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## Media Release

Thursday 25 October 2007

### Focus on investing in the university sector welcomed

Universities Australia today welcomes the release of the Australian Democrats Policy for Higher Education by Senator Natasha Stott Despoja as an important step in opening the discussion on Australia's universities in this election campaign.

Chief Executive Officer of Universities Australia Dr Glenn Withers AO said that the Policy Paper supported a number of initiatives the university sector has been campaigning for.

"Investing in our students during their time at university is a priority for the university sector," Dr Withers said.

"The 2007 Budget delivered some important measures for our university students and now is the ideal time to build on those initiatives by introducing two further changes.

"Firstly all scholarships and bursaries, regardless of their source, to be excluded from assessable income for the purpose of student income support, and a reduction in the age of independence for Youth Allowance from the current 25 years to 18 years over the next term of parliament," Dr Withers said.

The Australian Democrats also support investment in core university funding as well as a more appropriate form of indexation.

"Universities Australia acknowledges the Australian Government's provision of a substantial number of additional university places, boosting student numbers to record highs across the sector.

"However, at the same time, funding has not kept pace with increases in information technology and capital costs, wage costs, and inflation.

"Sustained public re-investment in core university funding is a top priority for sustainable national progress," said Dr Glenn Withers.

Universities Australia will continue to work with all political parties to ensure that investment in university education remains a top level commitment into the future.

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