

MEDIA STATEMENT

12 April 2020

Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) welcomes the Government's announcement of important policy initiatives for the higher education sector today, which will boost education and career opportunities for Australians and provide relief for Australian independent higher education providers in this time of national crisis.

IHEA is pleased that the policy measures IHEA's Sector Leaders' Group proposed to the Minister for Education in response to the COVID-19 crisis have been largely taken up by the Government in their announcement today. We're particularly delighted with the announcement of new short courses, the FEE-HELP Loan Fee moratorium, and regulatory fee relief which were all key proposals in IHEA's COVID-19 response plan.

Today's announcement by the Government sets out a clear vision for independent institutions to contribute to Australia's COVID-19 crisis response, and IHEA celebrates the Government's recognition of the important role that independent providers have in Australia's world-class higher education system. The quality of Australia's independent higher education sector is well established, and reflected in annual QILT Student Experience Surveys which consistently report independent providers as the highest rated institutions by students for overall quality, skills development, learner engagement and student support.

Short Courses

The facilitation of short higher education qualifications designed to be completed online over six months is a significant initiative. The creation of these qualifications was proposed by IHEA to allow those Australians whose careers have been impacted by COVID-19 to undertake further study and continue their career growth through a period of reduced employment opportunities. Independent providers stand ready to equip students with innovative & high-quality credentials for jobs in Australia's National Priority areas.

FEE-HELP Loan Fee Moratorium

IHEA welcomes the announcement of a six month moratorium of the 25% Loan Fee, which will lower the debt burden incurred by students who are trying to upskill and achieve qualifications during the COVID-19 crisis. By removing this financial barrier to education, this moratorium will assist more Australians to re-join the workforce when the economy recovers with a higher education qualification.

The benefits of this measure will be quickly felt by students and employers during the moratorium period. IHEA's long held view is that the Loan Fee is a barrier to education, and we are confident that the benefits of Loan Fee abolition for students and employers will be demonstrated through this moratorium.

Regulatory Fee Relief

The \$100 million of fee relief announced today, as well as the deferral of the transition to a cost-recovery model for the Government's regulatory agencies, will unlock additional cashflow for independent higher education providers who are working to support students through this difficult time. These measures will support those higher education institutions whose operations have been impacted by COVID-19 so that they can continue to focus on student success.

Australia's world class education system comprises high quality universities and independent providers who are committed to providing opportunities for Australians to advance their educational goals during the current economic crisis. IHEA welcomes the measures announced in today's *Higher Education Relief Package*.

All comment attributable to Simon Finn, IHEA CEO

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