



PREMIER OF TASMANIA

27 SEP 2022

The Hon Rob Valentine MLC
Chair
Legislative Council Select Committee
Inquiry into the Provisions of the *University of Tasmania Act 1992*
Email: utas@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Valentine ^{Rob}

I am writing to provide some information on behalf of the Tasmanian Government to the Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into the Provisions of the *University of Tasmania Act 1992* (UTAS Act).

The Tasmanian Government has a long-standing relationship with the University of Tasmania (UTAS). Successive governments have recognised its importance as the only University in Tasmania and its role in the economic, social and cultural development of Tasmania.

Our Government continues to work closely with UTAS in the interests of the Tasmanian community. We recognise its critical role in educating Tasmanians and others who come here to learn and its world-leading research capability. The relationship between the Government and UTAS provides a significant opportunity for collaboration to improve outcomes for the Tasmanian community.

To that end, a formal partnership agreement is in place between the Government and UTAS. The Agreement has been updated several times; most recently in 2015, when a ten-year Agreement was signed, focusing on education, innovation, quality of life and economic impact. A copy can be found at: https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/policy/partnership_with_the_university_of_tasmania.

The Agreement has resulted in some major initiatives, including \$75 million in Tasmanian Government funding for the Northern Cities Major Development Initiative and \$96 million for Tasmania's most ambitious cultural and arts infrastructure project, The Hedberg Centre. The Government has also supported Scholarships under the Partnership, including the Education Inspiration Scholarship Program (EISP) and the Tasmania Honours Scholarship.

Evaluation is essential in ensuring the initiatives under the Agreement are meeting expectations. In 2018-19, a review of the Agreement was put on hold as UTAS developed its new Strategic Directions Plan. Unfortunately, COVID-19's emergence has affected both the Government and UTAS in terms of business-as-usual work as the focus has been to be on managing Tasmania's response to the pandemic.

A new Agreement with UTAS will be developed in the future. This follows an independent review of the Tasmanian State Service (TSS), which reinforced that the TSS must continue to work with other sectors and organisations to access the best capabilities. The Government accepted, or accepted in principle, all 77 recommendations of the review, which will be implemented within the next five years. This includes building or renewing an ideas-based partnership with UTAS focused on areas of mutual benefit and with the broad objectives of improving outcomes for Tasmanians. The report can be found at: https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/policy/review_of_the_tasmanian_state_service.

Regarding the UTAS Act, the Act establishes the University and sets out its functions and governance. As an Act of the Tasmanian Parliament, the Government of the day has administrative responsibility for it. Under the Administrative Arrangements Order, the Act is currently assigned to the Department of Education.

Under the UTAS Act, the Minister has a small number of functions, including appointing two persons to the University of Tasmania Council (section 8(1)). The Ministerial appointment requirements enable UTAS to comply with the Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Governance of Australian Universities (the Code). The Code was endorsed in 2011 by the then Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education and Employment and was supported by the Council of University Chancellors.

The University Council must also provide an annual report to the Minister, who must then table a copy in both Houses of Parliament (section 12). The report must include a complete account of the income and expenditure of the University for the financial year to which it relates.

In reviewing the UTAS Act, it is vital to consider it in the context of the broader regulatory framework under which UTAS operates. As a provider of higher education qualifications, UTAS must be registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education. Amongst other responsibilities, TEQSA conducts compliance and quality assessments and advises the Commonwealth Minister for Education. It also provides guidance on matters such as admissions transparency and academic integrity. Information on TEQSA is available at www.teqsa.gov.au.

I trust this information will be of assistance to the Committee

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier