

JobKeeper Extension Welcomed by Independent Providers

21 July 2020

Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) welcomes the Prime Minister's announcement of an extension to the *JobKeeper* program today, which will provide much-needed support to many of Australia's 128 independent higher education providers.

As international travel restrictions place sustained pressure on Australia's higher education sector, the Government's *JobKeeper* program is providing a necessary lifeline to many higher education institutions facing challenging market conditions as a result of the pandemic.

All Australian higher education institutions have been particularly impacted by COVID-19 due to lost revenues from international students. Thousands of workers employed by independent providers are currently receiving *JobKeeper* payments, and IHEA has vigorously advocated for an extension of the program to Government in order to protect these workers and the ongoing vitality of Australia's independent higher education sector.

***JobKeeper* is currently supporting 5,038 jobs across IHEA's membership of independent higher education providers. Today's announcement will support the ongoing employment of these staff.**

Extension of *JobKeeper* income support to the end of March is particularly welcomed by the independent sector. The most significant intake of international students occurs in March for the commencement of the academic year and the new *JobKeeper* timeframe extends support through this period.

The extension of *JobKeeper* through to March 2021 will enable providers to maintain their operations and continue to educate domestic students while international student travel pilots implement COVIDSafe testing to inform a full resumption of the industry next year.

Independent higher education providers are well positioned to recover when borders reopen and have enjoyed sector-leading growth in recent years without taxpayer subsidies. The high-quality courses offered by independent providers are highly valued by students who rank independent providers the highest in the nation for skills development, learner engagement, student support and overall quality in the government's independent Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys.

Ensuring the survival of the independent higher education providers will be critical to drive greater diversity and innovation in Australia's higher education sector, and to meet the forecast demand for job-ready higher education graduates in the post-pandemic economy.

Independent Higher Education Australia is a peak body representing Australia's high quality independent higher education providers. Independent higher education employs more than 25,000 Australians and educates 145,000 domestic and international students.

All comment attributable to Simon Finn, CEO, IHEA

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