

the council of Australia's university presidents

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New deal for Australian universities

Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee President, Professor Deryck Schreuder offered his congratulations to Education Minister, Dr Brendan Nelson as the *Higher Education Bill 2003* passed through the Senate today.

"The Minister took over the education portfolio on 23 November 2001 and first met with the AVCC Board of Directors on 11 December 2001 where the future of Australia's higher education system was discussed. Almost two years to the day we are now witnessing that hard work come to fruition," Professor Schreuder said.

"The successful passage of the legislation is, in no small way, a result of the Minister's continued commitment to see the Government's package dealt with this year and his willingness to maintain negotiations with the AVCC and the Independent Senators.

"While we did not achieve every amendment we wanted for the legislation, in its current form it does offer a substantial basis for growth within the sector and provide a point from which we can move forward. The alternative – of not having the legislation passed – would have had a very negative effect on the future of higher education.

"With an election looming in 2004, the AVCC will continue to lobby all parties for further refinements to the legislation.

"It is important to acknowledge the contribution of the Independent Senators to this successful outcome. They were instrumental in both the adoption of many of the AVCC amendments, and most importantly, in voting the legislation through the Senate.

"Their desire to see the most beneficial outcome for the sector, and the significance they place on the future of higher education within Australia, has been an encouraging factor in our continued negotiations with Government.

"Rather than the end of a story, we see today as the beginning of a new era of reform for higher education. We look forward, in our bipartisan role as an advocacy body for the sector, to working with all parties for the future of our universities." Professor Schreuder said.

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