

STATEMENT – Job Ready Graduates Package

19 June 2020

Though not directly affected by the university funding reforms announced by the Education Minister today, independent higher education providers are focussed on career outcomes for their students and creating job-ready graduates at minimal cost to the taxpayer. Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) believes that independent providers will continue to make a significant contribution to the nation by producing job-ready graduates with high-quality, innovative qualifications and the skills to pursue their career and life goals.

IHEA will maintain its calls for more equal Government treatment of independent and public providers in order to realise the Government's goal of job creation through greater sector competition, flexibility, and provider diversity.

IHEA welcomes the Government's commitment to the future of microcredentials. Independent providers contributed to the success of the Government's microcredentials initiative by rapidly developing and delivering new Undergraduate Certificate courses for students. IHEA encouraged Government to establish these new qualifications in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) as part of the sector's COVID19 response and welcomes the permanent integration of the new microcredentials into Australia's qualification landscape. This measure will give confidence to independent providers to expand their range of innovative, career-focussed microcredential courses into the future.

Independent higher education providers have also pioneered the success of the University College category, and IHEA also welcomes the Government's recognition of the potential for these high-quality teaching institutions to continue innovating with a focus on quality course delivery and producing job-ready graduates.

IHEA also acknowledges the Government's support for greater access to higher education for regional and remote students. We will continue to engage with Government to ensure that students who choose a course from an independent provider have equal access to the Tertiary Access Payment and other programs. These programs can create greater equity for regional and remote students choosing a course from a quality independent provider.

IHEA will continue to champion equity for students and providers as a reform priority for Australia's higher education sector. IHEA believes that the Government's reduction of the FEE-HELP Loan Fee from 25% to 20% will provide some cost relief to students, but a full abolition of the Loan Fee would see many more graduates entering the workforce.

All comment attributable to Simon Finn, CEO, IHEA

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