

IHEA: Strengthening Australia's Workforce and Education System for the Future

With the 2025 Federal Election approaching, Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) is making a final call for practical, targeted reforms to strengthen Australia's tertiary education system, address critical skills needs, and support the nation's future development.

Through its 2025 Federal Election Platform, IHEA outlines 14 pillars under the three themes of Student-Centricity, International Education, and Regulatory Burden, namely:

- **Equity of HELP Loans:** The permanent abolition of the FEE-HELP loan fee
- **Funding Equity:** Access to Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) and programs
- **Diversification:** Diversification of higher education providers to ensure growth
- **Greater Access:** Permanently embed Undergraduate Certificates in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), announced in January 2025
- **Lifelong Learning:** Ensure that appropriate policy settings and incentives are in place to support lifelong learning
- **Sustainability:** Ensure the sustainability of international education
- **Accessibility and Competitiveness:** Reduce fees for student visas for Australia to remain competitive
- **Transparency:** Access to performance data on international education agents
- **Protections:** Allow onshore commissions for international education agents
- **National Benefit:** Greater pathways to permanent residency for graduates in priority disciplines
- **Streamlined:** Lesser, not more, bureaucracy
- **Fairness:** Implement an equitable Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) cost recovery model
- **Duplication:** TEQSA and Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) to reduce burden on dual sector providers
- **Modernisation:** Reform copyright legislation to reduce levies on independent education providers

“The future demands an education system that is accessible, adaptable, and aligned with workforce needs,” said IHEA CEO, the Hon Dr Peter Hendy. “Our 2025 Federal Election Platform presents a practical blueprint for strengthening Australia's skills base and ensuring more Australians are equipped with the qualifications and capabilities needed for the jobs of tomorrow.”

IHEA's platform highlights the critical role of independent higher education providers in delivering diverse, high quality learning opportunities, contributing to innovation, economic growth, and Australia's global competitiveness.

"As Australia works to meet its future skills needs, independent providers must be recognised as essential partners in delivering education solutions that are flexible, student-focused, and industry-aligned," Dr Hendy said.

"IHEA's advocacy has already achieved results, namely with Undergraduate Certificates becoming a permanent part of the AQF. We look forward to working with the next government to achieve further reforms in the higher education sector," Dr Hendy said.

IHEA repeats its criticism of both sides of politics for its unwarranted increases of student visa application fees, which is already at world-record high levels.

"We remain frustrated by the fee hike. IHEA has consistently called to lower the student visa fee," Dr Hendy said.

"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; instead both major parties are treating the sector as a cash cow," Dr Hendy said.

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