

**THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
COUNCIL MINUTES**

The 500th meeting of the Council was held at **8.30am (AEST) on Wednesday 18 February 2026** in the Mills Room, Chancelry.

Members present

1. Chancellor, the Hon Julie Bishop
2. Pro-Chancellor, Ms Alison Kitchen
3. Interim Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rebekah Brown
4. Ms Padma Raman PSM
5. Mr Andrew Metcalfe AO
6. Professor Juliana Ng
7. Professor Lyndall Strazdins
8. Ms Megan Easton
9. Mr Guoqing (Bruce) Pan
10. Mr Charley Ellwood
11. Professor Alexander Mikheyev
12. Ms Tanya Hosch AM
13. Dr Larry Marshall
14. The Hon Wayne Martin AC KC

Apologies

1. Mr Rob Whitfield AM

In attendance

1. Chief Operating Officer (COO) - Mr Jonathan Churchill
2. Chief Financial Officer (CFO) - Mr Michael Lonergan
3. Professor Tony Connolly

Secretariat

1. University Secretary, Mr Phillip Tweedie
2. Manager Corporate Governance & Policy, UGO - Ms Leslie McDonald
3. Senior Administrator, UGO – Ms Elizabeth Johnson
4. UGO Intern – Mr Malachi Bayley

Observers

1. Mr Stephen Howell, Effective Governance (Council reviewer) for Procedural items only

1 PROCEDURAL ITEMS

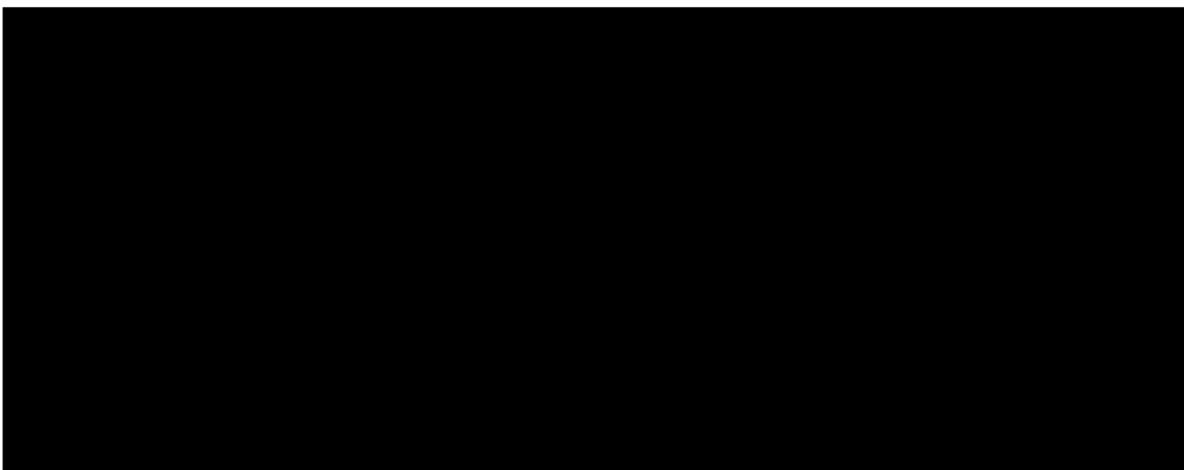
Announcements and Apologies

- The Chancellor:
 - Provided an outline for members of the planned Livestream session.
 - Flagged that she would endeavour to complete discussion on the Procedural Items before the start of the Livestream.
 - Thanked the iVC, COO and CFO for organising briefings outside of Council for ANU-based members this week.
 - Noted an apology from Rob Whitfield for this meeting.
 - Noted that Andrew Metcalfe would join the meeting via Zoom from Melbourne.
 - Noted that Professor Connolly's term as Academic Board Chair has recently ended but he has been asked to attend as an observer.

Leave of Absence

- The Hon Wayne Martin requested leave of absence for the April meeting.

Disclosure of Material Personal Interest



- The Secretariat will shortly undertake the annual disclosure process. It will incorporate new declarations relating to the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025, Foreign Ownership, Control and Influence (FOCI) considerations and others.

Arrangement of Agenda

- No further items were starred for discussion.
- The Chancellor noted:
 - That reporting and discussion of any confidential aspects of Items 3-6 would take place immediately on conclusion of the Livestream session.
 - That Item 10 would be discussed in a Member's Only session, following members return from visiting O-Week activities mid-morning.
 - The need to further discuss the outcomes of the Planning Day, tentatively scheduled for the afternoon.
 - That the Pro-Chancellor indicated an item of Other Business at the end of the meeting.

Resolved:

Council **approved** that the unstarred items be dealt with as proposed in the agenda.

Minutes

- The following requests were made for amendments to the minutes of the meeting on 28 November 2025 which were agreed to by Council:
 - A minor amendment to correct the spelling of a member's surname.

Resolved: Council:

1. **Approved**, with an agreed minor correction, the minutes of the Council meetings held on 28 November 2025.

2 MATTERS ARISING

- The Chancellor noted that of the seven outstanding matters arising, four are proposed for closure at this meeting. The four matters for closure are:

- Matter 6 – Gender-based Violence Response Plan – Council delegated its authority to a smaller group and the response plan was submitted on time as per Item 12 in the agenda.
 - Council expressed its thanks to the group for the huge amount of work undertaken to meet the University’s regulatory standard requirements.
 - The Chancellor also noted that a promising candidate for the Chair of SWC has been identified and that this may come back to Council for out-of-session approval in coming weeks.
- Matter 7 – Resourcing of iVC office – This has now been resolved.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Matters Arising and **approved** the closure of Matters 1, 5, 6 and 7.

LIVESTREAM SESSION

Following the conclusion of Part 1 - Procedural Items, Council commenced the main livestreamed section of the Council meeting at 9.00am, with members of the University community registered to join and view the meeting.

PART 2 – KEY BUSINESS ITEMS

- The Chancellor welcomed members of the ANU community to the livestreamed session of Council noting:
- Council’s thanks to the Corporate Communications and Engagement team for supporting the event.
 - That this is the 500th meeting of the University Council, with the first meeting held on 12 July 1951, succeeding the Interim Council that had operated since 1946.

3 CHANCELLOR’S REPORT

- The Chancellor provided an update on activities undertaken since the previous meeting including:
- The Chancellor reported presiding over 17 graduation ceremonies at Llewellyn Hall, attended by approximately 7,300 guests, and thanked the Graduations team.
 - She attended the State of the University address (9 Feb) and the Commencement Address (16 Feb), and spoke at the Bruce Hall welcome, noting its 65th anniversary and status as the University’s first undergraduate residence (opened 1961).
 - Council toured the refurbished University House; reopening is planned by August for the University’s 80th anniversary, following repairs from the January 2020 hailstorm.
 - Council held a Planning Day covering governance (with the ANU Governance Project), antisemitism in the higher education sector (with Dr Alan Finkel AC), and development of the next Strategic Plan.

- Council members attended a Sir Roland Wilson Foundation function recognising 10 scholars for 2026 under the APS scholarship scheme.
- Late-2025 highlights included: a \$16m gift to the Kambri Scholarship Scheme (endowment now \$50m) supporting First Nations students; 17 ANU undergraduates selected for the New Colombo Plan; and establishment of the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance with Federal Government support.
- Council noted congratulations to Tanya Hosch AM for significant service to the community and advocacy for diversity and inclusion; other ANU community honourees are listed on the website.
- Budget repair remains a key challenge; Standard & Poor's reaffirmed ANU's AA+ credit rating with a stable outlook. The CFO will provide an update.
- The University is subject to reviews by TEQSA, ANAO, and regarding antisemitism; the Chancellor expressed confidence the University will emerge as a stronger institution.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Chancellor's Report.

4 INTERIM VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

- The Interim Vice-Chancellor presented her report noting:
 - Professor Aaron Quigley commenced as Dean, ANU College of Systems and Society; thanks were extended to Professor Stephen Eggins for service as Interim Dean (2023–2025). A global search is underway for a substantive DVCR&I, with an internal process to appoint an Interim DVCR&I. International searches are live for the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International and Future Students) and the Director, ANU Pathways. An internal EOI will appoint an Acting Provost and Senior Vice-President pending confirmation of the substantive VC and President.
 - Thirty-four ANU community members received 2026 Australia Day Honours, including Council member Tanya Hosch and Dr Matilda House-Williams.
 - Seventeen conferral ceremonies in January–February produced 3,114 graduates.
 - Attendance at Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee Estimates on 12 February and meetings with government, alumni and donors on University direction.
 - A commencement address was delivered on the lawns of University Avenue; 3,597 domestic and 1,704 international students have accepted offers for Semester 1, 2026.
 - Co-design of the next University Strategy has commenced, with planned engagement across students, alumni, donors and external stakeholders.
 - A special committee has been established to consider the University's future size and shape to ensure strength, sustainability and academic excellence.
 - Commitment to a balanced budget by end-2026; a budget is before Council today for endorsement.
 - Continued focus on performance across disciplines and targeted investment to rebuild global rankings and lead national discourse. ANU holds more subjects ranked in the world's top 20 than any Australian university and leads nationally in 12 disciplines; strengths include Asia-Pacific links, a human-scale campus, and strong equity outcomes.
 - An evolving environment includes the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, sector-wide and ANU-specific reviews, and the National Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence; the University reiterated its stance against antisemitism, racism and discrimination and outlined support measures.
 - A new University Executive Committee has been created; three strategic stocktakes are complete (communication and reputation; culture and wellbeing; academic productivity and performance) with four underway.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the report from the Interim Vice-Chancellor.

5 CFO'S REPORT

- The Chief Financial Officer spoke to a presentation and the paper provided in the pack, noting:
 - The University's preliminary 2025 results show a significantly improved financial position with an operating deficit of \$45m that is approximately \$65m better than budgeted. This figure includes costs associated with Renew ANU and the Digital plan.
 - Contributing to this result was lower than expected research expenditure, leave and other salary management and unbudgeted philanthropic revenue. Operational budgets achieved savings targets across 2025 (salary and non-salary).
 - The 2025 financial statement audit by ANAO is well underway with auditors on site and finalising their work.

Resolved:

Council **noted** the report from the CFO.

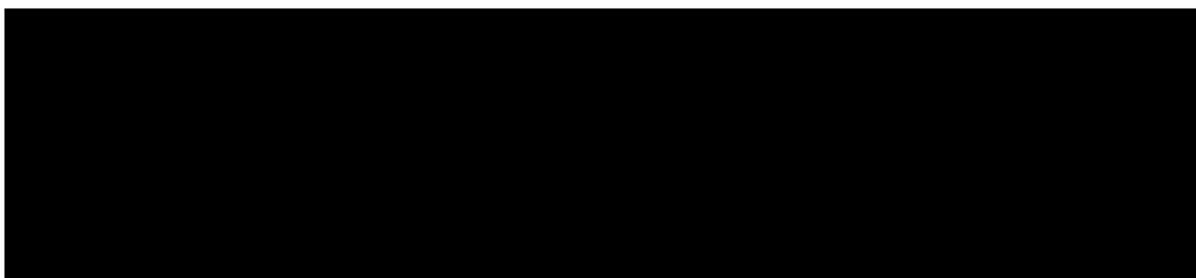
6 ACADEMIC BOARD REPORT

- The Chair of Academic Board spoke to the report, providing a summary of Academic Board issues. He noted:
 - The role and context of Academic Board, and the level of reporting to Council, including agendas, discussion papers and resolutions arising from the Board's meetings, as well as a verbal report by the Chair at each Council meeting on key issues, discussions and decisions of Board.
 - The key issues for Board in 2026 will most likely be university governance, the development of the strategic plan and racism on campus.
 - As a key pillar of University governance, Academic Board will contribute to a number of internal and external review and reform processes including Council and Executive governance reviews, the Strategic Plan, the work of the Governance Project, Senate and other governmental inquiries, such as the TEQSA inquiry, as well as initiatives relating to antisemitism.
 - Board has committed to ongoing scrutiny of the University's plans and activities in relation to the careful design and cultivation of a broad institutional culture of anti-racism at the ANU. This includes reviews of policies, procedures and definitions, consistent with Board's obligations to maintain both the quality of research and teaching and the effective operation of our policies on academic freedom and free speech.
 - Other areas of focus for Academic Board include the development of an academic risk management framework as well as considering the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence.
 - As the outgoing Chair, Professor Connolly noted his thanks to members and the secretariat for their excellent work on Academic Board over 2025.

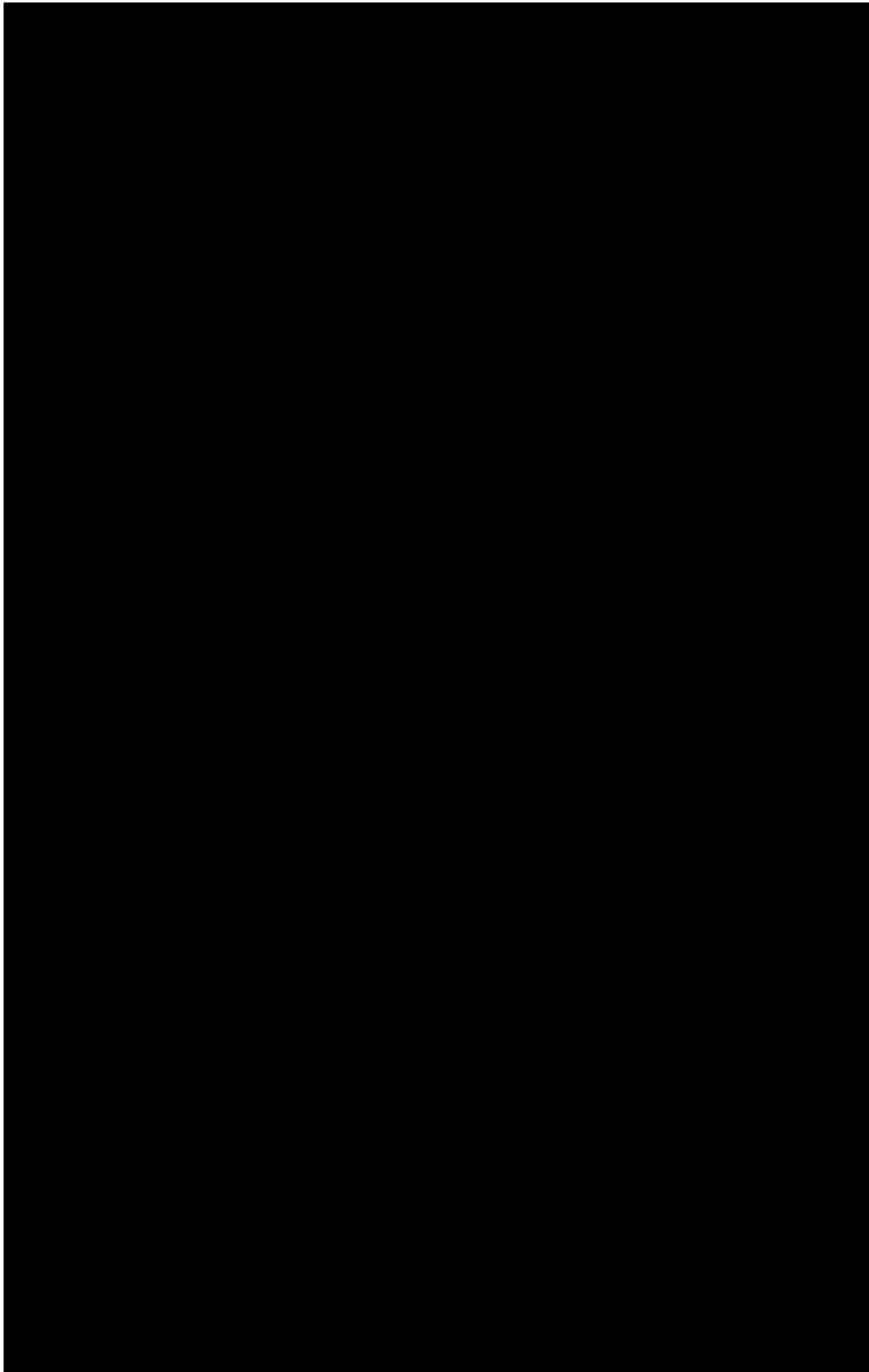
Resolved:

Council **noted** the report from the Chair of Academic Board, and the resolutions approved by Academic Board at Meeting 6/2025 held on 25 November 2025.

The livestream portion of the meeting closed at 1015am. Council then received reports on confidential issues which could not be included in the Livestream session items.



Council adjourned and undertook a tour of 'O' Week Activities. Council resumed at 11.45am.



Resolved:

Council:

- **noted** the University's proposed response to TEQSA's request for information and documents under section 28 of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Cth) and that additional updates would need to be made ahead of submission;
- **noted** the University's proposed letter to TEQSA concerning the Self-Assurance Report dated 19 August 2025 and that additional updates would need to be made ahead of submission.

Council resumed the main meeting at 3.00pm.

X PLANNING DAY OUTCOMES

- The Chancellor outlined the Planning Day outcomes and thanked members for their attendance.
- In discussion, Council noted:
 - The discussion with the Governance Project, the various reviews underway across the sector and the institution and members' desire to have a discussion regarding contingency planning.
 - The discussion on antisemitism and the contributions of Dr Finkel, as well as the contributions of members in the room and afterwards.
 - The facilitated session on the University's strategic plan and the importance and value of that work.
- The Chancellor noted that the Secretariat would be in touch to convene an out of session meeting regarding matters arising from planning day – the antisemitism definition and contingency planning.

Resolved:

Council **noted** discussion of the various planning day streams of work.

7 2025 WHS PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Resolved:

Council:

1. **Noted** the Work Health and Safety and Self-Insurance reporting for the period 1 January to 31 December 2025.

PART 3 – STRATEGIC ISSUES/DISCUSSIONS

8 ANU 2026 BUDGET AND 2027-2030 FORWARD ESTIMATES

- The Chief Financial Officer spoke to the paper provided in the pack, noting:
 - The budget has been considered at the University Executive Committee and Audit, Finance and Risk Committee twice, and was updated to incorporate discussions and recommendations.
 - Student enrolment numbers present the main key risk with the forecasted 'soft' start in S1 to be offset by an increase in S2 through several measures including differential pricing and pathway programs.
 - Expenditure assumptions have been reassessed, but there is still a need for tight expense control including the RAC, ledger controls and enhanced focus on finances, staff and student numbers.
 - The University's cash position is broadly flat. There is a low level of capital expenditure in 2026, which is not a material risk, but needs to be part of the thinking over the next four years, with 2027 forward estimates reflecting that.
- Council thanked the CFO for his report and, in discussion:
 - The Chair of AFRC reported that the Committee was more confident about the numbers following their out of session 10 February meeting, and that the Executive understood what was needed, particularly in relation to carry forwards. She noted the risk with student numbers and revenue shortfalls but also noted that the University has demonstrated it can control spend and management was confident about its approach to revenue.
 - The budget is in a much better position than it was, despite the risks with student enrolments and expenditure. Although it cannot be funded yet, in order to achieve any ambition of being No 1 in rankings again, major investment in R&D will be required down the track.
 - A member queried whether investment in the Mental Health Strategy is included in the budget. The CFO indicated that there are allowances in budgets across the year that could potentially be used for important initiatives. He also noted that \$8m has been set aside in the budget to fund growth initiatives and other important levers to support growth.
 - Concern was expressed that there isn't sufficient allocation for rebuilding reputation and funding achievement of the revenue raising targets set in the budget, particularly in relation to student numbers.
 - The interim Vice-Chancellor expressed her commitment to the mental health strategy and her confirmation that money would be put towards supporting people so that the University can grow. She noted the budget includes an allocation for a review of marketing, communications and branding strategy, as well as a number of other initiatives that support growth.
 - Members noted support for approval of the budget and forward estimates, but that the IVC, CFO and AFRC Chair should explore recovery/rebuilding/repair funding arrangements to achieve required growth in revenue, including in student enrolments and research.

Resolved: Council

1. **approved** the Budget for 2026 and the Forward Estimates for 2027-2030; and
2. **requested** that the iVC, CFO and Chair of AFRC consider development of a recovery/rebuilding fund to support necessary growth in revenue, for subsequent recommendation to Council.

The Chief Planning & Data Officer, Ms Richelle Hilton, joined the meeting for Item 9.

9 ANU CORPORATE PLAN

- The Chief Planning & Data Officer spoke to the report, noting:
 - This is a modest update to the Corporate Plan ahead of the development of a new strategy for the University. There will be a more comprehensive update next year.
- Council thanked Ms Hilton for her report and noted:

- The comments from the Chair of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee that the University has come a long way with this document and that the Committee was very happy to endorse it.
- Its sincere thanks and appreciation to Ms Hilton and her team for the work done and the long way this plan has come under Ms Hilton's guidance.

Resolved:

Council **approved** the Corporate Plan 2026–2029 for submission to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Finance by 27 February 2026.

11 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PLAN

Resolved:

Council **noted** the submission of the ANU Gender-Based Violence Prevention & Response Plan.

PART 4 – OTHER MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

12 2024-25 WGEA COUNCIL INDUSTRY BENCHMARK REPORT

Resolved:

Council **noted** the University's 2024-2025 Industry Benchmark report received from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).

13 ETHICS COMMITTEES' ANNUAL REPORTS 2025

Resolved:

Council **approved** the ANU Research Ethics Committees' Annual Reports for 2025 to be sent to the relevant reporting bodies in respect of the:

1. ANU Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)
2. ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), and
3. ANU Recombinant DNA (rDNA) Monitoring Committee

14 COUNCIL COMMITTEE AND BOARD CHARTER CHANGES

Resolved:

Council **approved** the proposed revisions to:

1. the ANU Foundation Board Charter
2. the Academic Board Charter
3. the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee Charter.

15 ANUE BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Resolved:

Council **approved** the appointment of Professor Tim Senden to the Board of ANU Enterprise.

PART 5 – OTHER MATTERS FOR NOTING

16 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE CONFORMANCE STATEMENT

Resolved:

Council, for the 2025 calendar year, **noted** the assessment in respect of the University conformance with:

1. *Australian National University Act 1991*
2. *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*
3. *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014*

4. *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021: Part 6 Governance and Accountability*
5. *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025*
6. *the Code of Governance Principles and Practice for Australia's Public Universities*

17 RESEARCH GRANTS REPORT

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Grants and Consultancies awarded between 7 November 2025 and 27 January 2026.

18 COUNCIL COMMITTEES – EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

Resolved:

Council **noted** the Council Committee and Board Summaries from the December 2025 and January 2026 meetings.

19 UNIVERSITY SEAL REPORT

Resolved:

Council **noted** that the interim Vice-Chancellor has appointed the University Secretary as the Custodian of the University Seal

PART 6 – OTHER BUSINESS

20 OTHER BUSINESS

RESIGNATION – PRO-CHANCELLOR

- The Pro-Chancellor, Alison Kitchen, resigned as Pro-Chancellor to Council citing increased work pressures preventing her from putting the time and energy required into fulfilling the role. She thanked Council for giving her the privilege of serving the University in this way.
- The Chancellor noted that Ms Kitchen had advised her that she intended to step down and recognised how challenging the role of Pro-Chancellor had been in a time of extraordinary pressure and workload, in addition to her roles on numerous Council Committees.
- She expressed her gratitude that Ms Kitchen will remain on Council and has agreed to continue to Chair the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee. She thanked Ms Kitchen for her steady leadership and sound judgement, noting that the University was fortunate to have someone of her calibre join Council.
- The Chancellor reminded members that the provisions of the ANU Act (s33) direct that Council appoints a Pro-Chancellor who must be a member appointed by the Minister. She noted that all current Ministerial appointees are very busy but asked all members to nominate an eligible member confidentially by email to her, and that Council would determine a new Pro-Chancellor by out-of-session action. She further noted, from her experience over the past year, that the position should be considered to be almost full-time.
- No further items of other business were raised.

Resolved:

Council **considered** any other business raised.

21 NEXT MEETING

Council **noted** that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on 24 April 2026.

The meeting closed at 3:40pm (AEDT)

The Hon Julie Bishop
Chancellor
The Australian National University

Date