

Chapter 3

Democrat Senators' Report

Higher Education Legislation Amendment (2005 Measures No. 4) Bill 2005

3.1 The Australian Democrats' views on the provision of public funding to private higher education providers, and our strong support for publicly funded, accessible higher education, are well known.

3.2 We recognise that Carnegie Mellon University's establishment in Adelaide has State and Commonwealth support and is expected to bring a significant financial benefit to South Australia however, it is imperative we ensure adequate safeguards are in place to protect the reputation of our existing public universities.

3.3 For this reason, we endorse and will be moving the National Tertiary Education Union recommended amendments: 'That the Senate amend the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (2005 Measures No.4) Bill 2005 to ensure Table C providers are listed under the title by which they have been accredited in Australia', and 'That the Senate amend the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (2005 Measures No.4) Bill 2005 so that overseas 'universities' accessing Table C must meet the tests set out in Protocol 1 of the National Protocol For Higher Education Approval Processes to be able to access university title in Australia'.¹

3.4 The Democrats support the tuition assurance requirements contained in this bill.

3.5 We reserve our judgement on the bill contingent on the resolution of the matters outlined above.

Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment Bill 2005

3.6 This amendment will only be necessary if the Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005 is passed and the collection of a universal service fee at universities is banned.

3.7 However, this bill alone will not protect the availability and affordability of student services - for international or domestic students, as the fees collected under so-called Voluntary Student Unionism - even with the passage of this bill - will not be enough to keep many of the services afloat. Furthermore, many of the services that survive will be forced to increase dramatically the cost of the services they offer, which are currently subsidised by the universal student services fee.

1 National Tertiary Education Union, *Submission 6*, p. 5.

3.8 We note concerns raised by the National Liaison Committee for International Students in Australia (NLC) and the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations that this fee for international students may be further increased to support these services (the student services fee is already significantly higher for international students than it is for domestic students). For this reason, we endorse and will be moving the NLC's recommended amendment that the 'amount charged to international students for the provision of services required under the ESOS Act be included in the definition of course monies within the ESOS Act 2000 and not be included in the tuition (by definition) fee but rather a separate itemised fee'.²

3.9 We reserve our judgement on the bill.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja

2 National Liaison Committee for International Students in Australia, *Submission 1*, p. 7.