



### Party commitment

Natasha has worked non-stop for the Australian Democrats for 15 years. She has been a member of the State and National Executives and State Council, helped form the Young Australian Democrats nationally, has been on staff, Deputy Leader, and Leader.

*Campaigning with Don Chipp during the 2001 election campaign . Photo courtesy of Randy Larcombe.*

*“She has inspired so many Australians – particularly younger Australians – to participate in politics and to see the connections between real life issues and political policy... I am always inspired by her energy and commitment, her warmth and that absolute powerhouse of a brain she has!”*  
Professor Lowitja O’Donoghue, 2004

### Leadership

Senator Stott Despoja was elected Leader in 2001 with around 70% of the vote and re-elected in January 2002 with approximately 90% of the vote.

As Leader, Senator Stott Despoja was the first politician to question ‘children overboard’, the first leader to visit a detention centre, and the first leader to speak out against a pre-emptive strike on Iraq.



*Addressing an anti-war rally*

In the 2001 election campaign, the Democrats launched more than 30 policies on issues as broad-ranging as education, reconciliation, health, welfare, employment, corporate governance, environment, tourism, innovation, science, women, small business and immigration.

*“Senator Stott Despoja was voted the most respected leader... followed by John Howard... and Kim Beazley.”* Leadership Victoria Survey 17/7/01

Under Senator Stott Despoja’s leadership, the Party’s membership was at its strongest since its formation and the polls reached 19% in the House of Reps in South Australia (40% among 18-24 year-olds).

Nationally, the Democrats’ House of Reps vote reached 9% in Newspoll (10% in Morgan) and the Senate vote reached 14% (Morgan).

*“I believe she has what it takes—intelligent and tough and prepared to listen to the electorate.”*  
Susie Scott, community activist, Kalgoorlie WA in Voter’s Voice series by *The Australian* 7/7/01

In 2001, under her Leadership the Party:

- won back 4 Senate seats (the same result as 1998) against the odds with an increased House of Reps vote in all States and Territories and an increase in the Senate vote in South Australia, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory;

*“For this, the Democrats can thank Stott Despoja, who in November 2001 led the party to winning a seat in Victoria (Allison), Queensland (Bartlett) and Western Australia (Murray) in addition to holding her own seat in South Australia.”*  
Gerard Henderson, *The Age*, 2003

- won a seat in the ACT Legislature for the first time (despite the Party’s previous attempts); and
- polled almost 15% in the Aston by-election on a three-Party preferred basis (a 6% swing to the Democrats).

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## Senator Natasha Stott Despoja: Fact sheet

Since she entered the Senate in November 1995, she has been one of the country’s most high profile and popular campaigners as well as one of the most prolific and active legislators.

### Milestones

Senator Stott Despoja is the youngest-ever woman to enter the Federal Parliament.

She was elected in 1996 with 14.5% of the vote — a quota in her own right (one of only two Democrats to do so at a half Senate election).

At the 2001 election, she received the highest personal vote of any Senator in Australia.

She has served her Party as Deputy Leader (1997-2001) and Leader (April 2001 until August 2002).

In 2001, she was recognised as a World Economic Forum Global Leader for Tomorrow , the only Australian recognised that year.

At the end of her term, Senator Stott Despoja will be the longest-serving Democrat Senator in the Party’s history. She is currently the 23<sup>rd</sup> most senior Senator.



*Photo courtesy: Daniel Neane*

## A hardworking legislator

Senator Stott Despoja has addressed the Senate 1705 times; successfully amended legislation 84 times and had 121 motions passed in the last 11 years.

She has initiated more policy in the form of Private Member's Bills than any other serving Senator, including bills that:

- progress stem cell research in Australia, in 2006 (ensured a conscience vote on the Lockhart review in Federal parliament and is now being examined by a Senate committee);

*"I also wish to thank publicly Senator Natasha Stott Despoja for her intelligence, passion, and commitment which has produced this superbly impressive exposure draft Bill."* Dr Paul Brock AM

- protect genetic information and prevent discrimination on the basis of genetic information, in 1998 (led to an ALRC inquiry and world class report and, this year, identical Government amendments to protect gene privacy);

*"Justice Kirby praised Democrats' Senator Natasha Stott Despoja—who... introduced a private members bill on genetic privacy in 1998—for taking a lead."* Tom Noble, SMH, 10/7/2003

- grant all working women the right to 14 weeks' maternity leave at the minimum wage: the only such legislation in Australia (adopted by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner);
- prevent Commonwealth patent law from applying to 'naturally occurring genes', in 1996 (she also ensured an ALRC inquiry on the issue of patents)
- extend privacy law to the private sector, in 1997 (ensuring the Government introduced its own such laws); and
- regulate pregnancy counselling to ensure pro-life services are upfront about their stance, in 2005 (recently examined by a Senate inquiry and has received cross-Party support).

Senator Stott Despoja has introduced at least 19 Private Member's Bills and Exposure Draft bills.

## Other groundbreaking bills

- provide for parliamentary approval of overseas troop deployments;
- ensure Australian companies operating overseas meet human rights and environmental standards;
- regulate post-ministerial employment;
- facilitate an Australian Head of State;
- reverse the prohibition on same-sex marriage;
- restore the 8% subsidy on educational textbooks;
- fix punitive loopholes in the income testing and taxation of university scholarships;
- require captioning of certain television programs and videos; and
- remove the exemption in the Privacy Act for political acts and practices.

*"What most distinguishes her in her generation is simply her exceptional capacity: energy, brains, homework, fast, clear speech whatever the subject's complexity and a serious intention to leave the world better than she found it."* Emeritus Professor Hugh Stretton



## In-demand speaker

Senator Stott Despoja has given hundreds of keynote speeches; lectures; book launches and other speeches.

*Speaking at the Press Club*

## Broad-ranging committee work

Senator Stott Despoja has been an active member of many Senate and Joint Committees and has initiated a number of key inquiries including those examining: the adequacy of our Privacy Act; the republic issue; the state of the higher education sector; and, the first Senate inquiry solely on student income support.



## Portfolios

Senator Stott Despoja is the Democrats' spokesperson on:

- Attorney-General's issues (including Privacy);
- Foreign Affairs;
- Science and Biotechnology;
- Higher Education; and,
- Women (including Work & Family).

*Senator Stott Despoja speaking out against VSU. Photo courtesy of AUSPIC*

## Active community and political involvement

Senator Stott Despoja co-convenes the Federal Parliamentary cross-party working group against the death penalty, the Parliamentary group for Burma, the Parliamentary Tibet group, Parliamentarians for an Australian Head of State, and Parliamentary Friends of Red Cross; is a member of the Parliamentary Liaison Group on HIV and HCV; is a board member of the Diabetes Transplant Unit Advisory Board and of the Burnet Institute; is an Executive Member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; and is patron of OzQuest and the South Australian Women's Football League.



*With Professor Steve Wesselingh, during a visit to the Burnet Institute.*

*Photo courtesy of the Burnet Institute.*