

Anthony CIANFLONE: *But in terms of actual specific actions going forward, especially off the back of the expert panel's recommendations, how will future instances be better identified and mitigated going forward? Are there improvements in the governance process? Are there measures and steps being taken to improve representation through the university council and the relevant subcommittees throughout the university to have a better voice from students and staff, potentially to help earlier identify such issues and concerns?*

Swinburne University of Technology Council initiated a comprehensive review of the causes of historical underpayments to identify key lessons and inform systemic improvement. The review was completed in April 2026, and in response the University is implementing a structured program of work to address the issues identified and mitigate the risk of recurrence.

This program includes strengthened issue identification and management processes, targeted payroll and system enhancements, improved controls, capability uplift across relevant staff cohorts, and the rectification of identified issues relating to casual engagements, including agreed rates and pay rate application.

To support earlier identification and mitigation, the University has enhanced its governance and assurance framework. Regular reporting on payroll compliance, emerging risks and remediation activity has been embedded within the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), including oversight of the implementation of review outcomes and ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of associated controls.

This is further supported by a more coordinated approach to internal assurance, including the establishment and progressive implementation of routine compliance reporting, enhanced query and trend analysis to support earlier identification of systemic issues, structured monitoring of payroll exceptions, and the identification and prioritisation of system improvement initiatives. As these measures are implemented, they are intended to further strengthen oversight and support continuous improvement.

In relation to representation and voice, Swinburne maintains established governance arrangements that include staff and student representation through Council and its relevant committees. The University also maintains an active Joint Consultative Committee, which provides a formal mechanism for structured engagement with staff representatives and unions on workforce matters and emerging issues. Together, these mechanisms form an important component of the University's control environment, supporting the early identification, escalation and effective management of workforce and compliance risks, and providing additional assurance on the robustness of governance and oversight arrangements.



Roma BRITNELL: *Can you please explain the process for individuals to make a formal complaint to the university about a staff member or an executive? How does Swinburne ensure that it provides security to the individual bringing the complaint? Do you have a whistleblower policy that is well understood? We have seen there is not enough transparency around students and lecturers feeling like they can participate in critiquing what is going on. How is that now looking?*

Roma BRITNELL: *The process to address it, though, not the actual complaints – what is your process, and has that been reformed?*

In general, there are currently three established pathways for individuals to make a formal complaint:

1. External (students / public):

Swinburne University of Technology (Swinburne) has a detailed complaints management framework. Swinburne has a dedicated team to triage complaints, reviews, appeals and misconduct (CRAM). Swinburne's CRAM processes are designed to ensure the efficient and effective management of complaints, while also ensuring fairness and transparency for students. Complaints can be lodged via the public-facing Complaints and Feedback page on the Swinburne website.

2. Internal (staff):

Staff can raise concerns through Workplace Relations. These matters are managed via the [P&C - External - Staff Complaint Handling Procedure](#).

3. Whistleblower disclosures:

These can be made confidentially, by either staff or students, via Stopline, in line with Swinburne's Improper Conduct and Whistleblower Guidelines.

Each pathway is managed through a distinct process:

- **Staff behaviour complaints** are assigned to an appropriate feedback advisor for assessment and investigation (typically the relevant line manager).
- **Workplace Relations matters** are managed through a confidential HR investigation process, including determining outcomes.
- **Whistleblower disclosures** are handled in accordance with the Whistleblower Guidelines, ensuring confidentiality, protections for the discloser, and independent assessment where required.

The Academic Senate, Audit and Risk Committee, and Council receive regular reporting on Complaints, Reviews, Appeals and Misconduct to support oversight and assurance.



Swinburne is continuing to review and improve its complaints processes. Currently, a new software program is being introduced to streamline the lodgement of complaints by students. There is also an ongoing broader review and improvement process to enhance equity, efficiency, accountability and reporting.



The CHAIR: Okay. Some universities are publishing their skills matrixes for council members. Is Swinburne doing that?

The CHAIR: But it would not be publicly available to me to go and look for?

The Swinburne Skills Matrix was developed by external professional support and approved by Council in July 2025. The Skills Matrix was further revised in December 2025 to incorporate health, safety and wellbeing in response to the National Code. The Council Skills Matrix has informed the recruitment and selection process for a current Governor in Council vacancy.

Whilst the Skills Matrix is not currently publicly available, this is being reviewed as part of a comprehensive assessment against the ECUG Principles.



The CHAIR: Then when you are looking at the other appointment process for council members, you are obviously using a school matrix, which you will check whether it is publicly available. But have you got an overlay to ensure diversity in that mix? Could you maybe expand on what your council might look like now? I am assuming you might have someone who has a finance, lawyer, I do not know, background. How do you come up with a mix?

Council and Committee Members (other than elected members) are recruited and appointed in accordance with a documented and publicly available process (available [here](#)).

This process ensures appointments to the Swinburne University of Technology Council are merit-based, transparent, diverse, and consistent with Victorian Government requirements for public entity boards. It covers planning, attraction, assessment, probity, appointment approval, induction, and ongoing evaluation. Probity requirements apply throughout the entire recruitment and appointment process, including panel composition, conflict-of-interest declarations, management of confidential information, assessment documentation, referee checks, and decision-making.

This process applies to all University Council appointments, including co-opted members of Council Committees and those made by or on behalf of the Minister, Governor in Council, or as otherwise set out in relevant establishing legislation.



The CHAIR: Yes. I suppose I feel sorry to ask you, Simon, because I believe it is really not for you to be answering this. It is really the Vice-Chancellor. Obviously there have been headlines in the paper around Swinburne's conduct and the Chancellor's conduct. It has been reported that he had approached the skills minister to have a band increase, which would result in his remuneration being increased as well. Do you know whether the council approved that type of meeting to happen, or whether it is something that he would have just done on his own?

At a meeting in April 2025, The People, Remuneration and Nominations Committee considered at item related to the Victorian Appointment and Remunerations Guidelines. At that meeting, the Committee was informed that Swinburne is classified as a Group A statutory authority organisation. Members were informed that the remuneration guidelines are intended to link the different remuneration bands for Boards (Councils) to the complexity of the organisation. Presently Swinburne has been assessed to be within the A3 band.

Following engagement between university management and the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR), at the request of the Committee, The Committee was advised in October 2025 that DJSIR confirmed the process to request a reclassification of Swinburne's remuneration band is for the Chancellor to make a formal, written request to the Minister for Skills and TAFE.



Not highlighted but for clarification

Anthony CIANFLONE: The last question I had was: why has Swinburne, as far as I can see in the submission, not recommended any need for legislation change in this space?

Presently, the Swinburne University of Technology Act 2010 (the Act) allows for Swinburne to expand the representation of staff and students on council and as such, no legislative change is necessary. A decision of Council is sufficient to increase staff and student representation on Council.