



INDEPENDENT  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
AUSTRALIA

## **IHEA SUBMISSION**

# **AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION'S A MORE JOINED–UP TERTIARY SYSTEM: DISCUSSION PAPER**

18 June 2026

## IHEA Submission

# Australian Tertiary Education Commission's A More Joined–Up tertiary System: Discussion Paper

Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Australian Tertiary Education Commission's (ATEC) A More Joined–Up Tertiary System: Discussion Paper, for which submissions are due by 22 June 2026.

### Introduction

IHEA supports the objective of creating a more joined–up/connected, learner–centred and responsive tertiary education system. Australia faces significant economic, demographic and technological challenges that will require higher levels of educational attainment, stronger workforce participation and more flexible approaches to learning across people's working lives.

Achieving these objectives will require a tertiary system that enables learners to move seamlessly between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education, access education throughout their working lives and receive recognition for prior learning regardless of where it was acquired.

The current system continues to be characterised by historical divisions between sectors, differing funding arrangements, inconsistent approaches to credit recognition and regulatory structures that often reflect provider boundaries rather than learner needs. While some progress has been made through the Australian Qualifications Framework, articulation agreements and dual sector delivery models, significant barriers remain.

IHEA believes the central objective of reform should be to create a system in which learners experience tertiary education as a coherent ecosystem rather than as separate sectors governed by different rules, incentives and expectations. A more joined–up system should support learner mobility, strengthen workforce responsiveness, promote equity of participation and preserve the diversity of providers that contribute to Australia's tertiary education landscape.

Achieving the Government's tertiary attainment ambitions, responding to emerging workforce shortages and supporting lifelong learning will require reform that harnesses the full capacity of all high–quality tertiary providers. This includes public universities, TAFEs, dual sector providers and independent higher education providers, each of which contributes distinct strengths to the system.

As such, IHEA recommends that the key elements of reform must consider the following:

- **Preserve provider diversity and innovation**, including the role of independent providers.
- **Avoid over–centralisation or regulatory burden** that stifles new models.
- **Ensure competitive neutrality** across provider types and sectors.
- Focus on **practical, scalable reforms**, particularly in credit recognition, funding alignment, and information systems.
- **Support lifelong learning through funding arrangements** that are portable, learner–centred and sector–neutral.

IHEA emphasises that a joined–up system is not a structural merger, but rather functional integration to enable seamless movement of students, fair funding and equal recognition of quality across sectors.

### Principles for Reform

Below, IHEA addresses the questions in the Discussion Paper with a focus on the following five principles that are drawn from ATEC's key themes:

1. **Learner-centred design**  
Reform should enable flexible, non-linear learner journeys across life stages, recognising that careers increasingly involve multiple transitions.
2. **Parity of esteem**  
Both sectors and providers within those sectors should be valued according to employment and skills outcomes; not historical hierarchy.
3. **Diversity of provision**  
Independent higher education providers play a critical role in workforce-aligned delivery and innovation, and should be recognised as such.
4. **Competitive neutrality**  
Funding, regulation and policy settings should apply equitably across public and private providers.
5. **Proportional and risk-based regulation**  
Regulatory harmonisation should reduce duplication without increasing complexity.

**Question 1: What actions will be most effective for ensuring that learners are better informed of the depth and range of course offerings and occupations when deciding on career options and tertiary education pathways?**

Australia's tertiary education system remains difficult for many learners to navigate. Prospective students are frequently required to make decisions about qualifications, providers, occupations and future pathways based on fragmented information sources. This challenge is particularly acute for students from regional and remote communities, mature-age learners seeking to re-train, migrants seeking recognition of overseas qualifications and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The existing information landscape remains divided across sectors. While initiatives such as Your Career and Course Seeker provide valuable information, learners often struggle to understand how qualifications relate to one another, how credits may transfer between providers and sectors and what employment outcomes can reasonably be expected from different educational pathways.

A more joined-up tertiary system should provide learners with access to a comprehensive and integrated information platform that combines information on qualifications, providers, labour market outcomes, credit transfer opportunities and future learning pathways. Such a system should allow learners to compare options across the tertiary education sector rather than requiring them to separately navigate different systems for VET and higher education.

**Question 2: What are the tangible actions that can be achieved through the Roadmap to support parity of esteem between the VET and higher education sectors?**

IHEA supports the discussion paper's recognition that parity of esteem is not simply a matter of communication or marketing. It requires structural reform. In particular, parity of esteem must be reflected in funding arrangements, student support settings, policy frameworks and public reporting arrangements. Learners should be able to choose between vocational and higher education pathways based on their aspirations, capabilities and workforce outcomes, rather than financial incentives, historical perceptions or provider classifications.

A joined-up tertiary system should recognise that educational value is determined by quality, outcomes and learner success rather than provider category. VET, higher education and dual sector delivery models all play important and complementary roles in meeting Australia's economic and social needs.

IHEA recommends:

- Equal policy framing of VET and higher education and of providers within each sector in national targets.
- Funding and student support arrangements that are neutral across sectors and provider types.

- Public reporting of employment outcomes by qualification type.
- Promotion of hybrid and dual sector models.
- Government leadership in communications highlighting career success for those pursuing tertiary education outcomes outside of public universities and TAFEs.

**Question 3: Noting fiscal constraints, how could existing funding settings and incentives be better aligned to support learner choice and labour–market outcomes across VET and higher education?**

IHEA views funding misalignment as the most significant systemic barrier. The discussion paper identifies inconsistent loan access and subsidies and fee distortions influencing learner choice. IHEA has been actively calling for the removal of these inequitable policy settings. The following should be addressed as a priority.

Universal income–contingent loans across all AQF qualifications to support lifelong learning

The Australian Government has set a target of increasing tertiary attainment from 60 per cent of working–age Australians holding a Certificate III qualification or above in 2023 to at least 80 per cent by 2050. Achieving this target will require more than increasing participation among traditional school leaver cohorts. It will require a system that supports repeated engagement with education and training throughout people's working lives.

While predictions can be made that skills in some broad areas will experience greater demand in the future, specific skill needs can be very hard to predict. Many occupations that will be created in coming decades may be hard to envisage and also rely on technologies that have not yet been developed.

From September 2026, the United Kingdom (UK) will introduce a Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE). While the UK model remains in the early stages of implementation and its long–term effectiveness is yet to be fully evaluated, it provides an important example of how tertiary funding architecture can be redesigned to support lifelong learning across vocational and higher education sectors.

Lifelong learning provides an opportunity for people to upskill and re–skill as they move through their working lives. A key ingredient that is currently missing from the tertiary harmonisation discussion is an LLE, which would provide students with access to a single, portable income–contingent loan entitlement throughout their working lives to access the education and training they need when they need it.

An LLE would bring cohesion to a lifelong learning framework by creating a funding mechanism that follows the learner rather than the sector or provider. Such an approach would better reflect contemporary career patterns, where individuals increasingly engage in multiple periods of learning, re–training and skills development across their working lives. It would also support the objectives of the Australian Universities Accord (Accord) Final Report by facilitating participation in both higher education and VET through a consistent funding framework.

In our submission to Jobs and Skills Australia on their Workplan for 2025–26, IHEA recommended that JSA specifically undertake scoping work regarding greater integration of the higher and education sectors to specifically support lifelong learning to meet the skills needs of the future.

We believe this is urgent work that needs to be progressed as a priority to ensure that all of the building blocks are in place to enable lifelong learning, regardless of what the future jobs market looks like. This will put students at the centre of the education and training system to acquire the knowledge and skills they need for the jobs of now and into the future as well as driving a strong economy.

This is an important measure that would better align funding arrangements across the tertiary system, which should be prioritised as an early reform measure. While a number of measures are in train to support lifelong learning, the critical element that isn't in place is a more joined up higher education and VET sector. This could be facilitated by a common and shared loan system for tuition fees through an LLE.

### Ensuring work under the dual sector strategy progresses to remove duplicative processes for dual sector (higher education and VET) providers

Streamlined regulation is an important piece of work to support better connectedness of higher education and VET. Current arrangements create duplicative reporting obligations, inconsistent governance expectations and conflicting compliance requirements between higher education and VET.

While we understand that this work is being progressed by TEQSA and ASQA through the Dual Sector Regulatory Strategy, we are re-iterating these important elements that are necessary to advancing a more joined-up tertiary sector.

A simple reform is to allow single registration via TEQSA for dual sector providers. Dual sector providers will be critical in supporting a better-connected tertiary education system centred on meeting skills needs including through upskilling, reskilling and other forms of lifelong learning' (p.69, of the Accord Final Report).

In the short term, there is an opportunity for the development of a Service Obligation Charter between TEQSA and ASQA to minimise burden and cost for dual sector providers. While a formal Service Obligation Charter has not been established, TEQSA and ASQA have since released a Dual Sector Regulatory Strategy that seeks to improve regulatory coordination, information sharing and alignment of regulatory processes for dual sector providers.

As noted during the Accord process, IHEA proposed relatively simple changes to ensure more effective and cohesive regulation of dual sector providers. Progress has been made in some areas, while others remain outstanding. In summary:

- TEQSA and ASQA have increased collaboration and coordination in regulating dual sector providers. However, TEQSA has not been designated as the primary regulator for dual sector providers for functions such as Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) registration and Provider Information Requirements, and dual sector providers continue to engage with both regulators. This needs to occur.
- TEQSA and ASQA have substantially aligned their Fit and Proper Person frameworks and have committed to further alignment of evidence requirements and regulatory processes. However, mutual recognition arrangements and single point reporting for Fit and Proper Person and Financial Viability assessments need to be fully implemented.
- Opportunities remain to further streamline annual reporting requirements for dual sector providers through greater standardisation and integration of higher education and VET data collections. While reform efforts have progressed, a single annual reporting system that consolidates TCSI and VET reporting requirements has not yet been established.
- Mutual recognition policies between TEQSA and ASQA for higher education provider/Registered Training Organisation (RTO) registration and re-registration decisions made by either regulator. ASQA's Draft RTO Standards are similar to TEQSA's Threshold Standards, which could be addressed through mutual recognition arrangements to remove complexity and ambiguity.

Such approaches will support the development of the infrastructure needed to support lifelong learning to deliver on the increased attainment of qualifications 'to meet Australia's future skills needs and drive improvements to national workforce participation and productivity' (p.17, Accord Final Report).

### Extension of funding support for students at independent providers

All higher education students need to be supported to study in the fields of their choosing, including those that will address current and future skills needs and shortages. Funded Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) on a demand driven basis should be extended to all TEQSA registered higher education providers in areas identified as national priorities, subject to appropriate quality, student outcome and accountability requirements. This would

ensure that public investment is directed toward high-quality providers while expanding system capacity and learner choice. Such an approach is critical to meeting the Government's target to lift the tertiary attainment rate of the working age population by 2050.

Inherent and underpinning its recommendation to increase the tertiary attainment target is a more than doubling CSPs from 860,000 in 2022 to 1.8 million, with 25 to 34 year olds with a bachelor's degree increasing from 45 per cent to 55 per cent. Given the stated importance of meeting the target to delivering "a skilled workforce to meet the changing needs of the economy" (p.17, Accord Final Report), achieving "growth necessary to meet future skills requirements" (p.4, Accord Final Report) will be pivotal.

This growth is unlikely to be achieved through expansion at public universities and TAFEs alone. Independent higher education providers already possess significant teaching capacity, infrastructure, workforce connections and delivery capability that can be mobilised immediately to support attainment growth. Leveraging this existing capacity represents a more cost-effective and timely approach than relying solely on expansion within the public university sector.

Further, building new universities is an unnecessary and excessive cost that will take considerable time. Independent providers are well placed to support students through Government programs because of their values, size, diverse delivery models, niche courses, student services and support, flexibility and responsiveness and approaches to student and staff safety. Without the critical work and support of independent higher education providers, the ambitious growth that the Government has committed to risks being unmet.

While overlooked in the Accord process, IHEA continues to support the recommendation of the 2008 Bradley Review that access to CSP be extended across the sector following the establishment of TEQSA.

Access to funded places for all registered higher education providers will deliver equity for all students. Providing funded places to all registered providers would advance equity for students regardless of provider type, promote a more connected and competitive higher education sector, and strengthen the foundations for a unified tertiary system with clear and flexible pathways between VET and higher education.

Importantly, competitive neutrality would allow Government to leverage existing high quality capacity across the tertiary sector rather than relying solely on expansion within public providers. This would provide a cost-effective pathway to achieving national attainment and workforce objectives while preserving learner choice, encouraging innovation and maximising the return on public investment in tertiary education.

#### Removal of the FEE-HELP loan fee on students attending independent higher education providers

The AUA Final Report specifically calls out that students accessing FEE-HELP need to be "fairly treated regardless of their provider and course and that the Review considered whether change to loan fee arrangements is needed" (p.163). It also states its concern about "the seeming lack of coherence around FEE-HELP arrangements for students at different classes of provider" (p.165).

We believe that the arguments that because of the extra costs of a FEE-HELP loan, that an administration fee of 20 per cent needs to be applied, are flawed and counter-intuitive. In effect, the argument is that because these students do not receive a grant in the form of a Commonwealth Supported Place and therefore have to borrow the full cost of their tuition fees, that they should further be disadvantaged with an additional 20 per cent charge, which operates as an additional financial penalty applied solely on the basis of provider type. The indexation on a debt plus 20 per cent compounds the issue and accelerates the increase of a FEE-HELP debt when compared to HECS-HELP recipients

IHEA has consistently raised concerns about the inequitable application of this loan fee, which applies only to undergraduate students at independent higher education providers, with the exception of the small number of private universities included in Table B of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*, who access a FEE-HELP loan. It does not apply to students accessing HECS-HELP at public universities.

IHEA recently commissioned independent advice from MinterEllison regarding the cost to Government of abolishing the FEE–HELP loan fee. The analysis indicates that abolishing the FEE–HELP loan fee would have an estimated net impact on the underlying cash balance of approximately \$8.6 million per annum.

Clearly, the cost is not prohibitive when balanced against the interests and equity considerations of students who otherwise are saddled with a more burdensome debt because of the choice they make about where they want to study.

The counter argument is that leaving this fee in place undermines genuine attempts to address access and equity in higher education.

As such, IHEA recommends the following actions:

- Universal income–contingent loans across all AQF qualifications.
- Extension of funding support to independent providers on equal terms.
- Incentives tied to outcomes (completion, employment) rather than sector.
- Removal of the FEE–HELP tax on students attending independent higher education providers.

**Question 4: What are examples of effective transitions, particularly for learners from underrepresented backgrounds? How can these be strengthened across the system?**

IHEA supports expansion of proven VET–to–higher education pathways, particularly in disciplines such as information technology, business, health, education and other workforce–aligned fields that demonstrate strong progression and equity outcomes.

Effective pathways are particularly important for learners from under–represented backgrounds and mature–age learners seeking to re–train or upskill. For many of these learners, vocational education provides an accessible entry point into tertiary education and a pathway towards higher level qualifications.

Independent higher education providers have demonstrated success in establishing articulation arrangements that recognise prior learning and minimise duplication of study. Such arrangements can reduce both the time and cost required to obtain higher qualifications while improving learner confidence and retention.

IHEA also supports greater recognition of reverse pathways from higher education to VET, which remain underdeveloped despite increasing demand for shorter, targeted and industry –focused forms of education, namely microcredentials. As career patterns become more dynamic, learners should be able to move in both directions across the tertiary system without encountering unnecessary administrative, financial or regulatory barriers.

Strengthening these pathways through improved credit recognition, transparent articulation arrangements and consistent student support would significantly improve participation and attainment outcomes for learners from under–represented groups.

**Question 5: What support arrangements are currently available for VET and higher education learners to assist with moving between the sectors and to ensure they can succeed?**

Effective transitions are fundamental to the development of an integrated tertiary system. The capacity of learners to move efficiently between qualifications, providers and sectors enables more flexible participation, reduces unnecessary duplication of learning and supports improved educational and workforce outcomes.

Australia has made considerable progress in developing pathways between VET and higher education. Many learners successfully use vocational qualifications as a pathway into higher education, particularly in disciplines where vocational and professional learning are closely aligned. Diploma to degree pathways, advanced standing arrangements and dual sector delivery models have demonstrated that learners can successfully transition between sectors when pathways are clearly articulated and appropriately supported.

In addition to formal pathway arrangements, a range of support mechanisms assist learners transitioning between sectors. These include academic skills programs, orientation activities, language and learning support, career guidance services, mentoring programs, wellbeing services, foundation programs and bridging courses. Such supports can play an important role in improving retention, progression and completion outcomes, particularly for learners from under-represented backgrounds.

However, access to effective pathways and support arrangements remains uneven. Learners frequently encounter differing admission requirements, inconsistent advice and varying levels of support when transitioning between providers and sectors. These barriers can disproportionately affect learners who are already under-represented within tertiary education.

Independent higher education providers have often demonstrated considerable innovation in pathway development. Many have established strong partnerships with vocational education providers that support progression into bachelor and postgraduate qualifications while responding to specific workforce needs.

Effective transitions also require funding arrangements that support, rather than impede, movement between sectors. As discussed in Question 3, reforms to tertiary funding architecture, including consideration of an LLE, would complement pathway reforms by supporting participation across a learner's working life.

Given that current supports remain fragmented and inconsistent, IHEA recommends:

- Dedicated transition support services for cross-sector learners.
- Bridging programs and academic preparation.
- Consistent support regardless of provider type or year of entry.
- Consideration of an LLE to complement pathway reforms by supporting participation across a learner's working life.
- Greater use of the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching results as an evidence base for which providers yield successful outcomes in providing support for learners.

**Question 6: What can VET and higher education providers do to better inform current and prospective learners of credit recognition arrangements and pathways?**

IHEA strongly supports the development of a National Credit Recognition Framework. The current system is characterised by inconsistent practices, limited transparency and low levels of awareness among learners regarding credit recognition and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) opportunities.

The ability to receive recognition for previously completed learning encourages participation, reduces duplication, lowers costs and shortens qualification completion times. Conversely, inconsistent or opaque recognition practices can discourage further study and create unnecessary barriers to progression.

While many providers have established effective articulation and credit transfer arrangements, substantial variability remains across the tertiary sector. Learners often find it difficult to determine how previous study, work experience or other prior learning will be recognised and may receive different outcomes depending on the provider to which they apply.

A National Credit Recognition Framework should establish nationally agreed principles for credit recognition, common terminology and transparent credit transfer arrangements while preserving providers' autonomy over academic standards and qualification outcomes. The objective should be to improve consistency, transparency and learner confidence rather than impose uniformity.

As such, IHEA recommends that any reform must:

- Include all provider types (including independent providers).
- Cover recognition arrangements in both directions between VET and higher education.

- Provide publicly accessible information on likely credit outcomes and pathway options.
- Promote greater consistency in RPL assessment practices.
- Consider existing sector–led and industry–developed recognition solutions before establishing new administrative structures.

**Question 7: What does the VET sector do well that you would like to see adopted in higher education? What does the higher education sector do well that could be applied to VET?**

IHEA agrees with the paper's assessment that both sectors possess distinctive strengths that should be preserved and leveraged.

The VET sector demonstrates particular strengths in employer engagement, applied learning, responsiveness to emerging skills needs and competency–based approaches to education and training. These characteristics support strong workforce alignment and employment outcomes.

Higher education contributes strengths in critical thinking, research–informed teaching, professional formation, analytical capability and the development of transferable skills that support long–term career adaptability.

Future reform should seek to combine these complementary strengths rather than homogenise the sectors. Many independent higher education providers already demonstrate how these strengths can be integrated through industry–engaged delivery models, work–integrated learning and professionally focused higher education qualifications.

**Question 8: What are the challenges in developing and sustaining innovative qualifications, pathways and practices that span across the VET and higher education sectors? What does each sector need from government(s) to support their development and sustainability?**

The paper correctly identifies key barriers as being resource–intensive curriculum mapping, regulatory complexity and weak incentives for collaboration. Whilst some higher education providers may indeed struggle with limited industry capacity, as noted above in fact independent higher education providers demonstrably excel in this area.

IHEA would add that funding silos discourage cross–sector delivery and that independent providers are often excluded from collaborative initiatives and government–supported innovation programs.

As a result, IHEA recommends that:

- Barriers to innovation for cross–sector programmes and projects involving independent providers be removed.
- Create flexible accreditation pathways for hybrid qualifications.
- Support smaller providers to participate in collaborations.

**Question 9: In which geographical locations, fields of education, industries or occupations would dual sector models be best suited? What are examples of work underway?**

Dual sector models are particularly well suited to fields experiencing persistent workforce shortages and where occupational progression pathways are clearly defined. This includes health care, aged care, disability services, early childhood education, cybersecurity, information technology, agriculture and emerging clean energy industries. Dual sector approaches may also be especially valuable in regional and outer metropolitan areas where flexible pathways can improve participation and workforce responsiveness.

IHEA agrees that dual sector models are most viable where strong occupational pathways exist. Many IHEA members are leaders in these fields, for example, health and social services, education and early childhood development, IT, agriculture and hospitality and tourism management.

Employers value both skills and theory. This is not just anecdotal but supported by QILT findings and other longitudinal studies. Many IHEA members are leaders in initiatives such as diploma to degree pathways and co-located campuses.

**Question 10: What does an ideal joined-up tertiary system look like?**

IHEA envisages a system where learners can move seamlessly across VET and higher education. This would be enabled by credit in units of competency being automatic where learning outcomes align, funding and loans are consistent and portable, providers collaborate flexibly without structural barriers and all high quality providers operate on a level playing field.

As discussed earlier in this submission, reform of tertiary funding architecture, including consideration of an LLE, would provide an important mechanism for supporting learner mobility across sectors.

**Question 11: Which reform opportunities should be prioritised and why? Which ones are likely to have the highest impact? Are there any gaps that should be considered?**

As outlined above, IHEA recommends prioritisation of:

- National Credit Recognition Framework.
- Funding harmonisation and loan reform, including introducing an LLE.
- Unified information architecture.
- Regulatory alignment between TEQSA and ASQA.
- Support for dual-sector innovation.

These are likely to deliver the highest impact by directly improving learner mobility and system efficiency.

**Question 12: Data and Information Systems What opportunities are there to improve Australia’s data and information systems to better support learner pathways and outcome measurement across VET and higher education?**

The current tertiary data architecture largely reflects provider and sectoral boundaries rather than learner journeys. As a result, policymakers often struggle to understand movement between sectors, while learners frequently encounter fragmented information regarding pathways and recognition opportunities.

IHEA strongly supports improved data integration. Priority actions include developing a unified cross-sector data asset tracking learner pathways, providing public reporting on outcomes across sectors and providers and enabling real-time information for learners on credit entitlements, employment outcomes and course comparisons.

Consideration should also be given to linking higher education, VET, employment and earnings datasets to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learner outcomes and workforce participation. Greater integration of data assets would improve evidence-based policymaking, strengthen workforce planning and provide learners with more meaningful information about the outcomes associated with different qualifications and pathways. Improved data is essential to support evidence-based policy and cut through barriers.

**Conclusion**

IHEA supports the development of a more integrated tertiary education system that enables learners to move seamlessly between VET and higher education throughout their lives. Achieving this objective will require reform that places learners, rather than institutions or sectors, at the centre of policy design.

A genuinely joined-up tertiary system must be underpinned by equitable funding arrangements, portable student support and transparent pathways. Extending Commonwealth Supported Places in areas of national priority to all TEQSA-registered providers that meet appropriate quality and accountability requirements, together with the

abolition of the FEE–HELP loan fee, would advance competitive neutrality and ensure students are not disadvantaged because of where they choose to study.

The introduction of an LLE supported by a single income contingent loan architecture would represent a transformational reform. It would create a common funding mechanism across VET and higher education, support lifelong learning and enable individuals to access education and training throughout increasingly dynamic careers. Such an approach would align Australia's funding framework with future workforce needs and strengthen the connection between tertiary education, productivity and economic growth.

Australia will not achieve its tertiary attainment objectives through public providers alone. Independent higher education providers already contribute substantial teaching capacity, workforce–aligned education, industry engagement and innovation. Competitive neutrality would allow government to fully leverage this capacity in pursuit of national attainment, skills and productivity objectives while preserving learner choice and maximising the return on public investment.

Success will depend upon creating a tertiary system that supports lifelong participation in learning, enables movement between sectors, removes unnecessary barriers to progression and provides equitable access to funding support regardless of provider type. A more integrated joined–up tertiary system will better position Australia to respond to future workforce demands, including technological changes.

IHEA looks forward to continuing to work with ATEC to develop a tertiary education system that is learner–centred, equitable, responsive and capable of supporting Australia's future economic prosperity, workforce participation and social cohesion.

## Who We Are

Independent Higher Education Australia Ltd. (IHEA) is a peak body established in 2001 to represent Australian independent (private sector) higher education institutions. Our membership spans independent universities, university colleges and other institutes of higher education, all of which are registered higher education providers accredited by the national higher education regulator, TEQSA or associate members seeking registration.

There is a long tradition of independent higher education providers in Australia, with the first provider created as early as 1815, only 27 years after the first British settlement in Sydney in 1788. In total, five providers were established between 1815 and 1845 and preceding the first public university. The fifth of these was St James College, which was created in 1845. The founders of St James College were then involved in creating Moore College in 1856 and remarkably Moore College, a University College, still exists and is Australia's longest continuously operating independent higher education provider.

Our Vision is that: students, domestic and international, have open and equitable access to world class independent higher education in Australia, built on the foundations of equity, choice and diversity.

Our Mission is to represent independent higher education and promote recognition and respect of independent providers as they contribute to Australian education, the Australian economy and to society in general. We achieve this by promoting continuous improvement of academic and quality standards within member institutions, by advocating equity for their staff and students and by delivering services that further strengthen independent providers' reputations as innovative, sustainable and responsive to the needs of industry and other relevant stakeholders in both higher education and vocational education and training. IHEA's commitment is to excellence, productivity and growth in independent higher education being delivered through a trusted Australian education system underpinned by equity, choice and diversity.

IHEA members have different missions, scales and course offerings across the full AQF range (Diplomas to Doctorates). IHEA has 90 members, which rises to over 120 if providers' constituent colleges and subsidiaries are included.

IHEA's 90 members comprise:

- Five private Universities (Australian University of Theology, Avondale University, Bond University, Torrens University and University of Divinity).
- Six University Colleges (ACAP University College, Australian University College of Divinity, Alphacrucis University College, Excelsia University College, Moore Theological College and SAE University College).
- Seventy–six not–for–profit and for–profit institutions of higher education (which includes three self–accrediting institutes); and related corporate entities.
- Three corporate owners of higher education providers.

IHEA members teach approximately 74 percent of the students in the independent sector (i.e., more than 140,000 students) and educate students in a range of disciplines, including law, agricultural science, architecture, business, accounting, tourism and hospitality, education, health sciences, theology, creative arts, information technology, human services and social sciences.

IHEA holds a unique position in higher education as a representative peak body of higher education providers. Membership in IHEA is only open to providers registered, or seeking registration, with the Australian regulator – TEQSA. However, some IHEA members are dual and multi–sector providers who also deliver VET and/or English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) courses.

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## IHEA Member Institutions

### Universities

Australian University of Theology  
 Avondale University  
 Bond University  
 Torrens University Australia  
 University of Divinity

### University Colleges

ACAP University College  
 Alphacrucis University College  
 Australian University College of Divinity  
 Excelsia University College  
 Moore Theological College  
 SAE University College

### Institutes of Higher Education

Academies Australasia Polytechnic  
 Academy of Interactive Technology  
 Acknowledge Education  
 Adelaide Central School of Art  
 AIBI Higher Education  
 Australasian Academy of Higher Education  
 Australasian College of Health and Wellness  
 Australian College of Christian Studies  
 Australian College of Nursing  
 The Australian College of Physical Education  
 The Australian College of Arts (Collarts)  
 Australian Data and Cyber Institute  
 AIBM King's Own Institute  
 AIM Business School  
 The Australian Institute of Music  
 Barton Business School  
 Champion College Australia  
 Central Institute of Technology and Innovation  
 Christian Heritage College  
 Crown Institute of Higher Education  
 Eastern College Australia

### Education Centre of Australia

Asia Pacific International College  
 ECA College of Health Sciences  
 Higher Education Leadership Institute  
 Endeavour College of Natural Health  
 EQUALS International  
 Gateway Business College  
 Governance Institute  
 Holmes Institute  
 IBC Education

ICHM  
 Ikon Institute Australia  
 International College of Management, Sydney  
 JMC Academy  
 Kaplan Business School  
 Kaplan Higher Education  
 Laurus Higher Education  
 LCI Melbourne  
 Le Cordon Bleu Australia  
 Leaders Institute  
 Lyons College  
 Marcus Oldham College  
 MIECAT  
 Morling College  
 Nan Tien Institute  
 National Institute of Organisation Dynamics Australia  
 Nova Higher Education

### Navitas

Curtin College  
 Deakin College  
 Edith Cowan College  
 Eynesbury College  
 Griffith College  
 La Trobe College Australia  
 SAIBT  
 SIBT  
 Western Sydney University International College  
 Ozford Institute of Higher Education  
 Photography Studies College  
 Polytechnic Institute Australia  
 Sheridan Institute of Higher Education  
 Skyline Higher Education Australia  
 S P Jain School of Global Management  
 Sydney Institute of Higher Education  
 Sydney Metropolitan Institute of Technology  
 Sydney International School of Technology and Commerce  
 Southern Academy of Higher Education  
 Tabor College  
 The College of Law  
 The Tax Institute Higher Education

### Torrens Global Education Services

Think: Colleges  
 Universal Business School Sydney  
 Universal Higher Education  
 UOW College Australia  
 UTS College  
 Wentworth Institute

## Economic contribution of independent higher education

# Key Findings.

Independent higher education is an important contributor to Australia's economic activity.

The sector contributes



**\$8.2 billion**

to Australia's GDP



**196,000 students**



**61%**

International\*



**39%**

Domestic\*

\*Shares based on EFTSL

For every **\$3** the sector directly contributes to GDP, it supports around **\$1** of additional value added elsewhere in the economy

Contributes



**\$3.0 billion**

in government tax revenue

International students contribute



**\$7.6 billion**

to Australia's GDP

Increases output by



**\$14.0 billion**

Supports



**18,906 FTEs**

across the economy

Contributes



**\$13.1 billion**

to total incomes

The sector contributes to the Australian economy through several major impact channels:



institutional spending



international student living expenses



expenditure of visiting friends and family



net increase in student labour supply



graduate labour productivity uplift



research driven productivity uplift