

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Enhancing Victorian University Governance

Melbourne – Thursday 14 May 2026

#### MEMBERS

Alison Marchant – Chair

Kim O’Keeffe – Deputy Chair

Roma Britnell

Anthony Cianflone

John Mullahy

Nicole Werner

Dylan Wight

#### WITNESSES

Dr Adam Lucas, Founding Member,

Professor Justin O’Connor, Founding Member (*via videoconference*), and

Professor Peter Tregear, Founding Member, Academics for Public Universities,

**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the public hearings for the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into Enhancing Victorian University Governance. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the Parliament's website.

While all evidence taken by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege, comments repeated outside of this hearing, including on social media, may not be protected by this privilege.

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Thank you so much for joining us today – and Justin is online with us today, thank you. I am going to start with a question first, if that is okay, but maybe if you could introduce yourself, where you are from and maybe the role you play in this organisation that you have formed.

**Adam LUCAS:** Can I start?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Adam LUCAS:** My name is Adam Lucas. I am a founding member of Academics for Public Universities with Peter and Justin, but I am also currently honorary senior fellow at the University of Wollongong. I have worked at the University of Wollongong full time for 17 years, since 2008, and prior to that as a postgraduate I worked as a casual lecturer and tutor. Prior to my 17 years at the University of Wollongong I was a senior policy officer in the New South Wales cabinet office, state and regional development, housing and Aboriginal affairs. I mainly worked in Aboriginal affairs policy.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you.

**Peter TREGGAR:** My name is Peter Treggar. As Adam said, I am also a founding member of APU, but I am currently a Principal Fellow at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne, and I also hold an adjunct professorship at the University of Adelaide. But I have also worked for a number of years at Monash University, University of Queensland and, perhaps most notoriously, the ANU.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Justin.

**Justin O'CONNOR:** Hi. My name is Justin O'Connor. I am currently Professor of Cultural Economy at the Adelaide University, but I have been working in the Australian university system since 2008, first in Queensland but then for a big chunk – 2010 I think to 2018 – in Monash. I am also a Victorian resident. I live in Melbourne but I work over here in Adelaide.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you so much. We have heard from a few bodies this morning, but we have just sort of really started to get into the nitty-gritty of this inquiry. I would like to jump straight into an issue that I just wrote some notes on when I was reading your submission that jumped out at me, and that was around the performance reviews and the appointments of vice-chancellors and chancellors. It sort of concerned me that we do not really have guidelines or there are minimum guidelines around that. Could you talk a little bit about: how could we improve that or what do we currently have and why is that failing and what could we have?

**Adam LUCAS:** Sure. This is related to this issue of the closed governance circuit that we raised in our submission. At present, because of the structure of the councils – we have done a number of analyses, different groups, of how the boards are currently structured across Australia, so this is sort of taking a helicopter kind of view across Australia – some of the initial analyses that we did revealed that about 30 per cent of the board were elected staff and students, which means about 60 to 70 per cent were appointed. Subsequent to that, what we have seen in New South Wales, and more particularly in Victoria, is that there are very minimal statutory requirements for universities to have elected staff and students. Here in Victoria presently it is about 15 per cent across the board, and that is due to changes that were made in the Acts between 2009 and I think 2019. In terms of the appointment of chancellors and vice-chancellors, you have internal committees which determine who should be nominated for those positions. What we have seen repeatedly is because there are no requirements in any of the Acts here in Victoria, also true in New South Wales, for there to be elected staff and student representation on those committees, they will tend to be members of the executive and external appointed

members. The backgrounds of most of the appointed external members, as we have been documenting, is they are coming from commercial backgrounds – corporate backgrounds, finance, banking, consultancies. One of our colleagues, Corinne Cortese at University of Wollongong, did an analysis of backgrounds of the current members, and she found about 57 per cent of them came from a finance or commercial background. That is obviously affecting who gets nominated for the chancellorships and who gets nominated for vice-chancellorships, and staff and students have rarely any input into those processes at all.

**Peter TREGGAR:** I would just add to that, though, I think one of the recurring themes across our work is what I call the ‘mission drift’ of universities. We might ask a more fundamental question of who and what the vice-chancellor represents. I was even thinking of the evidence just being given before us from Jesse when he was talking about his relationship to the university. I mean, even that use of language suggests that when we use university – what we mean by that is senior management, because there is in fact now I think this rift, whereas even I am old enough to remember when university actually meant the corporate body of academics, alumni, students and indeed the wider community. I think you can see that in the process by which vice-chancellors are appointed and also the overuse of consultancy headhunting firms too. All this seems to happen, and we get – again to use that wonderful term that Jesse used – the consent by silence to this kind of separation of a kind of managerial class from the body of the university.

I might just say on that thing of use of language, you think about what university words we used to use, like ‘faculty’, ‘college’, ‘collegiality’, they all embody – literally and figuratively – this idea that the vice-chancellor represents the wider community. I think, generally speaking, what we feel now is that senior management represents a managerial class that directs the university. It does not represent the university.

**The CHAIR:** So no mandate to publicly open nominations, no disclosure of the selection criteria and then an appointment – would it be reviewed maybe? Minimally reviewed? Or no-one would know how a decision has been made?

**Adam LUCAS:** No, that is right. It is not at all transparent.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Okay.

**Kim O’KEEFFE:** How should it be done is probably –

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Then I suppose the question is: do you have a suggestion on how to better do that? Is it about just disclosure and transparency?

**Adam LUCAS:** Sure. Obviously we have made lots of recommendations, and we were responding to the university expert panel’s eight principles. The first 20 pages of our submission were a series of probably about 80 recommendations. Some of them cross over and they are complementary, but I guess there are some particular areas that we think should be focused on. Obviously democratic representation is one of them, transparency is another, accountability is another, and the issue of collegial governance and reconstituting collegial governance, and not just within the council but at the multiple levels going down to the heads of school, because at the moment there are no restrictions on how the executive can exercise its authority over those delegated positions. The executive can pull rank on units or schools that want to appoint somebody internally as the head of school or even as a faculty dean and put in their own people to ensure that they are compliant, because they do not want resistance or opposition to their strategies.

**Dylan WIGHT:** Can I just ask a follow-up, Chair?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Dylan WIGHT:** We have spoken about – and your submission speaks to it as well – the corporatisation of the sector and moving away from that collegial governance model. You are all quite experienced in the sector. Do you fundamentally have an idea in your head as to why? I think a previous submission referenced the Dawkins report in 1988. Is it stemming from there?

**Adam LUCAS:** Yes. There has been a gradual whittling away of staff- and student-elected representation over the last 35 years. In our historical analysis at the end of our submission we used a few case studies to show

you that pre-1989 a lot of the universities had anywhere between 45 and over 50 per cent elected representation. That was the collegial model, and the sky did not fall in when we had that sort of structure.

I have analysed the New South Wales and the Victorian legislation in detail about how this has varied over the years, and most of the most significant changes in terms of representation of staff and students happened over the last 15 years or so in the legislation. It has been whittled away over that longer period of time, but most particularly over the last 15 years. It has been driven by this perception initially expressed by John Dawkins that universities have to be run more like businesses. He also made a statement about academics being self-interested. I think Peter would like to speak to that issue.

**Peter TREGGAR:** Yes, because one thing I think is that academics have been a bit asleep at the wheel, and I think I am being generous on that, as I am vocationally an academic. If you think about how universities kind of operated – I am not saying that was a perfect world by any means – there was a sense that they were entrusted to work. They were effectively kind of self-employed with a publicly funded salary but told to sort of get on with it. Right? Faculties represented their own interests and so on. That meant that when these changes were coming through it was kind of like the proverbial frog in boiling water. I think there has been a lack of initiative from academics to realise what was actually going on, because always there was an assumption that the people that were above us in the managerial chain were there to represent our interests. I actually think fundamentally that has changed, and I do not mean that even as a political point – I think that is a rational and observable objective fact.

The reason why I think, by the way, that academics should be re-entrusted with this is not to replace one closed circuit of governance with another, right, because one of the criticisms being made of putting more academics and students on governing bodies was saying, ‘Well, hang on, isn’t that a governing body that is managing itself?’ I think we have lost sight, and we really need to reaffirm this, that it is fundamental – if you like, axiomatic – to what an academic is that we have an idea of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, that we are meant to be self-critical, that we are meant to be self-aware and that we are meant to be able to look at our own internal biases. It is kind of like this is fundamental to our job, whether across the sciences or humanities. Again, I think one of the sadnesses for me over my career is to see that sort of idea, that vocational sense of what we do, sort of ebbed out. Forgive me if I may say, but it would be a little bit compared to how the public often see politicians. They forget, I am sure, that you are all there fundamentally because you want to serve a greater good, and then they reduce you into sort of self-serving – ‘Oh, you’re in it for all the benefits and the side hustle.’ I do not need to say it to you, but that has a real corrosive effect on good governance at the political level. We are seeing exactly the same kind of corrosive effect on good governance and indeed the social contract around how universities work as well.

**The CHAIR:** Justin, I just want to see if you would like to add –

**Justin O’CONNOR:** Sorry.

**The CHAIR:** No, that is all right. I just do not want to miss you.

**Justin O’CONNOR:** Just maybe just to reinforce that it is sometimes difficult for people outside of universities to realise just how much they have changed and how little control academics have, even over their own classroom. Because part of the shift to the corporate, if you like – of course it is not a corporation in all the ways we know, but it is a quasi-corporation; we know that. ‘New public management’ was the term for it. It is run as if it were a series of internal markets. Now, if we want to use security or if we want to use a printer, there are all these cost centres and things like that. So this is going on. But what has happened is that the changes at the top gradually came down and made it so that even when I want to put a course online – if I want to do that – the very structure of that course and the very structure of the students’ learning is determined in advance by the university. The actual control academics have even over those smaller things – never mind the big corporate visions – is quite, quite astonishing. I just have to give two little anecdotes that struck me as the frog-in-the-water kind of thing, and both are from overseas. The first was when I went to Bologna last year and people were quite excited as the vice-chancellor was being elected. ‘Oh, really?’ ‘Yes.’ And there were big, you know, kind of Pope conclave kind of machinations.

**John MULLAHY:** White smoke.

**Justin O'CONNOR:** Yes. But they were all academics. You had to be a professor. You had to be an academic. It was quite shocking to me, that. The other anecdote, which may be trivial, is I was at I think Uppsala University, one of the Swedish universities, and we were talking to the vice-chancellor, having a discussion in a room, and a knock came at the door. A student put their head in the door and went, 'Oh, we're in this room now,' and everybody went, 'Oh, quick. Oh, sorry,' and scuffled up their papers and went out. No student would ever meet a vice-chancellor in an Australian university, and they would never, ever be in a room they were capable of being kicked out of. Those are just two indications of how far we have come in Australia. As I say, the dashboard is blinking red on whatever register you want to look at.

**The CHAIR:** Interesting. Roma.

**Roma BRITNELL:** So just what I have heard then is that we have gone from all academics to I think they – I do not know who 'they' were – might have recognised it needed some sort of more business approach to make universities more efficient. We have gone so far across the spectrum that we have now got a very business-focused model. This is an inquiry about how we improve governance, but ultimately, what we want to see is the governance seeing educational outcomes and good independent research and to let academics be the type of brain that they are – you guys, not me – that can actually really empower that. What have we seen from this pendulum perhaps going too far, from an educational outcome perspective? How can we have an input as legislators into getting that balance back in sync?

**Adam LUCAS:** Okay. So I will attempt to answer that question. There are eight areas which are related to those principles that we feel need to be focused on. So I will go through those, and you can stop me or we can go into more or less detail about them as you like. But obviously we have been talking about democratic representation, because at the moment the Acts have got only token elected members. The minimum number of elected members is two across all of the nine university Acts in Victoria. So it is one staff and one student out of a council of at least 13. So that is less than 16 per cent.

**Roma BRITNELL:** Good governance usually means having nine – seven to nine. Would you want more than 13 because you are increasing the number?

**Adam LUCAS:** Yes. Well, we think so. We heard from Jesse earlier that if we want to have adequate representation of students then there are probably at least three categories that need to be represented, and there should be three different reps for them.

**Roma BRITNELL:** So you would not decrease other reps to increase the –

**Adam LUCAS:** Or decrease the appointed number of reps and possibly increase the total number of reps. In our submission we talked about Spain, we talked about France. Spain – were there 300 elected members?

**Roma BRITNELL:** Oh, wow. No.

**Adam LUCAS:** Which I think is probably excessive. It is not necessary to go there. But Slovenia and Italy have got models more like ours, where there is more a majority of elected staff and students on those. I think in Slovenia it was six out of nine. In some of the Italian universities I think it was 10 out of 12 or out of 15, something like that. We are recommending 50 per cent. But we also acknowledge that making those changes quickly is not going to be a good idea, and it is going to have to be done in a stepped sort of fashion over a three- or four-year period, possibly a five-year period.

But in terms of the actual issues, obviously there is the one about democratic representation, and we have made some specific recommendations about that. It should be at least 50 per cent because it is reintroducing all of these issues that we have had sidelined, which is the core mission of the universities: teaching, research and public engagement. The core mission of most of the universities at the moment seems to be property development and overseas expansion to bring more commercial funding into the university to fill the gap that has been left by the federal government. I think Jesse quoted a figure earlier of about 42 per cent federal government funding. John Howard, who is one of the university economists, the figure he came up with was about 33 to 35 per cent. So out of the total revenue for all of the Australian unis, that proportion is coming directly from the feds. That is not counting the HECS fees, though. The federal government tends to obscure the level of funding that is coming from HECS. This is something that we are trying to get to the bottom of at the moment. One of our colleagues in the Australia Institute asked Treasury officials yesterday, 'What is the

proportion of the HECS funding that's coming out from the federal government?' We think that it is about 20 per cent, but then there are direct payments from students for masters degrees and so on, and that is about 12 per cent. So we think that the domestic student contribution is about 30 per cent. We know that contribution from international students is about 27 per cent. So about 60 per cent of current funding is being paid for directly by students, but they do not have the representation in terms of decision-making and also determining where the funding is going.

We were talking to Darrin yesterday about the facilities for students on the University of Melbourne campus. In many cases they have just been allowed to degrade. There are lovely shiny buildings for the executive and to show off to international students but a lack of real attention being paid to supporting the students themselves in terms of having groceries available on campus, for example, or subsidised food for poorer students – all of these things. The universities have got over \$70 billion in net assets and they have got about \$7 billion in cash and cash equivalents, and yet their priorities seem to be totally skewed towards prestige, rankings, property development –

**Peter TREGGAR:** Commercial rents.

**Adam LUCAS:** and commercial rents.

**Peter TREGGAR:** Particularly the student union one is something that struck me very much when I came back from a period of working overseas at the University of Cambridge. I came back to the University of Melbourne, and you could see all these new buildings, and the one area of campus that was absolutely degraded was the student union. Now they have built a new student hub. But that is the point: you go in and it is full of commercial tenancies. There was no ground-level concern to ensure that students, who we know are suffering from malnutrition, frankly, particularly post-COVID, had an opportunity to be able to buy a cheap meal. I just think that is a staggering gap, particularly because the University of Melbourne has been told for many, many years that it ranks the lowest in the country on the student experience. That is another thing too: that sort of data is not getting the kind of attention at the governance level that it darn well should be. Otherwise, why do we even bother surveying the student experience on campus? It is 32 out of 32 campuses in the country, I think, the University of Melbourne – has been for years. There just seems to be, again, a disconnect with what the council tends to value institutionally by default and what in fact the wider community and indeed the people, as I say, substantially paying for our campuses actually expect a university to do.

**Adam LUCAS:** Can I bring up the issue about academic boards. Academic boards used to have some power over issues around curriculum, around academic standards and around research integrity, but currently they only have an advisory role, and there is nothing in any of the university Acts that gives them any determinative role over any of those issues. The council can override any recommendations made by the academic board. As we have explained, there is insufficient expertise on those councils to be able to properly evaluate following certain strategies.

**The CHAIR:** They have not come from an academic background.

**Adam LUCAS:** No. They have no awareness of what is required, and they are not inducted into understanding what is going on. That is another point: issues about induction. Jesse raised the issue of two-year terms for student reps, but even for the academic reps and the external reps the induction processes are internally determined by each university. One thing that would be really important to do would be to ensure that those induction processes, or at least principles for them, are put into the Acts and that there are certain requirements in terms of informing potential members about what their obligations are, what their responsibilities are and also what the responsibilities of the university are to them.

Something else that we talked about last night was allocating workload. There has to be a recognition of the workload involved for elected staff and students as well. For elected staff it is relatively straightforward. For academics we have got a 40–40–20 model mostly – some of us are purely research – so 20 per cent is governance. So nominally, say 0.1 of their total position is serving on the council. For the elected professional staff members, administrative staff members, there would have to be some kind of workload recognition for them, like a 0.1 recognition, but that means that whatever their roles are somebody is going to have to fill that 0.1. There has got to be some kind of clause in the Act to say that the university has to allocate appropriate resources and funding for the elected positions. For students, that is another issue. There are issues for them about being paid directly, for example. One of the things that Darrin and I discussed last night was: how would

you reward them? There has got to be some kind of incentive for them to get involved, and that might be something like a bursary – so at the end, once they graduate, they get some kind of concession on their HECS funding, for example. There has got to be some encouragement for us as staff, academics or administrative staff, and for students to get involved in the governance and some recognition of the work that is involved.

I was a council member at Wollongong for a year, and we were usually only given about a week to go through up to 400 pages of information. When I was working in cabinet office I had to prepare notes for the report on government services for COAG and so on, and we were very systematic about how we went about doing that and ensuring that there were executive summaries for all of the issues. None of that was in stuff that we were provided. It was impossible to get through all of that material without having dedicated time to go through it and to have it properly explained to us. Because often it was opaque, these papers that we were getting, and it was not clear what it was about and it was not clear what our responsibilities were to interrogate what was being proposed.

**The CHAIR:** I am mindful of time, but this has been a very interesting conversation for us to explore a bit further. John, do you have a question?

**John MULLAHY:** A great submission. It is very interesting, the conversation we have had today. You have made the submission with 91 recommendations. What should we focus on first?

**Adam LUCAS:** Democratic representation is important, but we think that the procedural issues about transparency and disclosure are probably the most important things to bed down first, because even if we have better democratic or collegial representation on councils, if the processes below them are not transparent then they are still going to have the wool pulled over their eyes about what is actually going on at a more fundamental level.

**Peter TREGGAR:** One of the things I could recommend is to have a look at the Tasmanian Legislative Council inquiry into the *University of Tasmania Act* that was published – usefully! – on 28 December last year, so it has probably got a bit buried. But one of the things it looked at was, for instance, the possibility of legislating against the default use of NDAs, non-disclosure agreements, and about being much more clear about what sort of material a council can go below the line, as it were – not be published – because it has become increasingly that they say, ‘Oh, it’s commercial-in-confidence.’ Well, you know, I mean, who does that benefit and who are we protecting? You know, universities – given their charities and so on – should they have that kind of protection?

Also something that I think we all feel quite strongly about is mandating appropriate encouragement of, and protection for, whistleblowers. Because we should again rely on the fact that academics, we are constitutionally awkward people. We are basically in the room to question, to be sceptical, including of ourselves, by the way – in fact especially of ourselves and especially of the institutions in which we work. We should encourage and celebrate that fact.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Anthony has got a burning question.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** I have just two very quick questions, and I am happy for you to take them on notice actually. But one is around the skills matrix. As we heard earlier, there are not really any in Victoria – one I think that is publicly available. So my question is really around – and you can come back to us on it – what skills matrixes are you guys aware of that are publicly available? And if so, where so? Do you believe there is a case to embed a position or expertise around social licence for a university in educational outcomes? The second question I had really was around cultural diversity. You have done some great analysis on who is who as VCs and chancellors, but my question really is around that we have got growing numbers of multicultural, international and diverse student cohorts in different universities and their voice is not being reflected in the current structures. Any analysis you can provide us around what is the cultural diversity and background of chancellors, vice-chancellors and those in those leadership governance positions at the moment would be helpful too.

**Roma BRITNELL:** Can I just add one last thing? You talked about commercial-in-confidence and the way that gets thrown around. Do you find also that that is operational? When we look at wage theft, for example, if you were sitting on a council and were asked about wages, I am pretty confident you would be told, as a

council member or a board member, 'Oh, that's operational. Stay out of that.' I think they are two things that are thrown out to push you away and hide red flags.

**Adam LUCAS:** Yes, definitely.

**Roma BRITNELL:** Is that your experience?

**Adam LUCAS:** Yes. My experience on council was we were repeatedly told by the vice-chancellor that anything to do with staff–student policy was operational and it was not the concern of the council.

**Roma BRITNELL:** I think that is happening right through boards and volunteers. People are overwhelmed by the intellect of those around them that they think is better. How do you actually empower the people who are representing the students to actually be saying, 'That's not a really reasonable answer. I want to see the wages bill'?

**Peter TREGGAR:** Very good question. One, this is slightly left of field, but what about – because Adam and I were talking about this last night – making risk and audit committees actually deal with reputational risk and not just financial risk, because one of the things I have found, and I have got direct experience of this, of raising what I saw were clear and apparent social licence risks to the university, and the council blocked me and said it was not interested. I thought, well, the natural meaning of risk, frankly, should embody that; it should not just be financial. It should be possible, again, for academics and indeed administrators to raise concerns like that and not have them blocked, because that is, I think, where an operational matter clearly becomes a governance matter, when it becomes a social licence risk. I think that would be one way to do that – just to open up risk committees to do what I think the wider community expects them to do.

**Adam LUCAS:** And also to do with professional accreditation. I mean, I heard from a rep who did the assessment of compliance of engineering degrees at the new Adelaide University, and Adelaide Uni exec was trying to get the institute of engineers to approve their program when they had not even finished designing it. These sorts of issues come up regularly, but we as academics do not have any input into those processes.

Anthony, going back to your question about the skills matrices, we critiqued that the skills matrices that we have seen are prioritising commercial property development, rankings, metricisation kind of issues and not looking at these broader issues around teaching, research –

**Roma BRITNELL:** So a recommendation would be to make sure it is not skewed towards commercial or academic, but the balance.

**Adam LUCAS:** Yes, that there is an appropriate balance there. One of the arguments for having lots of people with finance and banking backgrounds is because universities have got huge budgets and there is lots of money floating around, and you need to have commercial expertise on the board. Well, our argument would be, you do not necessarily have to have it on the board. Maybe you have those people as permanent employees within the university itself whose expertise can be called upon, and they have more loyalty to the university itself if they are being employed by the university.

**Peter TREGGAR:** Probably just as a very quick finish to that, I think this all is predicated on the idea that the council is absolutely clear what a university is. I know it sounds like a naive point to make, but I think there really has been mission drift. If you ask what a university is and indeed what academic values are, I think you would struggle to get a clear answer. Look, I say with a lot of respect under parliamentary privilege, a lot of vice-chancellors, I think, are very poor at articulating that. I think that gets back to that first question around how we appoint vice-chancellors, that this is not front and centre, that they are not great public advocates for the idea of a public university. That, to me, is something that, again, we should actually maybe look at legislating. If you go and look at the mission, say, of the University of Melbourne, you will struggle to find one that expresses what that is. In fact I should say very quickly as an anecdote, this was raised to me when we had a visit when I was working at the University of Melbourne from the deputy ombudsman, and that was the first point that she made. She said, 'I went looking for the University of Melbourne's clear mission statement,' and she said, 'That's a problem,' when it comes down ultimately to good governance and indeed when things go wrong, because there is not a clear statement of 'What are we for?' Then we get the misuse of university being a simile for senior management – it is not; it is actually all of us.

**Justin O’CONNOR:** Can I just add something very quickly on that? What Peter said is applying right now with AI in universities, and that is a disaster that is on us already. A clear mission for a university would set a clear mission for how we use these technologies. Do we use them? How do we use them? Which do we use? Those questions are not being asked at all, and we are going to see that come out in the next year. I would think there has been pretty much a stripping out of many of the functions of universities. I think that senior management have no clear grasp of what the stakes involved in that are.

**Peter TREGGAR:** That is a perfect example, because in the University of Melbourne AI tools were applied across the university. I mean, our job is actually to question that. Again, our job is to be difficult, to say, ‘Well, should we?’ That question was not asked, because the decision was made to apply AI tools by people that are not involved in the teaching, learning and research of the university – a fundamental problem. That is a governance problem that becomes a huge operational problem, which then goes and undermines and white-ants the social licence of a university when you get reports like the *Australian* did about two months ago saying that there is widespread cheating and people are doing their degrees by ChatGPT. Well, that is our fault.

**Adam LUCAS:** Can I on that raise just one more issue, which is about contracting out these large learning platforms to private providers like Canvas, and the failure of Canvas. We should be developing these programs in-house among a consortium of universities and publicly owning and controlling this software, not contracting it out to American multinationals who are also privatising our intellectual property without our consent.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. I am so sorry, we are going to have to finish. Maybe you could come to lunch with us. We really do appreciate your time. Your submission is very thorough, and it has given us lots to think about for our recommendations. Thank you, Justin, too, for joining us online. We will end the broadcast there.

**Witnesses withdrew.**