

UNION COUNCIL MINUTES

From the 6th Ordinary Meeting of the
109th UQ Union Council, 2020

5 PM

Monday 24 August 2020

Innes Room, Union Complex

Chair: Mitchell Ablett-Nelson

a) **The Meeting was declared open at 5:28 pm by Secretary Thornton.**

b) Credentials

The following were present:

Councillors

Barclay McGain
Bradley Plant
Chloe Ainscow
Georgina Quayle
Ian Trinh
Ji Davis
Matthew Pereira
Mitchell Ablett-Nelson (Chair)
Myah McGinity
Oula Shihan
Priya De
Ti Parker
Tim Heffernan

Student Executive & Officers

Brodie Fennell
Christian Rizzalli
Ethan Van Roo Douglas (President)
Rebekah Thornton (Secretary)
Rowan Evans
Zane Higgins

Others

Amy Sienkiewicz-Grob
Bradley Stone
Elias Blanch
Glenda Jacobs
Karen Da Silva (Minutes)
Marisha Robinson
Matthew Johnson
Tilly Clark
Utkrist Paudyal

The following members were absent:

- Daniel Boyle

The following apologies were received:

- Annabel Genest
- Dakota Titmus
- Guohang Ding
- Gustavo Pazo
- Jennifer Wang
- Lili Wackwitz
- Olivia Nguyen
- Thomas Landy (Treasurer)

On leave:

Nil.

The following proxies were received:

- Ash Zeller to Oula Shihan
- Bradley Plant to Georgina Quayle
- Guohang Ding to Oula Shihan
- Jack Dugdale to Amy Sienkiewicz-Grob
- Jennifer Wang to Tilly Clark
- Ji Davis to Mitch Ablett-Nelson
- Justin Gane to Matthew Johnson
- Lachlan Hardie to Barclay McGain
- Maddy Taylor to Mitch Ablett-Nelson
- Myah McGinity to Barclay McGain
- Nathan Kerr to Ethan Van Roo Douglas
- Olivia Nguyen to Marisha Robinson
- Rifki Sanahdi to Tilly Clark
- Swin Su to Elias Blanch
- William Kugelman to Elias Blanch

Resignations:

Nil.

It was moved

THAT THE CREDENTIALS FOR THE 6TH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE 109TH UQ UNION COUNCIL BE ACCEPTED.

COUNCIL 109/103

THORNTON/ABLETT-NELSON

CARRIED

5:29PM Cr De left the meeting and quorum lapsed.

5:34PM Cr McGinity left the meeting (proxy to Cr McGain).

5:46PM Councilors De, Heffernan, Shihan, Parker and joined the meeting.

c) Elections

Appointment to Casual vacancy

Returning Officer Peter Travers informed Council that four nominations were received and each voter could exercise one vote.

Four nominations:

1. Elisha Gitteridge
2. Emily Scott
3. Matthew Pereira
4. Utkrist Paudyal

The election to fill the casual vacancy was held and votes counted.

5:56PM Cr Davis joined the meeting.

5:56PM Cr Plant left the meeting (proxy to Cr Quayle).

Returning Officer Peter Travers announced Matthew Pereira to the position of Councilor in the 109th UQ Union Council.

d) The minutes from the previous meeting

It was moved

THAT THE MINUTES FROM THE 5TH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE 109TH UQ UNION COUNCIL HELD ON 24TH JULY 2020 BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED.

COUNCIL 109/104 ABLETT-NELSON/MCGAIN CARRIED

e) Business arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

Nil.

f) Requests for Starring/ Approval of the items not starred en bloc

Procedural motion to consider all reports en bloc.

CARRIED

g) Reports

It was moved

THAT THE UNION SECRETARY'S REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED.

COUNCIL 109/105 THORNTON/ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE UNION TREASURER'S REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED.

COUNCIL 109/106 THORNTON/ ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE STUDENT RIGHTS (VOLUNTEERING) REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED

COUNCIL 109/107 PAZO/ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE STUDENT RIGHTS (ACADEMIC ADVOCACY) REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED

COUNCIL 109/108 FENNELL/ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE GENDER AND SEXUALITY (WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE) REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED

COUNCIL 109/109 COGGAN/ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE GENDER AND SEXUALITY (QUEER COLLECTIVE) REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED

COUNCIL 109/110 TITMUS/ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE COLLEGES OFFICERS' REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED
COUNCIL 109/111 DALTON & CHANDLER/ ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER'S REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND
CONFIRMED
COUNCIL 109/112 GREEN/ ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE POSTGRADUATE OFFICER'S REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND
CONFIRMED
COUNCIL 109/113 RIZZALLI/ ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

THAT THE RULES COMMITTEE REPORT BE ACCEPTED AND CONFIRMED
COUNCIL 109/114 VAN ROO DOUGLAS/ABLETT-NELSON CARRIED

h) Matters arising from the Reports of the Elected Officers

Nil.

i) Question Time

Nil.

j) Reports of Union Bodies

Nil.

k) Business which has been proposed

6:20PM Secretary Thornton left the meeting.

Cancel Grant Funding

Cr Trinh referred to the motion passed at the July Council meeting regarding the C&S committee releasing funding to clubs and societies and demanded the immediate release of grant funding, and to immediately rescind the decision to implement an application for grant funding.

In discussions the following was noted:

- The C&S committee to be directed to approve funding without application.
- Clark spoke against the motion explaining that it did not make sense to say that clubs were being singled out. The Union was under financial constraint and '*what the heck!*'
- The regs delegate general responsibility to the C&S Committee.

- The Union, although a charity, does not give out money. The C&S Committee has autonomy and funds to be allocated on application rather than given away to inactive clubs.
- The motion to be discussed with Cr Plant and the C&S Committee.

It was moved

THAT THE UQU COUNCIL DIRECTS THE C&S DEPARTMENT TO REMOVE APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT FUNDING.

COUNCIL 109/115

TRINH/QUAYLE

TABLED

Hands off our collectives!

Council was advised that the Services Consultative Group (SCG) that monitors funding had requested all collectives (Abilities, Women's, Goorie Berrimpa, Queer, Environmental, etc.) to provide evidence of meeting KPIs for ongoing funding.

In discussion, the following was raised:

- The University feels the Union is a liability.
- The reporting mechanism indicates corporatization of the University.
- SCG monitors funding and KPIs to ensure collectives are looking after people in the collectives.
- SCG is made up of Student Affairs and Property and Facilities
- SCG Audit looked at University funding.
- There is confusion between SCG and SSAF.

Action: Van Roo Douglas to meet with Blanch and Clark to discuss and clarify.

It was moved

THAT THE UQ UNION CONDEMNS THE DECISION OF NEWLY APPOINTED VICE CHANCELLOR DEBORAH TERRY AO (WITH HER ATTACK ON STUDENT RIGHTS) TO A COMPLETE AUDIT OF THE UQU PRIOR TO SSAF NEGOTIATIONS AND RESOLVES TO FIGHT THE ADMINISTRATION FOR EVERY CENT THAT STUDENTS DESERVE.

COUNCIL 109/116

BLANCH/CLARK

TABLED

Minute silence for Beirut

In recognition of the human suffering caused by the explosion in Beirut on 4 August 2020, Council stopped for a minute in silence.

It was moved

THAT THE UQU COUNCIL TAKE A MINUTE SILENCE TO MOURN THE SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF LIFE AND CRITICAL RESOURCES IN BEIRUT DUE TO THE EXPLOSION AT THE PORT IN LEBANON.

COUNCIL 109/117

CLARK/BLANCH

CARRIED

In memory of Stonewall and Marsha P. Johnson

The following was highlighted in remembrance of the Stonewall uprising and Marsha Johnson:

- Pay respect to Marsha P. Johnson on her birthday (24 August).
- The Civil Rights Movement, modern Black Lives Matter Movement and Queer Rights Movement would not be at this point of success without Marsha's dedication.
- Mark Latham proposing trans law; challenging trans/queer phobia
- As an ally to all UQ students, irrespective of identity, the UQU Council has a responsibility to educate and support the UQ community about intersectionality and human rights.

It was moved

THAT THE UQU COUNCIL COMMEMORATES THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF MARSHA P. JOHNSON'S ACTIVISM.

COUNCIL 109/118

BLANCH/CLARK

CARRIED

UQ Union welcomes the new Vice Chancellor with an appeal to fight

Cr De highlighted the new Vice Chancellor – Deborah Terry's appointment at UQ at a time of historic crisis in the higher education sector. They noted the VC's achievements, that as a Union, we should be fighting against the treatment of the University as a business. Cr De also stated that the VC had predicted 20,000 job losses, they are in the G08 and the boss of UQ and had a record of treating education as a business.

In discussions the following was noted:

- Union Council needed to ensure that the new VC was supportive/aware of the goals and objectives of student unionism at UQ.
- Evans stated that at a recent meeting the VC expressed a view that student representation is the greatest thing at UQ.

It was moved

THAT THE UQ UNION COUNCIL

- RECOGNISES THAT THE NEWLY APPOINTED VICE CHANCELLOR DEBORAH TERRY AO IS A RUN-OF-THE-MILL NEOLIBERAL, THE CHAIR OF

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA WHICH HAS OVERSEEN THE TRANSFORMATION OF UNIVERSITIES INTO BIG BUSINESSES.

- NOTES TERRY'S ASSOCIATION WITH MINING CORPORATIONS, PARTICULARLY BHP.
- NOTES HER RECORD AS VICE CHANCELLOR OF CURTIN UNIVERSITY, MAKING DEALS WITH BIG BUSINESS AT THE EXPENSE OF STUDENT WELFARE.
- HOPES THE DOOR HIT PETER HOJ ON THE WAY OUT AND WELCOME TERRY BY SAYING WE ARE PREPARED TO ALSO FIGHT HER ATTACKS ON STUDENTS AND STAFF.

COUNCIL 109/119

SHIHAN/DE

CARRIED

UQ Student Union stands in solidarity with staff against wage theft

The ABC has recently helped expose that 10 of the country's 39 public universities, including UQ, are involved in a scandal over mass underpayment of casual staff. These universities are either currently repaying money, undertaking audits, or are still in disputes with casual staff. What the underpayment most often relates to is the impossible marking rates for staff, in which staff simply do not have enough time to mark essays and assist students, which forces them to work unpaid hours in order to maintain their quality of work.

This kind of underpayment is widespread across the university sector. At Murdoch University in WA, some students have been told that, since marking rates are so low, not all assessments will even be graded, while RMIT is being taken to the Fair Work Commission by the NTEU over new marking rates which limit the amount of marking and feedback time per essay to just 10 minutes, half of the previous allocated time.

The situation here at UQ is very similar. Elysse Fenton, a former UQ course coordinator for the School of Political Science and International Affairs, who was quietly let go when the pandemic hit universities, reported to the ABC some pretty shocking revelations. She had worked here at UQ for 13 years, but estimated that just in the past 18 months (from when she started logging her number of unpaid hours) the university owed her \$28,000 in unpaid wages, about half of her total actual earnings from that year and a half period. She described the marking rates as "impossible," also reporting that: "Some teaching staff have been instructed to do a poor job, I suppose, because there is widespread acknowledgment that these [marking] rates are inaccurate," and also that quote: "I have heard colleagues being told to skim read students' assignments or to just read the introduction and the conclusion of an essay." She said that "It's really a miracle that we haven't had a huge crisis in student experiences or teaching quality yet in universities." In response, UQ has predictably and shamefully denied any systematic issue with underpayment.

In discussion it was noted:

- 10 out of 39 universities have issues of underpayment of casual staff and were taken to the Fair Work Commission by NTEU.
- Academic staff have been advised to skim read assignments.

- Casual staff have lost jobs; staff forced by university into terrible conditions.
- Students cannot get timely feedback.
- Essays have been badly marked.

There was unanimous support for the motion; Cr McGain emphasized that staff must be compensated.

It was moved

THAT THE UQ STUDENT UNION STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH UNIVERSITY STAFF AT UQ AND AROUND THE COUNTRY WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED WAGE THEFT AND ARE CURRENTLY IN DISPUTE WITH THEIR UNIVERSITIES. WE RECOGNISE THAT STAFF TEACHING CONDITIONS ARE STUDENT LEARNING CONDITIONS, AND THAT STUDENTS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO STAND ALONGSIDE STAFF WHEN THEY ARE BEING EXPLOITED. WE DEMAND THAT ALL STAFF ARE PAID BACK FOR THE HOURS THEY HAVE WORKED AND WERE NOT COMPENSATED ACCORDINGLY. WE ALSO DEMAND THAT STAFF ARE GIVEN ADEQUATE TIME TO MARK ASSESSMENT AND TEACH STUDENTS WITHOUT UNREASONABLE TIME CONSTRAINTS.

COUNCIL 109/120

SHIHAN/RIZZALLI

CARRIED

The UQ Union opposes police presence on campus

The UQU International Department and the UQ Union have invited members of the Queensland Police Service to their event ‘*Get to Know Your Community*’. The event description says, “many people are uncertain about how our enforcement services can help in our community - as part of our get to know you series we will have Queensland Police Service on-site to answer any questions you may have...”

Considering the very robust history of student unions stridently opposing police presence on campus, and the global movements against police brutality, this is a tone-deaf move by the student union.

Just in the past year, police have attended numerous student protests, which is an authoritarian development by the university administration and a threat to student democracy. The historic position of student unions has been to say ‘cops off campus’, not actively inviting the cops to set up stalls at union events.

Only months ago, UQ Union passed a motion in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives. It is hypocritical for the Union Executive to then turn around and organise essentially a Public Relations event for the Queensland Police.

Actions:

1. The UQ Union uninvites the QPS to the event advertised for the 25th August.
2. The UQ union will publicly post in the Facebook event about uninviting the police.

3. The UQ Union will not engage in any further PR exercises with the police that would welcome their presence on campus.

The following was noted in discussion:

- Historically Unions have defended that cops should not step on campus at all.
- Facebook page shows the event on the 25th August is an unpopular move.
- Cr McGain spoke in support of the police stating that they save more lives than they take.
- It is important to foster a relationship between the people and the police.
- We do not need to demonize the police.
- Blanch suggested an amendment: to replace police with human rights lawyer from UQU.
- Clark stated that a lawyer would be better able to have advised the UQU International Department's event and suggested a Human Rights lawyer instead of police.
- Cr Ding, the International Student Officer, to be consulted about this motion.
- Cr Shihan explained that the main point is about the exploitation of international students and not of police or legal liaison.
- Cr Pereira expressed support for police involvement stating that Triple Zero are the safer first point of contact in emergencies.
- Cr De said that people contact Triple Zero knowing of the service being available. Black people end up in prison when police are contacted *e.g. Youth Detention Centre, Wacol* and that the role of the police in society is to bully the poor and the oppressed.
- Higgins stated that a Human Rights Lawyer would be appropriate to address a situation of racial abuse.

It was moved

THAT THE UQ UNION OPPOSES POLICE PRESENCE ON CAMPUS, AND WILL UNINVITE THE QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE TO AN ADVERTISED 'MEET YOUR COMMUNITY' EVENT. THE UQ UNION RECOGNISES THAT THE POLICE ENFORCE RACISM, THREATEN UNIONS AND FREE SPEECH, AND ARE NOT WELCOME ON CAMPUS.

COUNCIL 109/121

SHIHAN/DE

FAILED

UQ Union calls for youth prisons to be emptied in light of COVID-19 outbreak

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 at a Wacol youth prison exposes the real horror of institutions designed to torture children.

Youth prisons are notoriously overcrowded and are places of disease and constant outbreaks of infections.

The restrictions the QLD government has put in place will not limit the spread of the disease in places like prisons which have filthy conditions and lack the most basic care on a regular day to day basis, let alone during a pandemic.

The QLD government is both complicit in this outbreak and has responded inadequately to prevent further spread of the disease.

Overcrowding in prisons is a long-standing issue and the numbers are at an historic high. At Wacol, the majority of detainees are indigenous and 70 percent of them are on remand, meaning they have not been found guilty of any crime.

Authorities are intending on holding youth in solitary confinement to conduct testing and quarantine for two weeks. This decision constitutes torture and cannot be justified on public health grounds.

In discussions, it was noted:

- Torture cannot be justified.
- In support of the motion, Cr Heffernan said that vulnerable children are being held against their will.
- Cr McGain said that there needs to be a better rehabilitated system and that many inmates are in for committing sexual offences. McGain encouraged Council to vote against this motion and reconsider why this motion was being put forward.
- The people in prisons deserve human rights and should not remain in situations that will make them more psychologically harmed.
- Cr De explained that the majority of the people get arrested for small crimes and petty theft. Prisons are being bogged down and the pandemic is torture. Prisoners are more likely to have health issues and should be given safe accommodation – prisons need to be emptied.
- Van Roo Douglas said that it was very hard to get in to a youth detention centre and did not agree with petty theft filling up prisons.
- Cr De compared prisoners to travelers saying that quarantined travelers were not in prisons.
- Cr McGain said that the essence of the motion was that the status quo was unacceptable and it was not an argument for prison reform but for putting the detainees into the community.

It was moved

THAT THE UQU CONDEMNS THE TREATMENT OF YOUTH HELD AT THE WACOL PRISON. THE UNION CALLS ON THE QLD LABOR GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE YOUTH DETAINEES INTO SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION, AS SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE MONTHS AGO AT THE START OF THE OUTBREAK. THE UNION CONDEMNS THE INHUMANE TREATMENT OF CHILDREN AND CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE HEALTHCARE AND HOUSING FOR CHILDREN IN THIS SITUATION.

COUNCIL 109/122

TIERNA/HEFFERNAN

CARRIED

UQ Union opposes HECS loan cancellation for students

The Federal Government has recently announced that students who fail more than half of their subjects will lose access to loans and subsidies. Under this new proposal, those students would instead be forced to pay their loans upfront.

This is another attack on the poorest and most marginalized students. Students who support themselves through work, have caring obligations, or health issues are most likely to fail their classes. It is unlikely to be wealthy students, supported by their families and with money for extra tutoring who will be forced to cough up full fees.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- Cr Shihan queried how students were supposed to pay \$3000 if they failed courses.
- Cr McGain expressed support for the new legislation stating that it is a move towards streamlining education encouraging students to apply themselves to their study.

It was moved

THAT UQ UNION CONDEMNS DAN TEHAN AND THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL TO PUNISH STUDENTS WHO PERFORM POORLY ACADEMICALLY.

COUNCIL 109/123

DE/SHIHAN

CARRIED

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 7:19 PM.