

## Universities Accord Final Report sets scene for Higher Education future.

**Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA)** CEO, Dr Peter Hendy, welcomes the *Australian Universities Accord Final Report* and notes its comprehensive recommendations aimed at bolstering the higher education sector's future.

"The Australian Universities Accord process has brought the importance and complexity of Australia's higher education landscape into sharp relief. This is important, because we know higher education is transformative and has the capacity to alter lives in the most positive way, but it will also provide Australia the high-skilled, high value workforce to meet the challenges ahead.

IHEA notes the recommendation to establish the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC). It is imperative that the ATEC be comprised of notable experts in respective fields and, to that end, a commissioner from the independent sector must be included.

"The independent sector forms an important component of Australia's higher education landscape and will play a critical role in educating our future workforce. It is imperative that the independent sector's voice be heard as a permanent part of the ATEC," Dr Hendy said.

IHEA notes the recommendation to introduce participation targets to grow the proportion of undergraduate university students from under-represented backgrounds. If these ambitious goals are to be met, the independent sector must play a key role in achieving these targets and must be included in funding for equity targets.

We note that the consideration of the removal of the discriminatory 20 per cent fee on HELP loans for students attending independent providers in the interim report has not been adopted in the final report. We remain disappointed that this discriminatory and arbitrary additional fee has not been revoked.

IHEA is satisfied to see that the recommendation for a levy on income derived from international students has not reached the Final Report.

"Such a measure would have imposed 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.

IHEA looks forward to engaging with the government, sector stakeholders, and the broader community to discuss the recommendations of the AUA Final Report, ensuring that the higher education sector is well-positioned to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

**Ends**

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