



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes** of meeting 2021/4 of the Board of Trustees of Western Sydney University, held at 8.30am on Wednesday 4 August 2021 via Zoom.

**Present:**

- Professor Peter Shergold AC (Chair and Chancellor)
- Professor Barney Glover AO (Vice-Chancellor and President)
- Professor Alphaia Possamai-Inesedy (Chair of Academic Senate)
- Ms Elizabeth Dibbs (Deputy Chancellor)
- Ms Kerry Stubbs (Deputy Chancellor)
- Emeritus Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik AO
- Mr Joseph Carrozzi
- Dr Ben Etherington
- Dr David Harland
- Ms Naomi Hastings
- Ms Holly Kramer (Pro-Chancellor)
- Ms Georgia Lee
- Ms Rose Lewis
- Dr Linda O'Brien AM (Pro-Chancellor)
- Mr Lee Pinder
- Mr Bob Sahota
- Ms Natalia Vukolova

**Apologies:** Mr Peeyush Gupta AM

**In Attendance:**

- Ms Helen Fleming (University Secretary and General Counsel)
- Professor Clare Pollock (Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
- Mr Peter Pickering (Vice-President, Finance and Resources)
- Professor Simon Barrie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic)
- Mr Angelo Kourtis (Vice-President, People and Advancement)
- Professor Deborah Sweeney (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Enterprise and International)
- Ms Sophie Buck (Director, Office of Governance Services)
- Ms Christine Sharpe (Executive Governance Officer) (Minutes)

Observers (for open sessions items only)

- Mr Bakar Mohamad (Academic Senate Undergraduate Student Representative)
- Mr John Lewis (Student)

## **1. OPENING AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

### **1.1 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed members and observers. The Chancellor acknowledged the traditional

custodians of the land on which the Board met and paid respects to their Elders past and present. He declared the meeting open and confirmed that there was a quorum present.

The Chair welcomed Mr Bakar Mohamad and Mr John Lewis to the meeting as observers.

The Chair advised that this is the final meeting for the University Secretary and General Counsel and thanked Ms Fleming for her expertise and contribution to the University.

The Chair congratulated Professor Possamai-Inesedy on her appointment as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement and Advancement). Professor Possamai-Inesedy will continue as Chair of Academic Senate until December 2021.

The Chair welcomed the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, Professor Clare Pollock, to her first Board of Trustees meeting.

The Chair welcomed back Ms Georgia Lee, after a period of leave.

## **1.2 Apologies**

The Board noted an apology from Mr Peeyush Gupta.

## **1.3 Declarations of Material Interests**

The Chair invited Board members to declare any new material interests in relation to matters on the agenda or their role on the Board more generally.

The Chancellor advised the Board that he has been asked by the NSW Premier to join the Empowering Communities Pillar 5 COVID Taskforce.

## **1.4 Confirmation of Minutes**

The Board resolved as follows:

### *Resolution*

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**The Board of Trustees approved the minutes and confidential minutes of its 9 June 2021 meeting.**

**[4/8/2021:1]**

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## **1.5 Action Sheets from Previous Meetings**

The Board noted the actions taken on items listed. It was agreed to include a report on casual employment on the action sheet.

## **1.6 Starring of Items**

### *Resolution*

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**The Board of Trustees resolved to approve all unstarred items as having been considered and noted, and their respective recommendations as adopted.**

**[4/8/2021:2]**

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## **1.7 Arrangement of Business**

The following items were identified for consideration in closed session: 3.1, 3.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

The Board agreed to move forward item 3.3 to after 2.3 to enable the observers to view the discussions.

## **2. CHANCELLOR'S AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORTS**

### **2.1 Chancellor's Report [Open Session Item]**

The Chancellor's report was taken as read.

#### Delivery of the HSC in NSW

The Chancellor spoke about delivery of the HSC in NSW during the COVID situation, noting that the local government areas hardest affected during the lockdown contain many of the high schools from which the University draws students. The HSC has been delayed by one week, but results will still be released prior to Christmas. Examinations will go ahead despite 65%-70% of NSW students being in Level 4 lockdown. Contingency measures, such as additional venues, supplies and supervisors are being arranged.

The Chancellor noted that universities need to show a high degree of flexibility in accepting and supporting students. The Vice-President (People and Advancement) advised that the University has launched the 2022 admissions round. He noted the first tranche of early offers will be released at the end of August and that he will be meeting with the office of NSW Minister for Education to provide a briefing on the HSC True Reward program. There has been a lot of media and government interest in the University's HSC True Rewards program.

#### Meeting with Minister for Education

The Chancellor advised that he met with the Hon. Alan Tudge MP, and the Chancellors of the University of Wollongong and University of UNSW to discuss research funding and commercialisation of research and what more the Commonwealth can do to promote translation of research. There were also discussions on the certainty of fully funded places for undergraduate and master students and how to expand the short courses, and on freedom of speech in universities.

#### External Review of the Board of Trustees

The Chancellor advised the Board that he has met with Jill Baker from Baker and Baptist to discuss the first draft of the report of the performance review of the Board of Trustees. The report will be discussed further at item 3.4.

### **2.1.1 Confirmation of Strategy Day [Open Session Item]**

The Chancellor introduced this item and noted the outcomes from the Strategy Day were circulated out of session.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost advised the Board that a coherent and comprehensive package of projects, with a series of business cases, will be brought back to the Board at the December meeting. The Vice-Chancellor advised the Board that a financial proposal will also accompany the projects.

#### Resolution

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**The Board of Trustees noted that;**

- 1. Western Sydney University is currently engaged in planning for the future, in line with its strategic plan, Sustaining Success 2021-26, but also taking into account the evolving landscape of higher and tertiary education in Australia;**

- 2. Six areas of strategic focus were presented and discussed at the Board's Strategy Day on 10 June 2021:**
  - **building a more digitally capable organisation,**
  - **promoting greater online education, including post-bachelor degree alternative credentials,**
  - **maintaining commitment to international education, whilst also exploring new and expanded approaches to transnational education,**
  - **encouraging the translation and dissemination of university research on the basis of its capacity to create beneficial public impact,**
  - **developing an innovation culture and ecosystem both through cross-disciplinary entrepreneurial education for students and through place-based support aligned to the region's future economic strengths, and**
  - **actively fostering higher levels of commercialisation of university research and intellectual property;**
- 3. In line with the principles and values set out in Sustaining Success 2021-26, in developing bold and transformative investment opportunities, consideration will be given to fairness and equity in meeting the diverse interests of our students, staff, alumni and regional community;**
- 4. Following further consideration of these six priorities, detailed plans will be developed for inclusion in the 2022-24 triennial budget, addressing priority initiatives, indicators of success, resource requirements and risk management strategies; and**
- 5 To this end, draft proposals will be developed for consideration by the Board's Committees and presented to the Board for approval at the October and December 2021 Board meetings.**

**[4/8/2021:3]**

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## **2.2 Vice-Chancellor's Report [Open Session Item]**

### COVID-19 Update

The Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Executive team provided the Board with a comprehensive update on the University's response to the COVID situation in New South Wales. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following points:

- The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost provides regular updates to the Board of Trustees and Board Committee members.
- All staff webinars are being held with members of the Senior Executive team present. These are recorded, and closed caption is available. The Chancellor will attend the next webinar on 11 August 2021.
- There is a level of anxiety and Zoom fatigue with staff and students, so the University is focussing on providing support for staff mental health and welfare. The University is in a better position compared with last year because of the integration of Zoom into the University's learning management system.
- The Student Assistance Fund, food vouchers and accommodation guarantees continue to be actively utilised. Fee rebates and payment plans are being offered to international students, and there is a focus on offshore students experiencing challenges. A lot of work is underway at the School level and with Western Success advisors.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost highlighted the following points:

- Teaching and learning and non-critical activities have moved online until the end of August.
- The University is actively planning and testing scenarios beyond the end of August and planning for the likelihood of lockdowns continuing in September and October.
- There are teaching and learning challenges in more areas than other, for example, clinical placements.
- Critical research only is being performed on campus.

- Additional funding is being provided to Schools for casual academic and professional staff appointments to assist with COVID support initiatives.
- The University has been notified of 11 students who have tested positive for COVID-19, ten of whom acquired it locally. This brings the total number of cases in the University community to 71.
- The ban on construction activities has been extended, which impacts on the Engineering Innovation Hub, Westmead and Bankstown.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) highlighted the following points:

- The University continues to be responsive in planning activities. It is actively monitoring and responding to the needs of students.
- Following the success of its 2020 digital transformation project, the University is exploring digitalising practical learning.
- Support for students, particularly offshore international students, remains a key focus.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and International) highlighted the following points:

- Centralised research facilities are being operated by skeleton staff only.
- Focus is on HDR students and support for supervisors, and providing extensions of time where necessary.

The Board sought clarification on the long term impact the lockdown will have on research output and how the University is planning for this. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and International) advised that the University is looking at a number of initiatives, including a COVID consideration in applications to assist with research progression, researcher development awards and funding to each School to focus on early to mid-career researchers.

The Board sought clarification on student attrition since moving to online learning, and were reassured that, as with 2020, the data is showing that there is a higher rate of retention during lockdown. It was agreed to provide the Board with updated data on attrition at the October meeting.

The Board discussed the University's approach to a vaccination strategy. The Vice-Chancellor advised the Board that the University is encouraging staff and students to get vaccinated, and the University has offered to be a corporate vaccination hub if vaccine supply issues are resolved.

#### Safe Corridor Program

The Vice-Chancellor provided the Board with an update on the Safe Corridor Program.

#### Sports Tech Hub - Sydney Olympic Park

The Hon Alan Tudge MP has asked for more information about the Sydney Olympic Park joint proposal with the University of Canberra. A significant and detailed proposal has been provided with feedback expected at the end of September.

#### Institute for Applied Technology, Kingswood

The University has been selected as the university partner for the Institute for Applied Technology Construction Hub with TAFE NSW.

#### University Foreign Interference Taskforce - UFIT

The Vice-Chancellor has been invited to join UFIT as the Vice-Chancellor representative to assist with review of the UFIT Guidelines.

#### Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost advised the Board that the University is

preparing a response to the Review, and it was agreed that the Board will be provided with an update and the University's response to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review at the October meeting.

## **2.3 Academic Senate Report [Open Session Item]**

The Chair of Academic Senate spoke to aspects of the written report, including:

### Academic Senate Executive Approvals

The Academic Senate Executive Committee has recently approved a number of temporary variations to policies, including the Grade Point Average (GPA) Neutral scheme and variations to the Special Considerations Policy, to assist students during the pandemic.

The Chair of Academic Senate advised that the Academic Senate Executive Committee approved the Diploma Aerotropolis Industry 4.0 (Mechatronic Skills/Bachelor of Engineering Science).

### Charter of Academic Freedom

At the April 2021 meeting, Academic Senate considered a revised version of the Charter of Academic Freedom, which incorporated feedback from the *Review of the Adoption of the Model Code on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom* conducted by Professor (Emeritus) Sally Walker. The revisions were supported, however, there was some additional feedback, and a revised version was approved by the Academic Senate Executive Committee on 16 July 2021.

### Presentations to Academic Senate

A number of presentations were given at the June 2021 meeting of Academic Senate, including a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and International) and Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) on the Future of International Education and a presentation from the Senior Advisor, Partnerships and Growth on National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF).

## **3. SIGNIFICANT MATTERS FOR DELIBERATION OR APPROVAL**

### **3.1 Social and Affordable Housing [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **3.2 Western Growth Update [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

#### **3.2.1 Werrington Redevelopment Proposal [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

#### **3.2.2 Western Growth History Update [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **3.3 Response to the Walker Review [Open Session Item]**

The Chancellor introduced this item on the proposed minor changes to the *Code of Conduct*, the *Freedom of Speech Policy* and the *Explanatory Note: Model Code for Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers* in response to the *Report of the Independent Review of the Adoption of the Model Code on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom* by Emeritus Professor Sally Walker AM.

It has now also been confirmed that the Department will assess and confirm the University's compliance with the Model Code once the revised documents are submitted for review.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the University Secretary and General Counsel, the Chair of Academic Senate and Mr Etherington for their significant amount of work and advised the Board that the University now has a good suite of policies and places the University in a good position.

#### *Resolution*

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**The Board of Trustees resolved to:**

- 1. approve the amendments to the following documents as recommended by the Review of the Adoption of the Model Code on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom conducted by Professor (Emeritus) Sally Walker:**
  - a. the *Code of Conduct*;**
  - b. the *Freedom of Speech Policy*; and**
  - c. the *Explanatory Note: Model Code for Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers*.**
- 2. authorise the Vice-Chancellor to submit these documents, and the Charter of Academic Freedom, to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to seek attestation that these now fully align with the Model Code for Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers.**

**[4/8/2021:5]**

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### **3.4 External Review of the Board of Trustees [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

## **4. BOARD COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY BODIES**

### **4.1 Audit and Risk Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **4.2 Board Executive Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **4.3 Finance and Investment Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **4.4 University Infrastructure Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

## **5. OTHER MATTERS FOR APPROVAL OR NOTING**

### **5.1 Uses of the University Seal [Open Session Item]**

#### *Resolution*

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**The Board of Trustees resolved to approve the affixing of the University Seal to**

**those documents listed in the attached report, pursuant to the University Seal Policy.**

**[4/8/2021:11]**

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Student Observers

While students are always welcome to attend the open sessions of Board meetings, the Chancellor recommended that the agenda of a future Board meeting be constructed with open session items grouped together in advance so that observers gain a better idea of the Board's work. Board members supported this initiative.

**6. NEXT MEETING AND CLOSURE**

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 6 October 2021 at 8.30am by Zoom.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12.38pm.



Confirmed by:

(Chair)

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(Date)

6.10.2021

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