

UNIVERSITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second Reading

Resumed from 8 September.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [8.05 pm]: I am keen to rise to speak to the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. It is interesting that this second reading debate follows the discussion about marine conservation, because on Thursday night I was a guest of the University of Western Australia at the UWA senate community dinner. The chancellor of the University of Western Australia, Michael Chaney, and the vice-chancellor, Paul Johnson, organised the dinner so we could hear from one of the state's leading marine conservation scientists Professor Jessica Meeuwig. The second reading debate of this bill follows immediately a discussion about the importance of marine conservation in Western Australia and the need to protect not only marine habitat but also fish species in that marine habitat. It was especially disappointing to hear the Minister for Environment say that he is not interested in managing fish stocks. He even declined to answer a question about the issue. He just does not want to worry about fish stocks; he wants all that to be managed by the Department of Fisheries. That is a big concern when I think about what Professor Jessica Meeuwig was saying to us. Certainly, the resounding sense in the room at the UWA Club on Thursday night was that marine conservation in a very holistic sense needs to be a top priority for Western Australia.

Our University of Western Australia senate is engaged in all sorts of topical discussions. That is welcomed. I know it is probably typical of other universities' senates as well. I thought it was interesting—the member for Bateman might be able to verify this, but he is not in the chamber—as an elected representative at the gathering on Thursday night —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): There are too many conversations in the chamber. If you need to converse, please keep you voices right down.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It may have been that the chancellor was a little overwhelmed by the occasion, but I and the member for Bateman, the two elected representatives in the room, were not acknowledged. That is unusual, and I take no offence, but it is interesting that these things can happen at an event when it is the way of a university senate that protocols are respected. Whenever the University of Western Australia makes representations to this place, we meet with the various paid lobbyists the University of Western Australia employs and invariably we acquiesce to the desires of the University of Western Australia. I would have thought there would be a degree of mutual respect when it comes to acknowledgements, but I think it was simply an oversight and that is the way of things.

The member for Armadale in his excellent lead speech on this bill said that in various universities' senates and university hierarchies around the world there is a very strict sense of hierarchy and a very strong sense of the importance of the university.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, there are too many conversations in the chamber. Please take them outside; it makes it very difficult for Hansard.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I acknowledge that universities are very important places. I really think they are absolutely vital learning institutions and very important parts of our community. However, I am concerned that sometimes the politics played out in universities perhaps override some of the other priorities. It is interesting to hear universities trumpet their positions on the Shanghai index of global universities. I understand that the University of Western Australia is now ninety-sixth on the Shanghai index. Curiously, that index is primarily about the research capacity of a university rather than a university's teaching ability. We need to question that a little. Of course, it is wonderful for universities to be involved in academic research. It is very important, especially when that research is unfettered by commercial interest—interests that might be driven by corporate donors to a university—and it is pure and simple research, the sort of research that goes on, whereby we do not know the outcome, but then find years down the track that the research has led to a huge step forward in the use of technology by humankind. Those sorts of advances are based on good research, and of course they are important. But we must not overlook the fact that universities educate people; they provide people with a good education and help them. That teaching role of universities must never be forgotten; it must be their core activity. Anything that diminishes the importance of assessing the teaching capability of a university has to be exposed and called out because that is not what a university should be about. A university must be about excellence in teaching. It must be able to provide. We must ensure that the students who choose that university invest their time and, it has to be said in this day and age, invest much of their savings in achieving their goal of getting a particular academic qualification and are given the utmost encouragement and assistance, and we must respect the commitment that they are making and help them along. That is a concern.

In talking to various people, including academics in universities, I have heard that there is an interesting tendency amongst our Western Australian universities to hire vice-chancellors who are British expats. That seems to be a trend. I am not sure why there is this conformity with that trend. People point out that it is all very well for an expat vice-chancellor to come to Western Australia, bring about a whole lot of change and then move on, but that leaves a lot of other people with challenges to nurture, to re-establish the stability that might once have been at the university and to regain the confidence that is there.

I also notice the rise in the number of business schools in universities and the important role that they play in our universities, with the various master of business administration courses and what have you. I hear from some academics that those MBA courses are viewed as cash cows. They are not particularly expensive to run but they bring in students, often from overseas, and they are very lucrative for the university. They generate funds. I wonder about some of our MBA courses. I am concerned that in Australia we have a tendency to underplay the importance of languages in our MBA courses. I make the comparison between the courses run here and some of the overseas MBA courses. I note that there is an emphasis on languages at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, just outside Paris. It offers an MBA course that is recognised as being one of the leading MBA courses in the world. It bends over backwards to accommodate English speakers by making the language requirement easier. Here in Australia it is unheard of for an MBA course to have a language requirement, but it is absolutely essential to have a language requirement at INSEAD. It is seen as being very much a part of being a modern business person. We only have to think of some of the business leaders that we have. I believe that the head of BHP Billiton, Andrew Mackenzie, speaks five languages. I am sure that his predecessor, Marius Kloppers, was equally polyglot in his capabilities.

Languages must be part of our education. I find it quite depressing when I talk to some of the leading people at our universities who say that they do not have the demand or they are not investing in languages. That is a real mistake. I have looked at the situation at INSEAD. Its entry requirements state —

If English is your native language: If English is your native language, you have to demonstrate at least a practical knowledge of a second language —

This is just to get into the course —

(referred to as ‘entry’ language) before the start of the programme by passing one of our accepted language tests for your chosen second language.

To graduate, students need to have knowledge of a third language. It has made the rules easier for English speakers because it recognises that the English-speaking world is often lacking when it comes to language capability. When we look at INSEAD’s rules for non-native English speakers, we see that it just assumes that they will have knowledge of at least four, if not five, languages. We are really leaving ourselves exposed. We are falling behind the rest of the world when it comes to language education when we see that some of the world’s leading MBA courses make languages such a priority. They just assume that people will be competent in other languages. Then there is all that excellent MBA content in those courses. That is the priority of the course, but students have to have those language skills.

Politics at universities is an interesting thing. It is an issue that I found myself falling foul of when I ran for the presidency of the Curtin University alumni in 1999. At the time I was very concerned because the chancellor of Curtin University was a very nice gentleman by the name of Harry Perkins, who was also chairman of Wesfarmers, which at the time was very engaged in the logging of old-growth forests. My candidacy for the position of president of the Curtin alumni was that, if successful, I would push for the replacement of Mr Perkins. I had that written into my bio. Rather like we see with local government bios, I was allowed my 100 words, which I submitted to the vice-chancellor.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: You should read it out.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I am going off notes. I was trying to recall the details. It made it into “Inside Cover”. It was written up extremely well by Pam Casellas. Yes, I will read Pam’s words because she did such a great job of writing it. It was published on Saturday, 11 September 1999, and states —

Universities are places of vigorous debate, are they not, where the views of all are canvassed, without fear or favour.

Not quite.

Take the case of Curtin University’s forthcoming election for the position of president of its Alumni Association.

One of the candidates is Chris Tallentire. He submitted his biography to the university so that it could be printed and mailed to the 10,000 people entitled to vote.

He also quite honestly stated his views, so that anyone who voted for him would know exactly how he was thinking.

So honestly that the university censored his statement.

“Oh no, son,” said the vice-chancellor, Lance Twomey, or words to that effect.

“Take out paragraph 2, and then we’ll be in business. But if you don’t, no university resources will be expended on printing it.”

And the offending paragraph?

“If elected, I as a priority will push for Curtin University to have a new chancellor. The incumbent—who is also chairman of Wesfarmers Ltd, a company which derives profit from the logging of WA’s last old-growth forests—is inappropriate to the position.”

Mr Tallentire has an honours degree in agribusiness and works for the Department of Environmental Protection. And he has absolutely no personal feeling, he stresses, against the chancellor, Harry Perkins.

Vice-chancellor Twomey was in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, and his office just couldn’t seem to contact him.

Which is a pity, because we were going to ask him what rule he’d invoked to cut out the paragraph and how censoring someone’s stated political view enhanced the democratic process.

The story then ran another day. I will not bore members with that. Pam did write this up very well. Bearing in mind that the position of president of the alumni would have entitled me to a seat on the Curtin University Senate, the university was very wary of that. It did not want somebody there agitating for a coup—a replacement of the chancellor. So what did Curtin University do and what did it get away with? It just did not hold the election in the end; it cancelled it. An interim alumni advisory board was appointed—I think that is what it was called. That is how things were left. To this day, I do not know whether Curtin has had an election for the president of the alumni association. It is a real concern that that sort of manipulation can occur. I hope it is just the sort of thing that is being corrected by the bill before us. In terms of the current leadership of Curtin University, Deborah Terry strikes me as an excellent vice-chancellor and as someone who is very engaged with all facets of university life and who involves the university in many things that bring people from outside the university onto the university campus. I am sure that the sort of problem I encountered would not happen again. It was a disappointing experience and one that suggests that we have not only the most ferocious of politics being played out at our academic institutions, but also, from time to time, a manipulation of the rules. That is unfortunate. When we add that to the censorship that went on, it really was outrageous and should not be seen at any of our universities.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is a little reminiscent of the stories in the Tom Sharpe books *Porterhouse Blue* and *Grantchester Grind*, which are incredibly humorous, satirical exposés of life in a Cambridge college, the snobbery of which could be matched only by the poor quality of its students. It is a worry when that degree of snobbishness enters universities. I do not think it is something we would like to see here, and if we ever see any sign of that—chancellors and others feeling that they are above the general population—it is something that we should seek to stem straightaway.

The bill before us remedies certain situations around allowing universities to sell land that has perhaps been gifted to the university for the purposes of learning, research and all kinds of academic pursuits. A university will sometimes decide that, for all it was gifted land for university-type purposes, it would actually like to dispose of it—flog it off; sell it off. That is something we need to consider as well, because these very generous people, who often left this world many years ago, obviously had a desire to enrich the university through the bequest of land. People do that because they are committed to the objectives of the university. I think those people might be very disappointed if they saw that universities were simply looking to liquidate those land assets to perhaps just prop up a challenge being faced in terms of an operating deficit or some such thing. That is a concern I have. We must be very careful about allowing universities to just sell off land.

Another concern of mine is about overseas students. I absolutely welcome the involvement of overseas students in our Western Australian universities. This relates to my earlier comments about the importance of languages in universities. I do not think we do enough to not only approach and benefit from the cultural input of overseas students, but also have them actually augmenting the quality of languages education at our university campuses. That is a disappointment. I am particularly concerned about a problem that could become increasingly significant—that is, when overseas students are disappointed by their Australian university experience. If they feel that they paid an exorbitant amount and are not really satisfied with their course, that could be bad for the

reputation of not only that university, but also Western Australia and Australia in general. We really have to guard against that and make sure that we do not leave students with any sense of having been ripped off, that we make sure their academic needs are properly met, that we have flexibility in place and that their academic ambitions are fully met.

Dr A.D. Buti: I think Curtin University has the most overseas students of any university in Australia.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Interestingly, member for Armadale, I gather it is probably one of the most profitable universities around.

A government member: UWA!

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: In terms of an operating balance sheet, I think Curtin might be up there with profitability. UWA has a fairly small student population in comparison—I think it is somewhere around 25 000 now.

Dr A.D. Buti: It is much smaller than Curtin, which I think is about 40 000 or 50 000.

A government member interjected.

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Treasurer, you need to be in your own chair.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: That could account for some of the revenue differences. I hope that we do not hear stories in the future of overseas students being disappointed by the quality of the course they entered into and invested in. I know that is a story in other areas of education. We have heard some horror stories about some of the private education that goes on and about the sheer disappointment and waste of money that students from overseas sometimes go through. That is something we must be very mindful of. That would be damaging to the reputation of Western Australia on many levels. It could damage the relationship between our countries in the future if someone left here with a sense of having had a poor educational experience or having paid too much. That could be extremely damaging in terms of that person's attitude to Western Australia in the future and the attitude of their family and friends. It would be most disappointing. It is not what we want to happen.

I understand that the bill before us clarifies the situation on that very important issue of how the senates are constituted. It brings them down to a size of 17 members. I can see that that might well be a much more manageable size. I trust that the representation of the various student bodies and graduate bodies is properly constituted and that there has not been any diluting of the various influences, because we would not want to see a situation in which people who are just looking after the university from the perspective of an interest in the business world would overwhelm the overall direction of the university.

From my position as a member of an electorate in the south eastern suburbs, I would love many more students from the high schools in my area—Southern River College, Thornlie Senior High School and Yule Brook College—to see university as being attainable for them and something that they could enjoy. They need to realise that it may not be something they do immediately upon leaving school but could be something that they contemplate doing in the future. I think we are seeing students having the sense that, although they might come from a family in which they would be the first person to have a university education, they have a right to have, and an aptitude for, a university education, and that it is something they are perfectly ready for and will enjoy and benefit from into the future as well.

Making sure that our universities are as accessible as possible is something that we need to make a priority. When we go through this legislation, we should constantly ask ourselves: Will this legislation make access to universities a richer and easier experience for students? Are we making it possible for students who may have to contemplate doing a university course while also holding down at least one job to do so? To that extent, I think it is good that we have universities located in areas where people have easy access to them. Having said that, I am mindful of the European university system, and especially the system in the United Kingdom, where invariably a student will go to a university that is many miles from where they grew up and went to school. I think that is a strength in those university systems. I would like many more Western Australian students to opt for universities that are on the other side of the country. I think it is an opportunity for people to learn about things other than whatever might be in the academic content of their course. It is about developing life skills and self-reliance. Of course, if they have the opportunity—I think all university courses should be designed around this—they should study overseas and in a non-Anglophile country. I think that should be a standard. If we are a truly globalised country and we really believe that our future lies in a globalised world, we should make sure that people have those skills and are at ease with other languages and other cultures, and a part of that must involve living, studying and eventually working with those other cultures. I hope that our universities are driving in that direction.

I recall my Curtin University experience and the opportunities for me to travel to Indonesia and to visit East Java and Bali and to look at agricultural production systems, especially in dairying and beef production. That was incredibly enriching. It was a great opportunity for us to develop contacts with Indonesian people and to keep in

contact on particular research projects. The university experience has to be all-encompassing and all-enriching for people, and I hope that this legislation will help guide the universities towards providing that opportunity for people to be as broadly educated as possible. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [8.32 pm]: I rise to speak to the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I note that the member for Armadale has already outlined in some detail the opposition's position on this bill, although it has been agreed since the member for Armadale gave his address on behalf of the opposition that a small but significant part of the bill will change, particularly around the student services and amenities fee, as the government has agreed to ensure that 50 per cent of the total amount will be paid to the student guild. I note on the notice paper some of the amendments that deal with that issue that the Premier has given notice of, and I will come back to those in a moment.

I begin by noting that I am one of the few MPs in this place who has a university in his electorate—Curtin University. I am not an alumnus of Curtin University; I am an alumnus of the University of Western Australia. But I have had a close relationship with Curtin University since I was elected as the member for Victoria Park and, as a result, inherited Curtin University. I was very fortunate that when I came to Parliament, I came in effectively at a period of transition between former vice-chancellor Lance Twomey and then vice-chancellor Jeanette Hackett. Jeanette was the vice-chancellor to 2013 and the vice-chancellor is now Deborah Terry. For all of my time, it has been Jeanette Hackett, and now Deb Terry is running the university. Both are strong, dynamic leaders who have a very strong and certain view of Curtin University.

I have also had a very good relationship with various guilds in their various elected forms over the years, including the current one. I acknowledge Jake Wittey, the president of the Curtin Student Guild, who is in the public gallery tonight. He has been active in the debate around this legislation, particularly on the student services and amenities fees, and he understands it fully. I will go through some of the feedback that we have received, even though the government has, quite rightly, recognised the error of its ways about 50 per cent of the SSAF going to the student guild.

Like the member for Armadale—although I think he has gone through most of the universities of the world—I have had experience with a couple. I could quite happily have stayed with a university if someone had paid me to stay. I might have been able to get away with that with my wife. I loved my university life. I studied at the University of Western Australia and the University of London and had a great time at both. I note the comments of the member for Gosnells about INSEAD and the requirements for a third language to study. Thankfully, there is no requirement to speak another language at the University of London, but I noted that I was the only Australian in my master's course. I studied with students from Africa, Europe and South America, many of whom were doing a master's course in English as their second or third language. Thankfully, there were a couple of Americans. I, as the lone Australian, could sit there haplessly with the Americans, speaking only English, and be embarrassed by some students who had an extraordinary background in half a dozen languages, but English was not their first.

Dr A.D. Buti: Did you go to the university that Jim Hacker from *Yes, Prime Minister* went to?

Mr B.S. WYATT: Yes, thank you; I will not take that interjection!

I have had, and still do have, a connection with all the universities in Western Australia in one way or another. Of course, I undertook my undergraduate degree at the University of Western Australia. Not long thereafter, in the late 1990s, I took over from a law school friend Grey Egerton-Warburton—he has recently retired from Hartleys Ltd, as he moved from law into the much more lucrative area of broking—who was teaching a business contract law course at Edith Cowan University. He left halfway through the course and I filled in for him for the rest of that year. When I returned from England, it seems I developed a reputation for taking over courses because the incumbent lecturer was leaving. When I came back from England in 2002, Greg Craven was teaching constitutional law at the University of Notre Dame Australia. I had taken on a senior position at Curtin University, but I had the pleasure of finishing his constitutional law course in the second half of that year. Currently, I am on the advisory board of the Asia business school at Curtin University and on the advisory board for the implementation of the Aboriginal reconciliation action plan at Murdoch University. In one way or another, I seem to have had a connection with all the universities in Western Australia. I loved the role I had with them all, because they are inherently interesting organisations doing interesting and dynamic things.

I note that the member for Armadale said in his contribution to the second reading debate that people have strong views about the role of universities in society and in our public debate. There are other models, including the United States model and the British model. The United States model seems to be much more prominent in the public debate and also in the leadership of public debate. Often universities, in the United States in particular, are identified with a political persuasion or where they sit on the political spectrum. It is less so with the British model, which is what we, effectively, have here in Australia whereby there is understandably reluctance by universities to take on a political position.

I find the universities of Western Australia—I say this because they are the universities I am most familiar with; I cannot comment on the other states of Australia—have a much more subtle role—a role they need to, if you like, muscle up on. I go through this job as a member of Parliament—we all have a similar role—keen to hear from universities. I actively seek their input on things, whether it is comment or research. We could often go through this job and not know we have universities in Western Australia because they very much operate within their own boundaries and, by and large, do not take part in either the political debate or the public debate. For example, last year the member for Kimberley, the member for Kalgoorlie, some upper house members and I sat on a committee to examine what became the amendment to the WA Constitution to recognise Aboriginal people. It sat for a short period—three months or thereabouts—and the universities did not express a view. To be fair, we got one letter from the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University but nothing from the Law School and nothing from any other university on something that was a significant public debate. I use that by way of example. In the last two years I have found myself regularly being asked in a survey on the phone for feedback of what I think of a particular university. I make the same point: universities in WA need to become more prominent in public debates and, indeed, universities such as Notre Dame should be more prominent perhaps in the moral debate about questions we face in public discussion. I say that knowing full well that I may very well have different views from those of the universities. The universities have an enormous capacity to research and provide information of value, but they seem to have a great reluctance to be involved in debates.

I am being very general in those comments because certainly I go to all of them if I can; I have not been to all of them. The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre has become, in my view, probably the pre-eminent, if you like, economic think tank in Western Australia because it has taken a space, courtesy of a large endowment from Bankwest, to allow very good research in a full range of areas in Western Australia, and organisations do not seem to do that anymore. I think in some areas, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA used to do it. It does not do that anymore it seems. Other organisations such as the Grattan Institute, which is not a WA-based organisation, do some research in Western Australia, but we do not have in Western Australia a history of think tanks doing that sort of work about Western Australia. It is something I think Western Australia misses out on. I look to the universities to take those roles to add to the public conversation. For example, one of the big ones I am interested in and the former Leader of the National Party, the Minister for Regional Development, is interested in, is hearing from the universities about what they think, for example, of reform of remote communities. How can universities bring their intellectual rigour, given they have connections with universities all over the world, to solve problems that we are looking to solve that other countries have looked to? I do not sense any involvement from our universities in that debate. We are here in our Parliament about to grant our universities much greater freedom in the way they use their assets so I would like to see a dividend back to the Parliament and the people of Western Australia around perhaps becoming more prominent in public debates about issues of public importance.

I note that a number of universities have regional campuses. Those topics have been well fleshed out by a number of my colleagues. I will make one point in particular about the University of Notre Dame and its Broome campus being a fantastic investment by Notre Dame. I understand these sorts of investments are tough for universities to make. They do not necessarily cover their costs but, to its great credit, Notre Dame has seen its responsibility of having a campus in Broome to provide a range of courses; in particular, for Aboriginal people of the Kimberley. I will perhaps give the University of Notre Dame a gentle nudge to start thinking about using its Broome campus as more of a Kimberley-based or northern Australia-based research centre to perhaps lead a debate that we see coming out of Canberra occasionally around the future of northern Australia, usually in a fairly ad hoc way. But I think having a university such as Notre Dame based there is a huge opportunity. I do not think Notre Dame has gained recognition for its investment, nor has it been as bold in its vision for what that campus could be, not just in respect of courses it provides to the people of the Kimberley but also the leadership it can take in the Kimberley more broadly and in northern Australia.

I want to make one final point in my general comments. I note that the member for Armadale went through the various changes that the legislation seeks to make. I will not go through them all; it has been done. Interestingly, one is the change of the name from Curtin University of Technology to Curtin University. I think I understand that, member for Armadale. Perhaps there is a sense that the word “technology” does not deliver the higher education vision that Curtin is looking to, but in my view that is perhaps something of a mistake. I think keeping the name “technology” would have been a wise move by Curtin. I think the member for Armadale referred to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. I note that when Jeanette Hackett finished as vice-chancellor in 2013, she was given an honorary doctorate of technology from Curtin University. When this legislation passes it will offer what Curtin has been known for; that is, offering technical, but also, given the way that word has morphed over time, pragmatic courses for people.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Under the binary system, there are universities and institutes of technology. They had different funding systems. One was research oriented and one was an institute of technology. In the 1980s there was a discussion about making everything universities because there were different funding levels around

research. I know this because I gave a paper at a conference on whether we would continue to have a binary system. The technology aspect was from the WA Institute of Technology and that was when it became Curtin. Part of that was that they said they would keep “technology” because a lot of the universities were cautious about it becoming a university due to their concern that it would compete for research funding. There you go.

Mr B.S. WYATT: It is a funding argument, which is unsurprising I guess, but over time the term “technology” has been something of a plus for Curtin, not a negative. I understand the desire to become a university and not a university of technology, bearing in mind the courses Curtin now offers are very different from those it offered during its WA Institute of Technology days, member for Mirrabooka. So be it; these things change and we move on. Curtin University is certainly undergoing a huge change in my electorate. Its ambitions for a university town centre are quite extraordinary. If the new medical school is not complete, it is close to being complete on campus and the tens of thousands of students at Curtin University have underwritten the development of Albany Highway–High Street in Victoria Park. The vast array of Asian restaurants we see now in Victoria Park were effectively underwritten by the tens of thousands of foreign students coming through Curtin University, which has been a huge stimulus for Victoria Park and South Perth, but more so Victoria Park. Curtin University is still growing and will continue to grow aggressively over the coming years regardless of its name.

On behalf of the opposition, the member for Armadale will seek to move a number of amendments around the staff composition of the governing bodies of the universities; the member for Armadale has already gone through that. Originally, during consideration in detail we were going to oppose the provision deleting the 50 per cent minimum for the student services and amenities fee going to the guild. I am delighted that, as I said, the government has seen the error of its ways and is no longer seeking to divert or have the capacity for universities to shrink the amount of money going to the guilds; that 50 per cent will be retained. But we will be moving some amendments around the need to maintain a strong staff and student representation presence on the governing bodies. The member for Armadale will be leading the opposition’s amendments and debate in respect of those proposed amendments.

I was never involved in the guild at university, but I was involved in the Blackstone Society. For those in the house who have not studied law—I think there is only one in this place at the moment who has studied it; namely, the member for Armadale—the Blackstone Society is the Law Society’s representative body. I was involved with Blackstone but not the University of Western Australia’s guild; however, I was certainly supported by the guild. As a student I took great delight in using the guild’s facilities over my, in my view, insufficient years at university. I thank Jake Wittey and the Curtin Student Guild for providing reams of information to the opposition in respect of what that SSAF goes into funding. That quite diverse range of investments goes into making the student experience better and supporting students. Students who have children may require childcare so that they can access their courses more easily, but the investments also make university a safer place for people, particularly around Curtin University, which is spread out over a large area and at night can be a dark and intimidating place. It is a lot better now, but it certainly can be a dark and intimidating place. Similarly with upgrades to kitchens, cafes, bistros and a sushi bar—you name it, the guild seems to have invested in it. But also now I think there is a greater push for a move to a more sustainable way of moving around Curtin University, hence the investment from the Curtin guild into bike vendors et cetera, as parking spaces shrink at Curtin University and there is a greater demand for better transport. There has also been investment not related to capital investment.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr B.S. WYATT: The Kalgoorlie student representative honorarium again comes from the SSAF. The guild supports a legal assistant officer, which I think everybody in this place knows is a position of significant support for students. I have done a bit of work with the Curtin University Student Guild in Sussex Street legal centre that assisted some of the guild’s students. The Kalgoorlie student assistance officer, international student liaison officer, postgraduate mentorship program, education policy officer and compliance and safety officer are all assisted, and the activities just go on. My point is that what we get for the SSAF of about \$290 is an extraordinary result from the university, and it is similar at the University of Western Australia. Again, the member for Armadale read a lot of UWA guild’s letter to us in respect of the importance of the SSAF, and it made the point that the guild financially supports, through that fee—there is a huge list here—the 16 student portfolios of Access Collective, Albany Students’ Association, the education council, the environment department, the ethno-cultural department, the international students department, mature age students, postgraduate students and public affairs; it goes on. I understand that this argument around guild fees and a compulsory component to it gets caught up in the whole perhaps more vexed debate that plays out around whether people should be forced to join a guild. When I was at university we were required to be a member of the guild, and I had no problem with that. Things have changed over time, but I think we still need to provide support for guilds because I think guilds are vulnerable, if the discretion is put in there, to losing just a few per

cent here and there, and over time they are not left with much. I note that we are giving our universities the capacity to undertake commercial activity. Hopefully I do not get to see it, but no doubt at some point —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz): Member for Willagee, when you walk into the chamber you are expected to acknowledge the Chair.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I have no doubt that at some point there will be debate in this place over an investment gone wrong—a bad commercial decision made by a university as a result of these various amendments—but I understand that in the end we need to perhaps set the universities free or make them more flexible to respond to the challenges they have in respect of generating their own source revenue to provide the university experience.

I think the member for Gosnells made the point when he implored those universities to not forget that the first job they have is to provide that educational experience to their students. Ultimately, I do not think they will—I would like to think they will not. When I look around at the great universities of the world in the United States and the United Kingdom, the reason people will still beg and borrow and maybe steal to go to those universities is that they still provide an extraordinary student experience with a brand that people pay for, which is what I did when I went to the University of London. My one year there cost more than my five-year law degree here in Western Australia, but it was an experience I could quite happily go back to now if someone were kind enough to give me a scholarship to go back and do further studies.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We can fix that!

Mr B.S. WYATT: I note the Premier may be offering a very, very generous stipend for me to return —

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: A Premier's bursary!

Mr B.S. WYATT: A Premier's bursary for me to return to the United Kingdom to continue my very useful studies that I undertook a long time ago now.

To return to the amendments, I think the reason we are supporting them is that, obviously, the Labor Party has had a position around giving those flexibilities to the universities for a while. I hope they are exercised with caution—generally, universities are conservative organisations, and I am sure they will—but I am sure there will be, hopefully after I am out of this place, conversations in this place about the inevitable investments or commercial decisions gone wrong.

I will conclude with a couple of points. First, I want to see more from our universities in Western Australia. They do very good work, and I can think of every single university doing tremendous work with tremendous academics. But they often do it in their own little world—free and absent from the public debate that happens in Western Australia. I expect universities and leading academics to perhaps be willing to take on a stronger profile in the public debate around issues of public policy. I do not mean commenting on the politics of the day—plenty of people do that—but in respect of providing the vast resource, research and credibility of universities to these debates because it just simply, to be frank, does not happen in Western Australia. I dare say that that is because of, simply, the old British model of a more subtle approach to the public space, but I think that needs to change because we are now, effectively, giving the universities greater freedom. We are giving them a gift with this legislation—no doubt about it—and so now I would like to think that we will see from our universities stronger advocacy around the things they are researching that they perhaps can guide and advise not just members in this house on, but also the public of the day around policy positions that government—state, federal or even local—should be taking. Other than the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, there really is not a public, well researched, consistent think tank—style approach taken by the universities. I want to see that change because I think we will all be the wiser for it.

In conclusion, I thank the student guilds. As I said, I was not involved on a guild but I was involved with the Blackstone Society, which is similar and there to provide a service to the law students of the law school of the University of Western Australia. Guilds can often be maligned in public debate, but they provide an extraordinary service to the students who come to university. Some live at university for great lengths of time and some come and go as required; they have other things to do in life. The point I was making when I went through those lists provided by Curtin University and the University of Western Australia is that regardless of how short a time someone spends at university, they inadvertently call upon and use services provided by guilds, which are usually funded to the greatest extent by the student services amenities fee. If guilds lost that funding, there would certainly be a decline in services, because universities have great pressures and when they look around to find savings and alternative revenue sources, inevitably, the SSAF becomes a high target. I am delighted that the government is moving that amendment, which I will quote. It states —

The Council must pay to the Student Guild an amount that is not less than 50% of the total amount of the annual amenities and services fees collected.

That is a good amendment. No doubt the guilds and our universities will be very pleased to see it, and the Labor Party is very pleased that it will no longer have to divide and oppose that amendment.

MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee) [9.01 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to this debate on the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I should say at the outset, following from the member for Victoria Park, that he enjoyed a rich student life in his early years at university.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: According to the Premier, I have to go back!

Mr P.C. TINLEY: In many years from now the member for Victoria Park will walk the corridors of some university with a very wise look on his face!

Unlike many members in this place, I did not come through that particular system. As I say, I met the scholars on the way home, having left school at the age of 15, going to the country and working on wheat farms, of all things, before joining the Army. I obviously left school far too early. In those days John Curtin High School was not the elite public school it is these days; you had to fight your way in and fight your way out! Fights on the hockey field were a common occurrence after school and in fact they were billed as entertainment. It was not until joining the Army that I realised the value of a proper and more studious education, and through that went to the University of New England and enjoyed a Bachelor of Professional Studies, basically an undergraduate degree, and then a master's degree in international studies through the University of Canberra in subsequent years. I certainly would not have survived the university time that many in this chamber have enjoyed. I share that experience by way of introduction to my contribution on this bill to say that I, coming to tertiary education in my late 20s or early 30s, am representative of a large number of people in Australia who underscore how much tertiary education has changed and the mantra, if you like, of lifelong learning touted by educationalists—a continuum. It shows the way our information and knowledge is combined and weaved inside the professional and personal experiences of our lives, and I think that is a fundamental point to make.

The bill we are contemplating tonight takes another step towards the future we anticipate for the university sector. There is always a tension in public policy debate around the whole continuum from K to 12 and onwards about the best methods for the delivery of education. At the far end of it we are now talking about early learning and structured play groups, the zero to three model, early learning periods and when a child should start primary school. The last year of primary school has been transferred to our secondary schools. There are colleges in Western Australia such as Tuart College and Canning College that allow adults to get an improved Australian tertiary admission rank—or one at all—and they deliver fantastic outcomes that provide alternative pathways. One of my own sons went to year 12 at Christian Brothers' College in Fremantle. He was not necessarily academically inclined, but such is the flexibility in our secondary school system that he spent a day a week at TAFE doing a certificate IV in commerce, which gave him an ATAR score of 70 straight out of the gate just by passing it. His pathway to some courses in university was facilitated from year 11 onwards. These are the sorts of things happening in our education system and the continuum of that education. That morphs into the idea of the nexus between university—academic study—and vocational training, because the two are intertwined.

The member for Victoria Park is one of the few members who has a university in his seat, as does the member for Fremantle with, of course, the University of Notre Dame Australia. At the next election, when the boundaries change, I will inherit Murdoch University. Like many members who will inherit various parts of other electorates, I have been very active in trying to understand that. I think Murdoch University will be a significant beneficiary of this legislation. The issues at Murdoch are significant. It would be fair to say Murdoch is in a state of transition, if not, in certain parts, disarray. I do not mind saying that without over-egging that particular comment. There was a particularly difficult situation with the leadership there but that has been sorted out. In my view the university owes a fair debt of gratitude to its chancellor, David Flanagan, for the leadership he showed in the way he handled the senate and the other people involved in the nasty situation there. That recent iteration of problems at Murdoch also had a history, with other challenges with the leadership at the university, and it does not seem to have been able to take a trick over time. The university has not been inactive though.

Again, I pick up on what previous speakers have said about the role of a university in our society. The member for Victoria Park talked about the growing expectant role of universities as bigger participants in public policy debate of the day, and I think they have a great contribution to make. It may not be from a particular university or branded at a particular university; it will play itself vicariously through other methods in a modern technical and digital age. For example, there is *The Conversation*, which is an online publication. Subscribers get an email every morning with a dozen-odd articles in various categories from arts through to politics, business, health et cetera. They all contain contributions from academics, in most part well regarded, from a range of disciplines and universities nationally and internationally. *The Conversation* is a significant tool, particularly to a politician interested and active in setting and developing public policy, as we all would be in this chamber. Members can go to that one website and get a very clear handle on many, many, if not all, issues before the community of Australia and certainly Western Australia. There is a blurring of the lines of how education is delivered, as I said,

through that continuum of primary and secondary school and, of course, tertiary education. There is also a blurring of the lines in how universities operate in our community and within society.

The term “innovation” is overused, a cliché even, and unhelpful. The role universities play to diversify the economy is fundamentally the biggest contribution they make in our lifetimes. We talk often in this place about what we think may be happening in the economy of Western Australia and its need to transition not away from but beyond our traditional resource and agricultural industries. Again, I always add the caveat that we should never say for a moment that we have an either/or argument about the resource sector and agriculture. It does not hold up. We do not have a counter-poised industry to something that is worth over \$100 billion to our economy. It is not about that. I am talking about inoculating or making insurance around how our economy might protect itself from the global winds of change that we all see coming. Probably no state is more exposed than Western Australia to that trade and its reliance on commodities. It is globally exposed to variations in trade and also changes in technology and the potential for competition. I have spoken many times, and others know this, about the pricing differential between a tonne of iron ore from the Vale mines in Brazil to southern China and ours. It has gone from \$21 to \$4 a tonne. They were last year’s figures. These things move around on the basis of oil, but there are some fundamental technologies that have changed. That has been done with Valemax ships. I use that as a vignette to highlight how we are exposed to potential changes in the market, both in demand side and supply side variations and changes. We must attend to the idea of diversification from which the term “innovation” manifests itself.

I come back to my point about the role of universities. The member for Victoria Park talked about the role they might play. I think what should be fundamental to universities is what they contribute to the economy of Western Australia, not in direct terms in foreign students or research papers, but in the assistance they give at the enterprise level to businesses in Western Australia that want to diversify. If we go to a business in Western Australia and say, “Do you think the Asian region or the zone we live in is offering some opportunity for you?” most of them—any who are alive to the possibility of growth within their business—would say, “Yes.” If we asked, “Do you think technology is changing your sector or do you think technology has a role to play in your business?” they would almost all say, “Yes.” If we took the very beginning definition of “innovation”, which is incremental and which every business that wants to survive and thrive into the future would be doing daily—that boring, slight incremental change to their business and to their model to ensure that they are being either cost efficient or opening or expanding new markets—they would all say that they want to be part of a diversified economy that takes advantage of our location in Asia and the growing opportunity to our near north in South-East Asia. All of them would say that. But when we talk to them about how they would access that knowledge and how they would get informed about that, it becomes a little murky. They know about universities. Many of them have been to universities. It does not mean they are knowledgeable about how to access universities. The vast majority of enterprises in Western Australia would look at a university and see it as an amorphous blob, with no front door in particular. They would not know where to start. University websites are vast, with multiple pages, and pages within pages. It is a real challenge for universities to be relevant and available to the enterprises of Western Australia that want to diversify and take the opportunities of our region. For me, if this bill in any way can assist universities to be industry facing as they say—orientated towards the development of industries in Western Australia—that is a good thing.

Murdoch University, as I said—circling back on it, because I will inherent that university should I be re-elected next March—has been a particularly good experience for me. I cannot talk about Murdoch University without mentioning some of the great strengths of the university and the contribution it makes. I have talked about how businesses might take advantage of our region, and none is better represented than the Asia Research Centre resident in the Sir Walter Murdoch School of Public Policy and International Affairs, under Professor Ben Reilly. The Asia Research Centre, founded in 1991, provides a unique combination of multidisciplinary research in politics and political economy particularly in our region and a range of other things around modes of government and how to keep a sense on social change and policymaking in our region, which is fundamental and provides very important inputs into the thinking of businessmen who are trying to find guidance on what the markets might do and how they engage in those markets. The centre’s director, Dr Caroline Hughes, who is associate professor for government studies, has been heading that for a while now. She is particularly good at funnelling a lot of research into practical terms. When people get to know these academics, they are a great resource—for me, no more so than Dr Jeff Wilson, associate professor at Murdoch, who has helped me understand something that we on this side of the house term “Asian engagement”.

Murdoch has given rise to some great Western Australians. Of course, the now retired Dr David Hill is a very experienced and committed Indophile and he has contributed to public policy debate in Australia generally. I also highlight for members that in 2010 the federal government produced the “Australia in the Asian Century” white paper, which has basically gathered dust. It made a reasonable point about the “Asian century” and had a reasonable contribution to make. However, it was up to the Asia Research Centre, under the urging of senior leadership at Murdoch University, to produce the First Murdoch Commission. The First Murdoch Commission

talks about the Western Australian opportunity on the basis of the “Asian opportunity” or the “Asian century”. It picked up where the “Asian Century” white paper left off and translated it into Western Australian terms. If members want to understand how the Asian century impacts on Western Australia, the 2013 First Murdoch Commission report is a very good place to start to understand the contribution a university can make to the enterprises of Western Australia and to the debate about where we should be going.

Murdoch University has been around for a long time. It was established in 1975, largely for the purposes of providing veterinary school services. That is why it has a large plot of land, some 28 hectares, out the back. In my personal view, it is 28 hectares of wasted opportunity.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr P.C. TINLEY: It is 28 hectares of unleveraged opportunity. The veterinary school does not need it all. A very well-established master plan has changed over time. I add that it is the master plan that gave us 550 units at the St Ives retirement village, which I understand is contentious because it may well have been ultra vires to the act. In fact, this bill will in retrospect allow such commercial development. Murdoch University was leaning well forward when it came to innovative commercial opportunities for passive revenue to support the operation of the university. From here there is always going to be that tension, if you like, that balance, between getting a passive income or an active income—it does not really matter—but they are leveraging that opportunity to deliver better services, better research, better opportunities and better contributions to Western Australia.

Murdoch was one of the first universities to have outreach campuses, with varying degrees of success. The Rockingham campus, which many members would be familiar with, was opened in 1996. Unfortunately, it never really achieved the ambitions that the university had hoped for. At the time it was very much guided around delivering tertiary opportunities to low socioeconomic areas—to the southern reaches of the metropolitan area. It does not appear to have done that. The anecdotal advice from the university is that people who live in Rockingham are more than happy to travel to the main campus if they need to.

Dr A.D. Buti: I think the member for Gosnells talked about our conception of universities. I think we have to get away from the need for universities to be —

Mr P.C. TINLEY: A physical location.

Dr A.D. Buti: He was talking about England, where people go away to universities. With regard to Rockingham, the thing that has been successful is SCALES, which is the community legal service run by Murdoch University. It has been very successful.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: The member for Armadale’s point is valid because it relates to the opening comment I made about the nature of the delivery system of learning through life learning, if we want to put it in those broader terms, but also where do we take those opportunities for each university? Yes, there is a contribution to make, particularly when we see a need and when there is a failing. Other members talked about campuses in the regions, which is important. There is also the issue of campuses in the wider region, such as the Asian region. There is an opportunity for universities to expand further into places such as Dubai, where Murdoch has a campus, or Singapore, which has an international study centre. We do not utilise those enough. For example, if an enterprise wants to get into South-East Asia—for instance, Malaysia, Singapore or any of those countries in that region—why would it not allow one of its brightest to study a tailored unit at the Singaporean campus to get a sense of the place and engage with the professionals there? It is a very safe way of doing it.

I mentioned the Asia Research Centre and I talked about some of those outreach experiences. There were some very forward thinkers in that area, none more in my mind than Kevin Hewison, who ran the centre, and, as I have already mentioned, Professor David Hill. Professor Hill had the brainchild of the Australian Consortium for ‘In-Country’ Indonesian Studies. David Hill is a strong and international leading figure in Indonesian understanding. He was the founder and director of ACICIS. I always said to him that that name really does not pop and they should find a name that better explains it. But that is what happens when academics make up names. ACICIS is a consortium of 24 Australian and international universities that assists foreign students to study in Indonesian universities. It was established in 1994. ACICIS was praised in the government’s 2012 “Australia in the Asian Century” white paper as a successful model for in-country learning. Sorry; I said 2010 before—it is 2012. It has just undergone its twentieth year. I even got a badge for it.

Mr R.H. Cook: Are they going to change their name to celebrate?

Mr P.C. TINLEY: No, but it should. I made a couple of remarks at the twentieth anniversary and when I suggested that, I got some very interesting looks from all the old professors. ACICIS is a very good example of what can happen on the smell of an oily rag. It set up a campus in Jakarta and operates with the universities in Indonesia to give people a very good in-country understanding of what goes on. It teaches journalism up there as well, which is no easy thing in a place like Jakarta, and it does it very successfully. Two thousand students went

through the ACICIS program on a very modest sum. If a government of any persuasion was looking to assist in material ways, with the role that some of these universities play, ACICIS would be one of those role models. With a very modest improvement in its funds and its resources, not just the money but also support in other ways—if we could ramp that up—Western Australia really ought to be the leading think tank on all things Indonesian, given our proximity to Indonesia and the number of qualified and highly regarded international thinkers that Indonesia produces, instead of them going to Northwestern University, where there seems to be a strong alumnus. We should be trying to attract those people to Western Australia.

There is a wider issue here, which goes beyond Murdoch, Curtin, UWA or any other university. It is about Perth, and I do mean Perth, separate from Western Australia. Perth in a global context has been a strong launch pad for international businesses wanting to find a bolthole, if you like, into South-East Asia certainly but Asia generally. We have an opportunity in part of that theme of diversifying the economy to look at Perth as being an international hub, temporal as it may be, for engaging with Asia. The way we do it in large part is by making sure that our universities are aligned with each other in those areas that we can find alignment with them. I know it is a very difficult business. The competitive nature of universities will always be like that. If we can find the things that we can agree on about enterprises getting access to the region and growing the global reputation of Perth as being a creative centre and a place that enterprises can launch from into Asia, to allow them to both understand it and have strong networks into Asia, the universities can provide that.

This bill will be helpful for Murdoch to activate the 28 hectares that it sits on and other services. I really hope that it will have—I am sure it will—a bright future. We need the Murdochs just like we need the UWAs of the world. Murdoch sits in the top 500—it was 401st in one ranking—of universities globally, so it is no slouch. Significant people have told me that the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch, for example, was probably second only to the Australian National University in prestige for Asian studies. Unfortunately, also anecdotally, with the resignation of Kevin Hewison, David Hill and a few other senior people there, we might make the connection that it has probably slipped a little. We have to restore that. Asia is the opportunity for our universities, particularly universities such as Murdoch.

The final point I would like to make is about the role that universities have in their district. We talked about the fact that many universities are temporally connected, globally and within our state, but also universities have a local social responsibility, and Murdoch is a very good example. It has had varying degrees of interest from the secondary schools in its immediate proximity. They come and go, depending on the enthusiasm of either the secondary schools themselves or the university at various times. It would be very good in this instance if Murdoch could provide a better connection and a pathway for kids coming out of Hamilton Senior High School, which will merge with South Fremantle Senior High School to become Fremantle College, and Lakelands and further south, and of course the private schools such as Seton Catholic College, Kennedy Baptist College and the schools within the southern districts of the city, to make sure that they are giving every child the opportunity to go to university if that is their desire. A good example is North Lake Senior Campus, which offers years 11 and 12. That campus has a diverse ethnic make-up and takes a large number of migrants. It offers courses in English as a second language. Students also have the opportunity to undertake a six-month bridging course at that school before they even get to university. There are a range of unconventional solutions to some of the conventional problems in our community to make sure that we upskill people and give future generations of Western Australians the opportunity to have the full education that I enjoyed.

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle) [9.30 pm]: I would like to make a couple of points in my contribution to the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I was going to resist the temptation to give a few stories about my university days, but I cannot, so I will briefly touch on a few points that are relevant to the matters before us. I have been lucky enough to attend three universities in Australia, all at undergraduate level—the University of Western Australia, the University of Melbourne and Murdoch University. Certainly with the first two, which I attended when I first left school in the early 1980s, my education was greatly enhanced by my extracurricular activities. An important element of the bill before us is the contribution to the student amenities fee and to student activities through their elected representatives in Western Australia, which are usually called guilds. In Victoria they were known as the student union or the Students' Representative Council. They have since been amalgamated at Melbourne University into one organisation, but when I was there the two were separate—the student union dealt with a number of student services and the Students' Representative Council was a more political organisation.

One example of my extracurricular activities at UWA was around what has been kindly described as sandpit politics, or student politics. In 1982 we protested against the first tranche of student loans and changes to the way in which student services were funded and the level of government contribution to students at university. The Fraser government was putting in place a student loan scheme whereby people would be asked to take out loans to assist their time at university. That was considered to be quite an incredible act by the then Liberal federal government. Now it seems pretty mild, but at that time we were protesting against it. I was in my first year at uni.

People had decided to protest against these fees by holding a mock trial in which four students, who would no doubt be worse off as a result of these student loans, would be tried and hanged. There was going to be a woman student, a part-time student, a mature-age student and I forget who else, who were going to be tried and hanged because they could not repay their student loan, all because of the Fraser Liberal government. At the last minute someone did not turn up to the protest, so I got pushed to the front and was part of this little student theatre group. The person who did not turn up is now one of the national secretaries of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, Dave Noonan. He was sensible enough to not turn up and I got pushed to the front. The way this little protest was going to run was that people were going to be tried on the Oak Lawn for not repaying their fees and there was then going to be a mock hanging. Grahame—his name has just escaped me —

Ms J.M. Freeman: Droppert?

Ms S.F. McGURK: No; he is now the secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union.

Ms J.M. Freeman: McCulloch.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I thank the member for Mirrabooka. Grahame McCulloch was responsible for doing up the ropes and organising some of the props. As luck turned out, I was the first person to be tried and hanged. They put me on a chair on the Oak Lawn and tied a fake noose around my neck and a shorter rope under my arms. As Grahame pulled away the chair to make sure that things were all okay, we found that he had not tied up the rope very well, so I was hanging from a tree on the Oak Lawn and kicking for a little bit. The people who were going around collecting money for the protest said that it went quite well and they got quite a bit of money! I do not know how many members know Grahame McCulloch. He is quite a confident fellow, but he still looks very sheepish when he sees me because it could have ended a lot worse than it did. As it turned out, I got a few beers bought for me that afternoon. That was just one protest I undertook in my first year at UWA.

I later transferred to Melbourne University and really enjoyed my studies there, partly because of the proximity of the university—we could live close to the university. A lot of our activities were centred around Carlton and the university. Apart from the academic focus, which was very rich, I really appreciated being involved in the elected student body, the SRC, and the student union, and I ended up becoming the chair of the student union towards the end of my degree. That student union ran a quite highly regarded art gallery and student theatre, which has produced many people over the years, including Barry Humphries and a number of people who are on television now, such as Magda Szubanski, who was at university when I was there, and Rob Sitch. All those people went through that student theatre at Melbourne University. I can claim no credit for that at all. It was a big university. It had about 15 500 students when I was there. I am not sure how many it has now, but I think it is one of the biggest universities in Australia.

The issue in the bill before us about the level of student fees allocated to student services was as much an issue at university in the early 1980s as it is now. In the case of the student union, we elected to change some of our managerial structure. We considered the money that was allocated to the student union to be our money. We were an elected body and we decided to spend it as we saw fit. The vice-chancellor at the time did not agree with us and decided to sack the student union when I was the chair of it, and that was quite a dramatic turn of events. I remember going to see the people at Legal Aid as chair of the student union. I went to see them in my capacity as a student representative and they were not really that interested, but when I explained that they would be taking the vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne to the Supreme Court because he had sacked the student union, some of the lawyers looked quite interested and thought it would be a bit of a lark. We took the university to court, but the proceedings did not last long.

The issue, as we saw it, was about students paying money to get a service and there being no taxation without representation. Essentially, people had elected their student body and those people should have had a significant say over how their student fees were spent. I still believe that that should be the case. Of course, on the whole the university had an interest. I remember there were long debates nationally about ensuring that student services were offered to students and that the people who paid the fees made a contribution. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the voluntary nature of the student contributions was, I think, a political move made partly in response to the idea that there should be so-called compulsory unionism, but also because of the level of political activity that came out of the universities. In the few years that I was at university, Lindsay Tanner, who went on to become the federal finance minister, finished his studies, and Julia Gillard, who obviously later became Prime Minister, was there. It was an incredibly rich culture and I learnt a lot from my extracurricular activities. I think the level of political activity in student unions nationally, and even down to a campus level, influenced the Howard government's move to make those fees voluntary. I also think that has an adverse effect on political activity or involvement generally by students in their campus years, which is an important element of their education. However, important services can be affected as well, and that can be especially the case for people from rural areas. University administrations were very cautious of voluntary student unionism. As a result of the

pressure on students now to get through their university degree, pay their student fees and earn an income, their studies are worse off and their overall education is compromised.

Later on, I also attended Murdoch University and did some study in broadcasting, which I had always been interested in. Going back to university in my late 30s was quite a different experience. It was a very practical course that I really enjoyed, but going back to university well and truly as an adult was certainly a different experience.

We welcome the government's commitment to effectively retain the 50 per cent income from student fees for student services. I think that is important.

I also want to make some brief comments about the commercial activities of universities. The reality of the economics of higher education is that there has to be a diversification of the way that universities gain income. Whatever we might think about that, that is the reality of the challenges of the federal government's proportion of funding for tertiary education. Like most people who have had anything to do with universities, I can see the pressure on universities to look at various alternative forms of income, whether it be full-fee-paying postgraduate courses, which have been mentioned, or attracting and retaining overseas students, which has a lot of benefits, but we also need to be cautious that educational standards are not compromised at times because of the pressure to attract and retain those students. That was certainly my experience when I attended Murdoch University. The university lecturers I know talk about that. These are anecdotal or individual observations. I was working at an organisation with a woman who got a Master of Business Administration from Curtin University, but I would say that she would have struggled to put a coherent letter together in English. She was a very good worker and a very bright woman, but I questioned how she got an MBA from Curtin University when we could not get her to correspond in English. That is one example, but from the people I know who have taught at universities, the tone is certainly there, and it was my experience when I went to Murdoch University later in life.

I know that the member for Armadale referred to class sizes and all those manifestations of the commercial pressures on universities. If the amendments to the legislation before the house allow those universities that do not currently have the ability to offer commercial activities on their sites to do so, and they are complementary to the work of the university—either teaching or research work—it would be difficult to argue against it.

I want to take a little time to talk about the contribution of the University of Notre Dame Australia to my electorate. I think the jury is still out on the presence of Notre Dame in Fremantle. The university was established in 1989 and I think it took its first students in 1991. This year it will have 11 000 students across its three campuses in Sydney, Broome and Fremantle. One of the issues for Fremantle when the university was established was whether it was essentially buying up a large part of Fremantle's west end and would impose some sort of monoculture on the west end and take away its raffish nature.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms S.F. McGURK: The number of hotels in that area is quite extraordinary. I have a list of them. I think there are half a dozen hotels along High Street alone.

My experience since becoming the state MP representing Fremantle, and even before that, is that Notre Dame has made a positive contribution to Fremantle. If we look at the challenges of the local Fremantle economy, we can see that we need all the help we can get. I think Notre Dame has made a positive contribution, but I think a lot more could happen that would assist in Notre Dame's positive contribution to the economics of Fremantle. Obviously, it would be better if more students lived in and around Fremantle. There are very few now. The original idea was that it would be a kind of university town. As I said, my experience at the University of Melbourne was a very positive one. I have not studied at the Oxbridge or Ivy League universities, but the idea of students walking around the university and living there being part of the rich experience of a broader education has not been realised in Fremantle with Notre Dame.

In the late 1980s, early 1990s there was a big debate about whether Notre Dame University was killing the atmosphere of the west end of Fremantle. A bit of analysis of this has been done. One analysis was commissioned in 2002 by the University of Notre Dame, the Phoenix English Language Academy, which I am not sure is still operating but which was attached to the university, as well as the City of Fremantle of the economic and social impact of Notre Dame University by Helen Grzyb and Associates. The conclusion they came to, not surprisingly perhaps considering who commissioned the study, was that the university had made a positive contribution but more could occur if more students were living in Fremantle. Part of that debate was occurring with the Fremantle Society and John Dowson and other people saying that the university was moving in and taking away the character of Fremantle. In 2003, then Mayor Peter Tagliaferri wrote to the *Fremantle Herald* with his personal reflections on what the west end had been like before Notre Dame Australia had moved in. I am reading not from the Helen Grzyb report but from a PhD done on this issue in 2014. In his reflection of the west end, Peter Tagliaferri was quoted in the *Fremantle Herald* as saying —

“You would see warehouses, gambling dens, nightclubs, strip joints, clubs and cheap booze, along with rows of empty derelict warehouses. It was too dangerous to go to the west end of Fremantle after dark! Oh, I forgot there was also a police station on the wharf to deal with all the problems, muggings, rapes, stealings, drunkenness, stabbings and other crimes that took place in this once seedy area...Fremantle is past being known as seedy port city where booze barns are the major attraction.

I guess Peter Tagliaferri was well and truly putting paid to the kind of romantic notion of what the west end once was. There has been a lot of analysis of Notre Dame’s contributions. I was quoting from the PhD of Shaphan Cox, who in 2012 submitted his Curtin University PhD “Whose City/Whose Fremantle? Reconceptualising Space for an Open Politics of Place”—sounds like a PhD title!

An important debate for us in Fremantle is how we make sure people are living and working in what is clearly a very beautiful town and has a lot of attractions to both improve density in a very liveable area near a train line and be attractive for tourists. We have the ocean, a rich, built heritage and a working port—all those things make Fremantle attractive. I think the presence of Notre Dame has made a positive contribution to Fremantle. I said earlier that I thought the jury was still out but in fact my experience of Notre Dame has been very positive, but it would be certainly enhanced if more students were living in Fremantle. My impression is that Notre Dame has struggled not to take on too many things, so to take on additional student accommodation has been difficult for it. Under the current leadership of Professor Celia Hammond, I think the university has made a very positive contribution locally. Although many of the heritage buildings in Fremantle are not being used in their original state for hotels and the like, they are being used; some of the courtyards are quite beautiful and the activation of some of those spaces has been really quite good.

Just today I attended an inter-faith service at the university called Abraham Day, based on having three of the monotheistic faiths getting together and talking about what they have in common. The Catholic Archbishop, the Chief Rabbi of Western Australia and the Imam and teacher at Langford Islamic College, Sheikh Agherdien, spoke today. It is the sort of contribution Notre Dame has played to the local community but certainly for its students. I get the impression partly because of its scale with 11 000 students over those three campuses—I am not sure how many of those are in Fremantle; I think the vast majority would be—that people feel some connection to the student body. I am not sure that is the case now in some of the much larger universities.

I look forward to continuing to work with the University of Notre Dame. As I said, I think it makes a positive contribution to Fremantle. It would be fair to say that more locals wish that it paid rates. It does not pay rates because it is essentially a university and it was created as both a Catholic and private university—one of the first. I do not think it was the first; I think Bond University was the first private university. That it was established as a Catholic university was quite controversial at the time. It is a little strange sometimes going there to see the extent of the Catholic activity that goes on. People regularly have mass and say prayers but, overall, I think that university has made some very positive contributions, not the least of which is due to the scale of the university and people feeling connected, the class sizes and the university community. I think that is essentially all I wanted to say on this bill. Other speakers have made comments about other elements of the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill before us.

There is actually one other point; namely, the changes to the size of the governing bodies in this Universities Legislation Amendment Bill. I think there continues to be concern to ensure a proportion of teaching staff have representation on those governing bodies and students have reasonable and elected representation on them. I can see those contributions as only being beneficial for the universities and how they are run.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [9.57 pm] — in reply: I thank members opposite who have contributed to debate on this Universities Legislation Amendment Bill and for their broad support of the legislation. There are some points of difference; probably the main one relates to the current situation whereby at least 50 per cent of student amenities fees must be distributed to the student university guilds. This bill was going to remove that but the Minister for Education has reconsidered it, so the status quo will remain. I think that was the major point of difference, which has now gone. Members probably also have some views about the composition of university councils, senates and the like. We will no doubt discuss that in the consideration in detail stage. Otherwise, there seems to be broad support. It will give some consistency among the various university acts and clarify the situation on commercial activities. It will make changes to the size of the governing bodies. I think most people agree that they should be smaller and be limited to 17. A few other bits and pieces seem to have broad support.

Most members reflected on their university days and recontested their battles as student guild members and the like. I thought the member for Gosnells’ failed attempt to become president of the alumni was probably the highlight of that. Pick on the chairman and you are bound to lose. He probably learnt a political lesson from that. I join in the spirit of the debate. Universities have been an important part of my life. While I did an honours degree at the University of Western Australia and then a master’s degree, over my lifetime I have had a closer

association with Curtin University. I find it incredible. I was writing something the other day, and my master's degree thesis was called "A Hedonic Price Model of Consumer Demand for Urban Land Attributes", which is pretty strange in itself. It was actually quite a heavy, econometric, statistical, computer-based study; today I struggle to use a mobile phone, so how I ever achieved that is somewhat beyond me! In those days master's degrees were pretty rare—only a handful had been awarded at that stage; now, fortunately, a lot more people go on and do postgraduate study.

Curtin University has been very good to me over the years. When I was working in Canberra in my early 20s, I wanted to come back to Perth and Curtin gave me a job as the most junior of junior tutors. Pretty quickly I was a senior tutor, then a lecturer. We had a strange little department; for some reason, economics and business law were together. This was in the days of the WA Institute of Technology, as WAIT was going through the process of becoming Curtin University. In this very small academic department there were some interesting people—I count me as one of them. The Treasurer, Mike Nahan, was there; Lyndon Rowe was a member of that little department; Jeanette Hackett was there; Val French, who many may have known as being married to the Chief Justice, was there; as was John Wood, who members would probably know as deputy vice-chancellor at Edith Cowan University. We were all, sort of, tutors and senior tutors, maybe; none of us were particularly involved in student politics, but we did have quite an influence in the way Curtin was going. I guess it was just a group of fairly interested people—fairly talented, some of them. I enjoyed that time. Curtin also gave me the opportunity to be a visiting fellow at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, which was very generous of it. That was obviously a good experience. I subsequently came into politics, where we always have our highs and lows. I guess for me a low period was during the last Labor government when I, for the first time in my political career, was not on the front bench either in government or in opposition. I sat where the member for Armadale is now sitting—I call it my Gulag years, sitting up on the —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I remember those years.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes; the member for Midland would have enjoyed them—I did not!

I thought: What am I going to do to keep myself thinking? Curtin graduate school asked me whether I would do a bit of teaching, which I really enjoyed. I went back and did, basically, introductory economics courses, but it was good. It kept me busy and kept me alive during those periods.

We all have happy memories of university days. There was a general discussion about the role of universities, and I thought most of the points made were very valid. It is my view, and I think most members made the same point, that universities really do have to be about teaching and learning. Obviously some take a far stronger view in research than others, and that variety is good.

I will conclude with a couple of comments about universities as I think they are going at the moment. I think back in the 1990s, when I was education minister, I was of the view that we had too many universities; I think at that stage we probably did. They did not tend to cooperate with each other. Perth has grown now, the population has grown, there are more students and more overseas students; it is probably a blessing now that we have those five universities. I know some probably struggle a little in terms of student numbers, but we have five universities, and they provide, I think, a wide range of courses and different experiences. What I believe is important is the university experience. Although I never got involved in student politics or the like—in fact, I was not even interested in politics during my university days—it is more about simply doing a course and getting a degree. Members opposite were more involved around universities than I was in those days; I was more interested in playing football for Claremont, which I failed at. The university atmosphere is, I think, something that is often forgotten. I always feel a little sorry for students, often more mature age, whose university experience is to be a part-time student. I think they miss out on that experience of being a student, being on campus and participating in student life and all it involves.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Now it is all done online.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes. We have to be careful we do not lose that. I think that is part of the growing up of a young person and their broader sort of social development, if you like.

Universities are now very externally oriented in terms of their overseas students. I think we are getting good research performance. I think the universities are now collaborating better than they ever have before, and that is across a whole range of fields.

I will talk about a couple of current developments that I believe are important. The City of Perth Bill gave rise to a debate about local government reform and the like, as there should have been. I have to say that one of my major motivations was to expand the City of Perth boundary to the west, so that it included UWA and the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre and that strip of land in between. There is no doubt that if we could project ourselves forward 20 years, that strip of land would be basically occupied by the university and the medical

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 13 September 2016]

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Peter Tinley; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Colin Barnett

industry. We will see a blending of UWA with the major teaching hospital for medical training and the major medical research centre, basically integrated with QEII Medical Centre, with obviously the major hospital, the Perth Children's Hospital, and in the future there will be, obviously, a women's hospital there. That is a bit like the Texas Medical Center and other centres like that around the world. The other one happening now is the development of the university campus at Midland for Curtin University, which will provide the clinical training of doctors but also undergraduate education in nursing, physiotherapy, business studies and possibly engineering. I think everyone would agree that the eastern suburbs of Perth has been the one area that has not had a university campus, and I think it is terribly important to give equality of opportunity to all students obviously in Perth, but hopefully throughout the state. That should start to take place next year, which I think will be a significant advance for that area.

That is all I need to say. I thank members for their support, and obviously there will be some issues when we get into the committee stage. The government has some amendments that I think members opposite will support.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.