NSW University Sector Inquiry – Supplementary Questions

Professor G.Q. Max Lu AO, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Wollongong

(1) I note you appeared at Budget Estimates in August this year. University of Wollongong responded to a number of questions on notice and supplementary questions from Budget Estimates. Who prepared the responses to those questions? Who signed off on the responses?

Responses to questions from Budget Estimates were coordinated by the Vice-Chancellor's Office, which sought inputs from relevant teams across the university. Responses were reviewed by the relevant leaders and signed off by the Vice-Chancellor, and the Chancellor where appropriate.

(2) In a media release announcing your appointment you indicated that your 'immediate focus would be to meet as many members of the UOW community as he could, and hear what mattered most to staff, students and 'partners".

> **(a) Since you started as VC has many staff and student have you met with?**
>
> **(b) What have you learning from these meetings about what matters most to staff and students? How are you implementing that?**

I have met with countless staff and students since my appointment. This has included hundreds of staff across our campuses and entities, from academics to professional services colleagues, as well as students. I've engaged deeply with the university community – our honorary and emeritus professors, alumni and generous donors – and externally, with our valued partners in government, industry and the community. Their welcome and encouragement reinforce the responsibility and opportunity we share: to ensure UOW continues to make a positive contribution to our community, our nation, and the world.

A significant amount of this engagement occurred during consultation on our new strategic plan which was launched in September. Shaped through more than a year of consultation with over 1,000 staff, students, alumni and community partners, the strategy sets a bold and unifying vision for the decade ahead. We are now working to implement this strategy, which initially focuses on rebuilding our foundation, achieving financial sustainability and setting the course for long-term success.

(3) In 2019, Academic Senate raised concerns about previous VC Paul Wellings decision to 'fast-track' the approval of a privately funded degree – The Bachelor of Western Civilisation – funded by the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation – it wasn't until Council stepped in to approve the degree that legal action against UOW was averted. This degree has now been opened to HECS students.

> **(a) What does the relationship with Ramsay Centre entail for UOW? Do they still have a role in decision making over academic appointments associated with the**

Ramsay centres academic or research programs and student selection for scholarships?

(b) Do you have any concerns about private organisations offering degrees at public universities, and having access to university staffing arrangements and scholarships for students?

The University recently renewed its funding agreement with the Ramsay Centre through to 2031. The agreement extends philanthropic support that underpins the School of Liberal Arts' operations and staffing, enabling delivery of the Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation degree, as well as the associated scholarships. From 2026, a new Liberal Arts major will also be available to students from across the university.

Since launching in 2020, the Bachelor of Arts in Western Civilisation has consistently set benchmarks for student success. This past year, around 40 per cent of students were named on the Dean's Merit List, while three students were recognised as University Medallists. Approximately 80 per cent of students achieved Distinction or High Distinction grades across core subjects and nearly 95 per cent student satisfaction has been reported in course evaluations.

UOW welcomes philanthropy that delivers education and research opportunities. UOW does not compromise on academic integrity or the quality of our offerings, and our courses are subject to rigorous academic governance oversight.

The Ramsay Centre does have representation on recruitment panels for staff, and in all cases these representatives are academics. Appointment of staff is a decision for UOW, and the chair of the panel is always a UOW staff member.

Similarly, Ramsay Centre has academic representation on student scholarship panels. These processes are robust and run by UOW.

(4) Could you explain how income from UOW Global Enterprises flows to UOW to support higher education in the Illawarra Region?

UOW Global Enterprises distributes a dividend to UOW which is used to support academic, research and operating activities in Australia. We are currently exploring ways to provide a dedicated mechanism for the use of the dividends to clearly demonstrate the benefits that UOWGE delivers for UOW and the broader Illawarra community.

Wollongong will always be our home. We will always educate predominately domestic students. But internationalisation and education of international students, both onshore and offshore, will continue to play an important part in supporting our education, research and operations in the Illawarra.

(5) Do you have any concerns about how the relationship between UOW Global Enterprises and University of Wollongong's mission has panned out? One of the key strategic pillars is local impact, how does continuing to expand globally while cutting local jobs achieve local impact?

UOW and UOWGE work closely together to ensure strategic alignment. The CEO and MD of UOWGE sits on UOW's University Executive Board, and the Vice-Chancellor and Vice-

President (Operations) are members of the UOWGE Board, which was consulted in the development of our new university strategic plan. In addition to local impact, another one of UOW's strategic pillars is Global Excellence and Connection, which focuses on our strengths as an interconnected, world-leading university with a long-standing international presence recognised for teaching and research excellence and societal impact.

UOW's international operations, including its offshore campuses, play a strategic role in supporting its core mission in the Illawarra. Financially, the overseas tuition fee margins plus the dividend received from UOWGE's operating surplus cross-subside the infrastructure, research and general operations of the University, benefiting the domestic students and research, in turn, strengthening the communities in the region. UOW's long-standing global presence not only strengthens UOW's financial sustainability and reputation and provides opportunities for students and staff to engage in education and research overseas.

(6) Please provide a list of all the subjects, courses and units that have been cut under the transformation strategy

We take this to refer to the Teaching and Learning Change Plan finalised in January 2025. Last year we underwent a focussed whole-of-university process to identify courses with zero or very low enrolments that could be suspended or discontinued, to enable us to focus more resources on other courses and create new ones in response to community and industry demand. This led to the Teaching and Learning Change process that was completed between October 2024 and January 2025.

Throughout this process, there were a broad range of impacts to teaching activities, spanning courses, majors and minors. This included adding new items, through to the amendment, suspension or discontinuation of others.

Through the process, some disciplines originally identified as being in-scope were able to achieve the required reductions in staffing and/or curriculum changes to ensure viability. Some disciplines remained unviable and were disestablished as part of the Change Plan. Disciplines that were disestablished were Cultural Studies, Japanese, Mandarin, and Science and Technology Studies, which was a discipline that involved the examination of the societal, historical, cultural, and political aspects of science, technology, and medicine. UOW continues to offer courses in other discipline areas related to science and technology, such as the Bachelor of Science, and courses in Computer Science and Information Technology.

Importantly, it's not just about cutting courses, we're also growing in areas of demand too. In 2026 the following new courses will come online:

- A short course entitled 'AI for Learning and Future Careers'
- Graduate Certificate in Clinical Care, an online, part-time, specialised program designed for healthcare professionals seeking to advance their clinical expertise in complex care environments.
- Bachelor of Engineering Technology, which provides options for developing skills in areas such as programming, electrical systems, sustainable design, materials selection and mechanics. This course also provides a pathway into the Bachelor of Engineering (Honours).

- New English and Modern History specialisations for the Bachelor of Secondary Education.
- New course offerings at the UOW Liverpool campus, including the Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Exercise Science, Bachelor of Nutrition, Bachelor of Criminology, Bachelor of Medicinal and Health Science, and Bachelor of Exercise Science and Rehabilitation.

UOW reviews our suite of course offerings every year in response to student demand, changing employment trends, employer expectations and other market factors. This is business as usual. For UOW to continue to deliver contemporary, industry-responsive, high quality teaching and learning experiences, we must continually review and refresh our course portfolio. The process continuously aims is to reduce complexity of offer to enhance the student experience, improve efficiency, drive course innovation and deliver enhanced student outcomes.

Any changes we make relating to our course portfolio meet the requirements of professional accreditation bodies and TEQSA.

(7) How much money has the University of Wollongong saved through the Transformation Strategy?

As the University has stated before, the transformation is expected to generate upwards of $40M in recurrent savings annually and help put UOW on a path to financial sustainability. The financial benefits realised at the end of 2025 totalled $21M, which was primarily because of the Teaching and Learning Change Plan. Additional benefits will be achieved throughout 2026, relating to the UOW Operations Change Plan, which was finalised in August 2025. The total cost savings by the end of 2026 are expected to be approximately $45M.

(8) What are the voluntary redundancies costing UOW over 2024-2026?

The costs of voluntary redundancies over 2024-2026 are anticipated to be approximately $39M. This is a one-off cost, but the University will benefit from ongoing recurrent cost savings. It is also worth noting that at the beginning of the transformation program, UOW allocated a remediation budget which has been used in part for the cost of voluntary redundancies.

(9) How much will rehiring 148 staff for vacant positions cost?

The University is not rehiring staff into previously vacated roles. As part of the organisational transformation, a new operating model has been implemented which has resulted in the creation of new and differently scoped roles aligned to revised service delivery, capability and governance requirements, to implement the new Strategic Plan 2030.

The positions reflect roles within this new operating model and are necessary to support the transformed structure and ways of working. Recruitment to these roles is occurring within the approved workforce and budget framework and does not represent a return to former structures or a reversal of transformation outcomes.

(10) Why are you listed as an attendee of the Performance and Remuneration Committee? Isn't this where your performance and pay are discussed? Is it really appropriate for you to attend this committee?

Performance and Remuneration Committee is also responsible for confirming the annual performance outcomes for Senior Executives and it is appropriate for the Vice-Chancellor to be involved in those discussions. Where my personal performance and remuneration is being discussed, I am not present and not involved in those discussions, as appropriately so.

(11) Can we get a breakdown of Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) funding and where it has been spent over the last 5 years?

> **(a) What engagement has management had with the Wollongong Undergraduate Student Association about the distribution of the SSAF funding?**

Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) allocations are published on UOW's website as per our legislative requirements, including an annual breakdown dating back to 2012.

The Wollongong Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) President has been an active member of the SSAF Subcommittee, a student committee of 13 members, since its inception in 2018. This subcommittee includes elected and appointed representatives representing the diverse student population who contribute SSAF. In, 2024 and 2025 the WUSA President reviewed all SSAF project requests, was a voting member in providing recommendations to the university regarding allocations and also contributed to commentary that was provided to the University Executive and Project Managers.

WUSA was invited to submit for SSAF funding in the last 3 funding rounds (2025 x 2 rounds and 2026), with no funding request limit imposed. Extensive information was provided on the SSAF submission process and support offered in preparing submissions. In 2026, WUSA received funding for every submission they made, as did WUPA.

WUSA President has also been an active member of the Student Advisory Council (SAC) in 2025, where SSAF and the subcommittee business was shared with the meetings. Minutes for SAC are available on the SAC website.

WUSA members have also attended the SSAF Project Managers quarterly meetings where information relevant to SSAF is shared. UOW has also met with WUSA on a monthly basis and SSAF was regularly discussed, including how the SSAF subcommittee operates, their role on the subcommittee, the SSAF distribution process and how they can access SSAF funding.

On 5 November 2025, the Department of Education approved the 2026 UOW Transition Plan which requested a three-year transition arrangement to reach compliance with the amendments to SSAF legislation within HESA and associated guidelines, to allocate a minimum of 40% of SSAF revenue to student led organisations. This plan includes working alongside student led groups to improve their financial and corporate governance processes, and a capability uplift for student representatives involved with SSAF.

(12) What staffing/resourcing changes (if any) occurred in Safe and Respectful Communities / sexual assault response services during the university restructuring period?

> **(a) SARC workers appear to be on fixed term contracts with no guarantee of work after next year. Can you confirm that this is the case, and if there is any intention to renew the contracts for these workers?**
>
> **(b) How does UOW ensure public assurances to students regarding service continuity align with internal resourcing decisions?**

On 26 November the University released a Revised Change Proposal for Complaints, SARC and WHS, which aims to strengthen the University's operating model, better support students and staff, and meet emerging regulatory and legislative requirements.

SARC is not being disestablished under the proposal and trauma-informed support for students will continue. These changes are designed to ensure UOW can meet emerging national standards while providing safe, timely and trauma-informed support to staff and students.

The revised proposal has been shaped by extensive feedback from students, staff, union representatives and stakeholders. The Final Change Plan is expected to be released on 23 February.

In relation to the current fixed term positions in the team, the intention is to monitor this in the coming months to determine whether the introduction of new processes will enable UOW to sufficient manage volumes of complaints and support services within the team. This will ensure we make an informed decision about whether the roles are required on a permanent basis.

(13) Who appoints the Student Advisory Council? How are these appointments decided?

The Student Advisory Council (SAC) is the peak student advisory group to the UOW Vice-Chancellor. Formed in 2018, the SAC represents the whole onshore student body and has direct connection into all campuses, faculties, academic governance bodies, equity and diversity groups and student associations. The SAC provides the student voice on a wide range of topics related to student life, curriculum and operational matters, with the goal to positively impact decision making and the student experience.

The SAC is formed from elected student representatives from student governance roles across UOW, with the addition of some appointed members to support diversity representation. 32 of the 40 positions on SAC are elected. Both the Wollongong Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Wollongong Postgraduate Student Association (WUPA) have standing positions on the SAC. Elections for University Council representatives, Academic Senate Representatives, Campus Representatives, Faculty Representatives, WUSA and WUPA Presidents, Pulse Student Director are undertaken in line with their relevant governance documents and electoral regulations overseen by an external Returning Officer. All details and outcomes of elections are publicly available on the Student Elections page. The appointed representatives, including Woolyungah, Mature Aged, Women's, LGTQI+, Persons with a Disability, Student from Residences and Clubs Reps are invited to self-nominate and a shortlisting and interview process is undertaken.

Detailed information about the SAC, its membership and how it engages with students and management are available on the UOW website.

(14) I note that the University of Wollongong entered into an enforceable undertaking in September with FWO and will make approximately $6.6 million in payments to 5,340 staff. While the size of the underpayment is already quite concerning, I was particularly concerned that FWO found that a key cause of the underpayments was the university's poor governance processes, and fundamental payroll system errors.

(a) Do you have any comments to make on this finding?

(b) What are you doing to ensure that these poor governance processes do not affect the university moving forward?

(c) What actions are you taking to ensure that all relevant staff receive the mandatory training, as required by the Enforceable Undertaking?

(d) Have you identified an independent auditor to conduct the audits required by the Enforceable Undertaking. (If the auditor is identified as KPMG can this really be considered independent given a partner of KPMG has sat on Council for quite some time and will now be acting as a Pro Chancellor)

(e) Have you convened the Joint Consultative Committee as required by the enforceable undertaking?

i. Who are the members of this committee?

i. What actions has this committee taken?

ii. How are the proceedings and actions of this committee been shared with the University Community?

(f) What steps has the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee taken to prioritise and embed monitoring of compliance with the Fair Work Act, Fair Work Regulations and Industrial Instruments as required by the Enforceable Undertaking? Why was this not already a consideration of the Committee, why did it take an Enforceable Undertaking for this to occur? (If it was already included as a function how did the Committee miss such systemic underpayments?)

The University acknowledges the Fair Work Ombudsman's findings and accepts responsibility for the underpayment errors, including the contribution of deficiencies in governance processes and payroll system controls. We have apologised to all current and former affected staff and made remediation payments accordingly.

The University is delivering on its Enforceable Undertaking to implement the required system, process and governance improvements, with a strong focus on preventing recurrence. We are confident that the changes underway will strengthen oversight, embed compliant practices, and significantly improve payroll and governance integrity across the institution.

The University has put in place strengthened governance and oversight arrangements to ensure that the issues identified do not affect the organisation moving forward. A dedicated Pay Assurance Program has been established and is overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by the Vice-President (Operations). The Steering Committee is responsible for monitoring delivery, reviewing program outputs, and ensuring issues are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

The University's Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee (RACC) receives regular reporting in relation to the enforceable undertaking. Moving forward, RACC will receive a report at each meeting on compliance with the Enforceable Undertaking and receive a dedicated report at each meeting on compliance with Fair Work Requirements, including Fair Work Act, Fair Work Regulations and Industrial Instruments.

The University Executive Board receives regular updates on progress, enabling collective senior executive oversight prior to matters being considered by RACC and Council. The University has strengthened its institutional compliance function which will monitor and provide assurance to UEB and Council (via RACC) that we remain compliant with all legislative instruments, including workplace law. These arrangements are designed to embed stronger assurance, accountability and transparency across payroll, governance and compliance processes, and to ensure sustained improvement over time and build employee trust and confidence.

The University has taken a number of actions to ensure that all relevant staff complete mandatory training requirements under the Enforceable Undertaking. As part of the implementation of the 2023 Enterprise Agreement, training was delivered to relevant stakeholders, including payroll staff, People and Culture business partners, managers and supervisors, on the operating requirements of the Agreement. Training sessions were conducted for supervisors and employees, with supporting resources made available on the University intranet and complemented by direct advisory support from People and Culture.

In addition, managers and supervisors are advised of changes to the Fair Work Act and guided on how these changes translate into practical employment obligations. To support ongoing awareness and compliance, the University is developing a structured training plan for 2026, which will be rolled out to all relevant staff and form part of the University's broader compliance and assurance framework.

An independent auditor has been identified and will be presented to the FWO for their consideration and approval.

The Joint Consultative Committee has been convened as required by the Enforceable Undertaking. The members consist of representatives from the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and the Community Public Sector Union (CPSU) and Management. The committee has been provided with an overview of the enforceable undertaking obligations and actions to date, including data from the enquiry service summarising issues and resolution actions. Work is in progress to publish the summary dashboard to the staff intranet in addition to updates provided to employees by the unions.

Audits and health checks form part of the audit calendar in addition to the audits prescribed in the enforceable undertaking, and Fair Work requirements will be included in annual audit plans as a cyclical audit.

(15) Please provide a list of consultancy engagements exceeding $250,000 since 2020 relevant to restructuring / organisational change, including:

(a) scope;

(b) approving authority;

(c) cost;

(d) deliverables; and

(e) implementation status.

Please find the detail in the table below:

Provider	**Approving Authority**	**Cost**	**Scope/Deliverables**	**Status**
Partners in Performance	Council/Vice-Chancellor	1,499,967.20	Engaged in May to August 2023 to review the University's financial business model including research institutes.	Complete
KordaMentha	Council	$918,599.39	Engaged in July 2024 to conduct a review of the university's operating model, including reviews of People and Culture and Complaints.	Complete
KordaMentha	Program Control Board approved engagements in 2024. Management approved engagements in 2025, following Professor Dewar's departure, relating to design and implementation of the workplace change process.	$2,921,204.72 (inc. GST and Travel) Note: This figure reflects payments for work undertaken by KordaMentha and excludes sub-contract arrangements with other vendors outlined below.	Engaged to support the development of the UOW proposed Operating Model and support its implementation from December 2024 to October 2025.	Complete
Research Strategies Australia	Council	$207,051.92	Engaged in 2024 to conduct a review of the universities research operations.	Complete

Research Strategies Australia	Management	$558,501	Engaged in 2024 to support the development of the research operating model and strategy.	Complete
LHH	Management	$509,542	Delivered outplacement support and career support for affected staff the Teaching and Learning and UOW Operations change processes in 2025 and 2026. This support remains in place and accessible for affected staff.	Ongoing
CharterX	Management	$566,640.84 Note: this expenditure was processed via KordaMentha as a sub-contract arrangement for co-ordination and efficiency purposes, and as a result is reflected in our financial accounts as a payment to KordaMentha. This was to reduce administrative overhead and ensure alignment across the transformation program.	Engaged in 2025 to develop the UOW Digital Roadmap. The UOW Digital Roadmap has been delivered and endorsed by University Council.	Complete
Lnixon	Management	$405,334.60 Note: this expenditure was processed via KordaMentha as a sub-contract arrangement for co-ordination and efficiency purposes, and as a result is reflected in our financial accounts as a payment to KordaMentha. This was to reduce administrative overhead and ensure	Engaged from June to September 2025. Delivered change impact and business readiness assessments., Developed and supported the implementation of a leadership capability program.	Complete

		alignment across the transformation program.		
Korn Ferry	Management	$335,784.90	Engaged to develop position descriptions and conduct job evaluations for the new operating model from April to June 2025.	Complete
NousCubane	Management	$661,100	Subscription to NousCubane for benchmarking data to enable continuous review and improvement and help assess resourcing needs in an ongoing manner.	Ongoing subscription services
OrgVue	Management	$376,491	Technology platform supporting organisational design through the transformation program.	Ongoing
U&U	Management	$429,000	Recruitment partner engaged to temporarily support P&C with the recruitment of newly established roles in our new operating model, during a period of increased recruitment activity.	Complete

(16) What post-implementation review (if any) has been conducted to assess whether consultant led restructuring achieved the stated objectives, particularly where evidence suggested readvertising/ re-hiring followed redundancies?

A post-implementation review has commenced into the Teaching and Learning Change Plan, which was finalised in January 2025. This is a requirement of UOW's enterprise agreements following major workplace change and will review whether the changes were implemented as planned, identify opportunities for continuous improvement, and measure progress against the original objectives. The university community was notified in December 2025 and invited feedback from all academic and professional staff.

It is important to note, the Teaching the Learning Change Plan did not come about due to engagement of an external consultant. It involved a focussed whole-of-university process led by management to identify courses with zero or very low enrolments that could be suspended or discontinued, to enable us to focus more resources on other courses and create new ones in response to community and industry demand. This led to the Teaching and Learning Change process that was finalised in January 2025.