

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS

1.1 The Australian Democrats consider a strong higher education sector to be critical to Australia's ability to respond to the social, economic and environmental challenges facing this country.

1.2 The *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (2007 Measures No. 1) Bill 2007* is intended to amend the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and other legislation to alter the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes and secure funding for the implementation of the Research Quality Framework (RQF).

1.3 While the Democrats have no in-principle objections to the proposed amendments in this Bill, we do support the concerns raised by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) that many of these provisions appear premature when key policy decisions concerning the National Guidelines and the Research Quality Framework (RQF) have not yet been finalised.

1.4 The Australian Democrats echo the NTEU's call for additional funding for universities to help them implement the RQF. The current figure of \$16.4 million allocated to the Implementation Assistance Programme is likely to be totally inadequate as a means of helping the tertiary education sector to adapt to the significant administrative burden that the RQF may generate.

1.5 The Democrats continue to have strong concerns about the directions in which Howard Government policy is forcing the higher education sector, particularly with regard to radical and questionable reforms like the RQF. As such, we reserve the right to move amendments to this legislation when it is brought before the Senate.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja

