

## IHEA Says Student-Centred Focus of Universities Accord Interim Report is a Win for Flexibility and Diversity

**Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA)** CEO, Dr Peter Hendy, welcomes the *Australian Universities Accord - Interim Report's* ongoing focus on a student-centred funding model, an initiative IHEA has ardently supported.

“The student-centred funding model, via a Universal Learning Entitlement, champions diversity, inclusivity, and progress in higher education. It is the cornerstone of a world-class higher education system and will drive diversity and productivity dividends,” said Dr Hendy.

IHEA strongly supports the Review’s finding [page 131] that a “universal learning entitlement should sit at the centre of the higher education funding system and any capable student would receive a CSP [Commonwealth Supported Place] in a higher education course of their choosing.”

The interim report outlines five immediate considerations that IHEA supports in principle.

These proposals include the creation of study hubs, replacing the 50 per cent pass rule with increased student progress reporting, extending the existing guarantee for First Nations Australians to access higher education, assuring funding for public universities for the next two years, and urging the National Cabinet to engage the states in improving public university governance.

“These are measures that align with our mission of enhancing the higher education sector,” said Dr Hendy.

Increased student progress reporting to replace the 50 per cent pass rule must apply universally across the sector, to both independent and public institutions. Similarly, the extension of the First Nations guarantee must include access to independent higher education providers.

We note the consideration of the removal of the discriminatory 20 per cent fee on HELP loans for students attending independent providers [page 138]. We remain disappointed that this discriminatory and arbitrary additional fee has not been revoked immediately.

IHEA would be opposed to a potential recommendation for a levy on income derived from international students [page 128].

“Such a measure would impose significant burdens on higher education providers already facing a demanding competitive environment. The imposition of such a levy would make Australia less competitive against our international rivals,” added Dr Hendy.

The Australian Universities Accord Panel has a large amount of work to do prior to the final report due in December, and IHEA will continue to work closely with review process.

**Ends**

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