

IHEA: Reducing Student Visa Costs Is Key to Sustaining Australia’s Global Competitiveness

As part of its 2025 Federal Election Platform, Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) is urging the next government to reduce international student visa fees to enhance Australia's attractiveness in the global education market.

Australia’s student visa fees remain among the highest in the world, creating significant financial barriers for prospective students and diminishing the nation’s appeal as a study destination.

“Our excessively high visa fees are pushing talented students to competitor countries,” said IHEA CEO, the Hon Dr Peter Hendy. “To remain competitive and attract global talent, we should align our student visa costs with the US rate of around \$280.”

IHEA warns that continually rising non-refundable visa fees discourage international students from choosing Australia, damaging the nation's reputation as a welcoming destination.

“Reducing visa fees will open Australia's doors to students based on their academic merits, not financial capacity. We need to evaluate international talent on aptitude and potential, not their ability to pay excessive administrative costs,” Dr Hendy added.

IHEA emphasises that every student lost to overseas competitors is a missed opportunity for Australia's economy, cultural diversity, and skilled workforce.

“International education remains Australia's largest services export. And global economic factors mean the time is right for Australia to capitalise on its competitive advantage in international advantage,” Dr Hendy said.

“The US’s tariff and migration policies are seeing it become a much less desirable international education destination, while Canada and the UK are actively shrinking their sectors. The time is now for Australia to increase its share of the lucrative global education market and deliver a much-needed shot in the arm for Australia’s economic prosperity,” Dr Hendy said.

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