export of education, attraction of students to stimulate our economy and raise the capability of Tasmanian business through education of the workforce and assistance in research and development.

The Chamber has enjoyed an enduring relationship with the University of Tasmania (UTAS) and believes it makes a significant contribution to the business community. UTAS's strategic direction to focus on academic content that aligns to Tasmania's strengths (e.g. agriculture) as well as future workforce needs (e.g. science, technology, engineering and maths) will see Tasmania's unique competitive advantage grow on a global scale.

The Chamber is highly supportive and welcoming of UTAS's decision to relocate into Tasmanian city centres and to focus courses and opportunities around the needs and the strengths of each region. We believe that UTAS has acted in accordance with its legislative responsibilities in making these decisions.

In looking over the terms of reference of this Committee the Chamber would like to make the following comments about the *University of Tasmania Act 1992* (the Act).

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Clause 6(a) to advance, transmit and preserve knowledge and learning

- The primary purpose of most students attending university is to gain knowledge and skills needed to get a job in their chosen field. To this end, a significant function of UTAS is to prepare the future workforce and align education outcomes to industry needs. On this basis, Clause 6(a) should be reviewed with the needs of students in mind, or a separate function created to represent this critical role.

Clause 6(b) to encourage and undertake research

- From a business perspective, the Chamber considers that UTAS has a significant role and responsibility in increasing the economic potential of businesses through a greater focus on supporting industry led research that will create career pathways for academic students into industry.

Clause 6(c) to promote and sustain teaching and research to international standards of excellence

- The Chamber agrees with this function.

Clause 6(d) to encourage and provide opportunities for students and staff to develop and apply their knowledge and skills

- The Chamber agrees with this function and highlights the example set by the College of Business & Economics at UTAS. Students studying business courses are currently being educated in a 'flexible co-working environment [that] has been purposely designed to reflect the function and feel of a real workplace, providing our students with an experience that prepares them for future employment'.<sup>1</sup>

Clause 6(e) to provide educational and research facilities appropriate to its other functions

- The Chamber believes that UTAS's decision to relocate into Tasmania's city centres rather than to refurbish its existing facilities meets this function requirement.
- The Chamber commends UTAS for its decision to expand the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture to Launceston which recognises the potential of this industry to contribute to significant economic growth and point of competitive advantage for Northern Tasmania.
- From a business perspective, the availability of flexible online education to compliment the physical campus presence is vitally important to increase the availability of university study to those working or where their personal circumstance makes it difficult to travel to a campus.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.utas.edu.au/about/news-and-stories/articles/2021/henty-house-hosts-next-chapter-of-university-presence-in-launceston-cbd>



Clause 6(f) to promote access to higher education having regard to principles of merit and equity

- The Chamber agrees with this function.

Clause 6(fa) to foster or promote the commercialization of any intellectual property (IP)

- Entrepreneurialism is critically important to the growth of Tasmania's economy. Having a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem will attract thought leadership, innovation and the development of new products and services. The Chamber would like to see this function of UTAS strengthened to include 'facilitating' commercialisation of any IP.
- As Tasmania's only university, it is of high importance that UTAS be the research and development partner with industry.
- The Chamber would like to see greater transparency in regards to UTAS's approach to delivering on this function including clear policies on IP ownership and progress reporting.
- The Chamber would like to see UTAS acting as a research partner with students, empowering students to use the IP that they develop while studying at UTAS for their own benefit.
- The Chamber would like to see Industry retain IP or if agreed, shared when research is industry led.
- The Chamber would like to see UTAS actively working to create opportunities for start-ups to access UTAS's research resources in exchange for share ownership in those start-ups that reflects the value of research contributed.

Clause 6(g) to engage in activities which promote the social, cultural and economic welfare of the community and to make available for those purposes, the resources of the University.

- The Chamber would like to see this function expanded to include the fostering of thought leadership in UTAS's academic areas of focus which involves collaboration with community, industry, and government.

With regards to the governance of UTAS, the Chamber would like to see greater industry engagement in the determination of course content and delivery methods as it relates to qualifications relied on by workers to enter the workforce or increase their career potential. This is to ensure that the students are being taught a curriculum that increases their ability to enter the workforce.

The Chamber would also like to see more formal links between the University, TAFE and the Department of Education to reduce resource duplication, clarify learning pathways, jointly promote professions where there are skill shortages and ensure that students are getting both the academic, soft skills and experience required to be job ready.

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We would like to see the State Government taking a greater role in reducing the cost of university attendance, particularly to:

- Support students from disadvantaged backgrounds including backgrounds where there is limited academic achievement within a family to succeed at UTAS.
- Reduce the cost of degrees in skill shortage areas.
- Attract students to jobs of the future.

Thank you for this opportunity. Please have no hesitation in contacting us if you should wish to receive verbal evidence.

Yours Sincerely,

Kate Daley  
**President**

William Cassidy  
**Executive Officer**

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