

Democrats' Supplementary Report

The Democrats are in agreement with the conclusions, recommendations and the majority of the content of the Oppositions Senators' report. Accordingly, our supplementary comments and recommendations will be confined to additional issues or areas where we have different views from those covered in the report.

We acknowledge the useful information produced during this brief inquiry and its relevance to the current debate on the issues surrounding future higher education policy.

The Democrats, however, are concerned that some of the language used in reference to the representatives of Melbourne University Private (MUP) who appeared before the Committee in the public hearing on 19 August is unnecessary, personal and unsubstantiated.

The Democrats believe that MUP gave their evidence in good faith and that offers of further meetings after the public hearing could not be seen as an attempt to 'avoid the scrutiny of the Parliament' (paragraph 2.63, Opposition Senator's report).

We also note that MUP, in a letter to the Committee following the public hearing of 19 August 2004, stated in their concluding remarks –

Finally, the University believes that its integrity has been impugned by Senator Carr, and that the Committee should take all steps necessary to rectify the damage done to the University's reputation by the suggestion that it had misled the Committee, the Victorian Minister, and the public through a false and dishonest research report. (MUP answers to questions on notice, point 23)

The Report details conclusive evidence and numerous reasons for MUP not to be included on the Table B list of providers of the Higher Education Support Act 2003. However, the Democrats are concerned that descriptive comments in the Opposition Senators' report, in regard to the representatives of Melbourne University Private (MUP) who appeared before the Committee, may detract from the evidence presented within the report.



Senator Natasha Stott Despoja