

COUNCIL COMMUNIQUE

FEBRUARY 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council extended a special welcome to Ms Ivana Pedruco-Aniceto, the undergraduate student representative on Council, attending her first Council meeting. The Council also welcomed Professor Craig Simmons (PVC, College of Engineering, Science and Environment) who was attending as an observer.

HEALTH & SAFETY

The Council undertook its annual due diligence briefing on WHS, noting recent legislation, case law and obligations of Council members.

The Council received a WHS Quarterly Update and discussed the trends in WHS at the University and the University's response to gender-based and psychosocial issues. The headline results of the 2025 Australian University Census on Staff Wellbeing was examined for lessons for the University, noting more information was required about the detailed findings. The Work Program Injury Management Plan was tabled.

UPDATE FROM THE CHANCELLOR

The Chancellor provided an overview of her program of engagement with University students, staff and external stakeholders. The recent UA / UCC Conference was discussed, including how universities are managing issues including antisemitism and racism and more broadly an uptick in regulations impacting on universities.

UPDATE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Acting Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the Vice-Chancellor's recent engagements, including the largest ever graduating cohort crossing the stage at the December graduations, the re-naming of Elizabeth Evatt House and the fifth year of Ngarrama, among many others. Sharon Claydon MP had provided the University with a transcript from Parliament on 3 February where she outlined her attendance at Ngarrama acknowledging not only its fifth year but its importance in Newcastle's calendar of events.



The Council was advised of sector updates including the ATEC legislation passing the House of Representatives without amendment and new TEQSA reporting requirements on workplace obligations, along with an update on student enrolment.

LOOKING AHEAD 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

Mr Joel Palmer, Director Strategy, Planning & Performance Engagement, presented the final draft of the Looking Ahead 2030 Strategic Plan, which was approved for launch at the end of March. The Council thanked Mr Palmer and his team for their significant effort in consultation and delivery of this important document.

FINANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on issues discussed at the Committee including the Chief Financial Officer's report, the Demolition Program Update and contract delegation and the Horizons Update.

RISK COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on issues discussed at the Committee including the new Risk Framework, the internal audit plan and the annual report on privacy management.

NOMINATIONS & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on issues discussed at the Committee including the appointment of Professor Peter Coaldrake AO to fill the vacancy on Council for a person with higher education experience. Professor Coaldrake recently received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Newcastle.

The Committee discussed the gap analysis that was undertaken showing the University's status against the Expert Council on University Governance report and noted the intention to comply with all recommendations.

In addition, Honorary Degree and University Fellowship nominations were considered along with Controlled Entity Board Director appointments.

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PEOPLE & CULTURE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on issues discussed at the Committee including a discussion of the Annual HR report, the release of QILT data, the Annual Complaints and Grievances Report and the feedback received from the President of UNSA and our new undergraduate Student member on the challenges for students with the cost of living crisis.

CHANCELLOR'S COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on Committee discussions around the Vice-Chancellor's performance against his 2025 goals, noting his comprehensive report. The Committee congratulated the Vice-Chancellor on his achievements.

ACADEMIC SENATE UPDATE

The President of Academic Senate provided an update on his report outlining membership and governance matters, as well as an overview of academic risk and Academic Senate forum items that have been raised.

COUNCIL SITE VISITS

On 27 February 2026, Mr Brendan Barrett, CEO of NUsport, led Council on a guided tour of the NUsport facilities including the pool, courts, high performance gym and new ovals. Council then had the opportunity to meet with NUsport staff.



NEXT MEETING

A special meeting of the Council will be held at Gosford on 27 March.

The next full meeting of Council will be held on 1 May 2026 at Callaghan campus.

CONTACT: Mr Daniel Bell – Chief Governance Officer