

Democrats' Supplementary Report

The Democrats are in agreement with the conclusions, recommendations and the majority of the content of the Opposition 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 Opposition Senators' 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, specifically in relation to further privatisation of the higher education sector.

The Democrats, however, believe the evidence presented to the committee and many of the arguments raised in the Opposition Senators' report warrant stronger recommendations.

The decline in Commonwealth funding of education, relative to other portfolios, over the past thirty years is of particular concern to the Democrats, as are the recent HECS fee increases for students. The Democrats believe Government policy should work to reverse this trend, not strengthen it.

Recommendation

That the Senate omit *Item 2 of Schedule 1 of the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (2005 Measures No.1) Bill 2005*, which amends the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* to allow the institutions listed on Table B access to funding from the Capital Development Pool.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja

