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Higher Education Support Amendment (Demand driven system and other changes) Bill 2011

The IRU supports passage through the House of Representatives of the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Demand driven system and other changes) Bill 2011*, scheduled for debate today [Wednesday 1 June 2011]. The legislation will ensure universities are funded for each student they enrol from 2012, a critical element of the Government's reforms to higher education.

"The Bill achieves its intended purpose of allowing universities to be funded for each enrolled undergraduate place except for medicine," said Professor Ian O'Connor, IRU Chair. "This is a major step forward for universities, recognising the need to open access to all Australians capable of university study.

"There are also provisions to control the total funding a university can receive should a future Minister consider that necessary. The IRU understands the need for some reserve provisions in case there is strong evidence that a university was expanding provision beyond its capacity to provide high quality education and we welcome the current Government's assurances that it does not expect to call on those provisions." Professor O'Connor said.

The Bill also removes the Student Learning Entitlement, a complex arrangement that limits access to a funded place once an individual has used up their entitlement. "The provisions require complex, costly administrative systems and procedures by universities in order to restrain a very small number of individuals who reach their limit without good educational reason. The costs of the provisions far out-weigh the savings gained. Hence we support their removal" Professor O'Connor said.

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