INDEPENDENT HIGHER EDUCATION AUSTRALIA

The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Retrospective impact of student visa changes introduced on 2 October 2026

I am writing on behalf of Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA) regarding changes to the Student (Subclass 500) visa program that commenced on 2 October 2026.

There are significant impacts on many thousands of international students that is affecting their wellbeing and in particular their mental health.

We cannot accept that this is anything more than an unintended consequence with potentially severe consequences for the individuals involved.

We therefore request an urgent meeting between you, the Chair of the IHEA Board, Professor David Perry, and me to discuss the impact of these changes and identify a practical resolution for affected students.

Under the new arrangements, most Student visa holders seeking a further Student visa must apply from outside Australia unless they qualify for a limited exemption.

One exemption allows students who require up to 12 additional months to complete their studies to apply onshore, provided they remain with the education provider for which their current Student visa was granted.

However, advice received from Assistant Minister Hill, Minister for International Education, and the Department of Home Affairs confirms that this exemption does not apply to students who transferred to another education provider, even where that transfer occurred lawfully before 2 October 2026.

IHEA is concerned that the new arrangements have a retrospective effect on students who transferred providers before the changes commenced.

These students made lawful decisions under the previous arrangements and could not reasonably have anticipated that doing so would prevent them from accessing the course completion exemption.

The impact is particularly significant for students who have already completed a substantial part of their course and require only a short extension to graduate.

These students may have spent several years studying in Australia, maintained satisfactory academic progress and made substantial financial and personal commitments, including undertaking compulsory professional placements where required.

They may now need to leave Australia to lodge a further visa application at significant cost that is likely to disrupt their studies and delay graduation.

Your urgent to this matter is needed to ensure rules already in place are fixed as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon. Dr Peter Hendy
Chief Executive Officer
Independent Higher Education Australia
26 October 2026