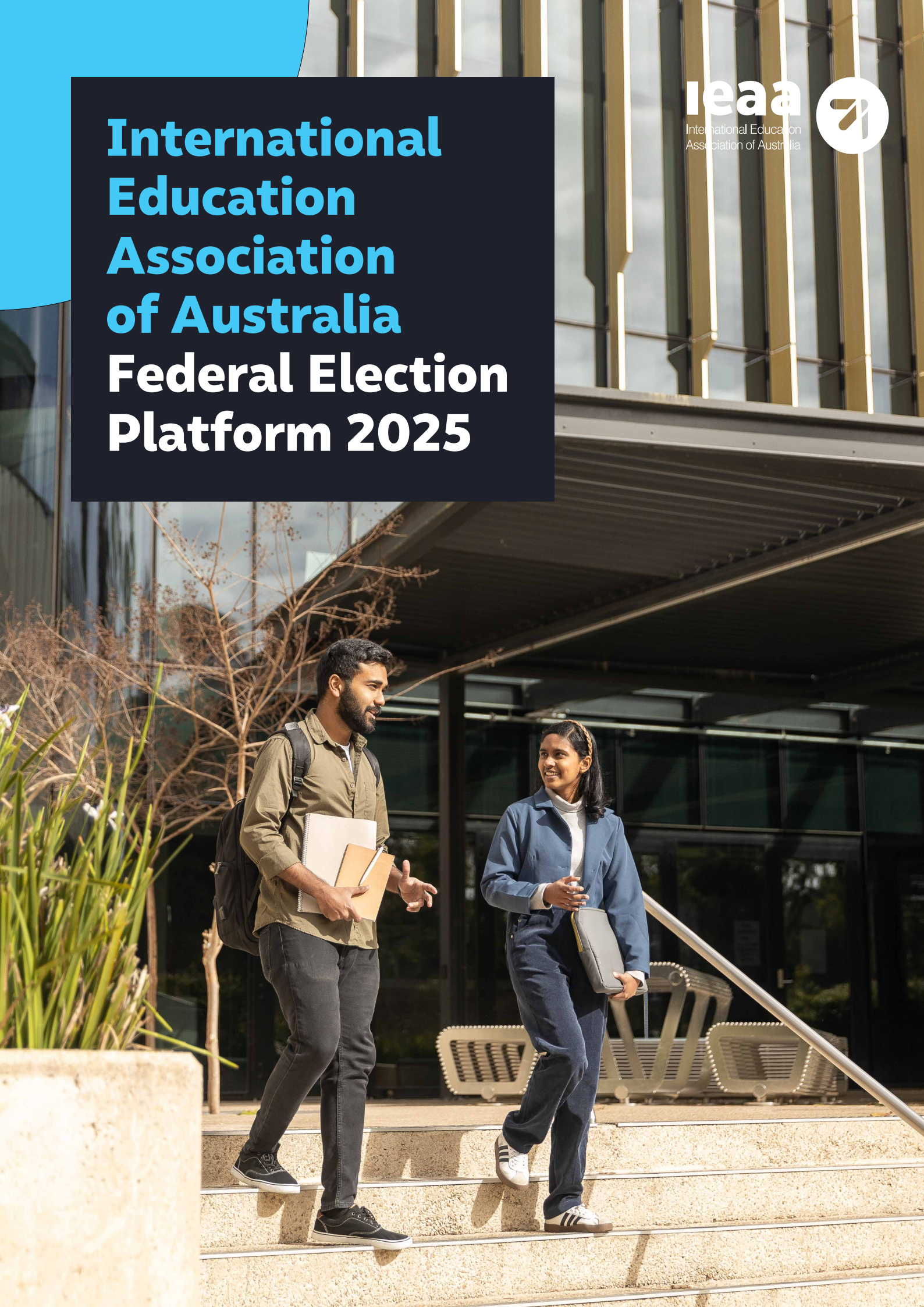


International Education Association of Australia Federal Election Platform 2025

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International Education
Association of Australia





Introduction

As the peak body which represents all sectors of the dynamic international education industry, the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) calls on our elected representatives to endorse a number of key stakeholder engagement principles as well as specific sector policy reform priorities.

Australia has for many years been a welcoming destination for international students who bring with them diverse cultures, perspectives and aspirations. These young people leave their homes and families behind to pursue world class education qualifications and contribute to our nation's vibrant academic landscape. Since 1985, the tuition fees they have paid have significantly supplemented government funding for domestic students and research. The Parkinson Review recently estimated that 35% to 40% of Australia's annual university research spending comes from international tuition fee revenue.

The international education sector in Australia includes government and independent schools, English language providers, public and private VET providers, our public universities, independent Higher Education Providers, education agents and purpose built accommodation providers (PBSA). Across each of these providers, students from diverse cultural backgrounds enrich their classrooms, campuses and communities with unique experiences,

traditions and perspectives. They open doors for our own local students in cross-cultural understanding and enhance collaborative connections with others from around the world. Encouraged by Australian Government initiatives, such as the New Colombo Plan scholarship program, domestic students are increasingly studying in other countries' education systems as well.

International students also play a pivotal role in Australia's economic prosperity. They contribute billions of dollars annually, support our volunteer sector and address critical skills shortages. Their expenditures not just on tuition but also accommodation, transportation, daily essentials and tourism (including from friends and family visits) help sustain local business whilst bolstering our nation's economic growth.

International Education Action Plan

1. Integrity and Good Governance

As international education is impacted by a number of different portfolios, good governance of our sector is crucial to achieving an effective and coordinated policy framework. To this end, IEAA calls on Government to:

- **Review and launch a new National Strategy for International Education:** Review the existing Australian National Strategy for International Education 2021-2030. Given recent decisions around enrolment limits (caps), and a focus on Transnational Education delivery, this review needs to factor in sustainable growth. If the blunt instrument of enrolment limits are to continue, the sector needs to have a co-design role that will ensure a fairer and more effective allocation for all providers.
- **Engage meaningfully with the National Council for International Education:** Maintain an effective National Council which is charged with meaningful responsibilities rather than its current purely advisory role.
- **Re-establish the Council for International Students in Australia:** Ensure that ongoing support and recurrent funding is provided for the re-establishment of the now dormant Council for International Students in Australia (CISA). Good and responsive policies for our sector requires effective input of the student voice.
- **Renew investment in the International Education Innovation Fund:** Maintain and grow the current International Education Innovation Fund (IEIF) for research projects that support sector-wide strategic initiatives and priorities.
- **Significantly increase investment in marketing study destination Australia:** Ensure that Austrade is adequately funded to fulfil its role as the Government's offshore marketing arm for international education. For too long the tourism sector has been provided with financial, and other forms of Government support, which is exponentially higher than the meagre funds provided to international education (currently a 1:10 funding ratio).
- **Expand the remit of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission to include oversight and planning for international education:** The current Government's Universities Accord initiative calls for the establishment of an Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC). While the goals of this Commission are laudable, at this stage they are almost exclusively weighted to the domestic tertiary education sector. However, many of the Accord's recommendations envisage specific impacts on international education and ATEC should therefore encompass international education and all Higher Education and VET providers in its role as sector steward. A first priority must be co-designing, with the sector, a fairer enrolment cap allocation framework.
- **Prioritise a student-centric approach:** Offshore and onshore education agents have a very strong influence on student decision making in their selection of education provider, courses and preferred study location. While IEAA supports the broader integrity principles in the ESOS Bill, matters relating to education agents and commissions will require further consultation with the sector.
- **Ensure proportionate burdens and consequences for both good and bad behaviour:** Our national regulators, TEQSA and ASQA, and the Department of Home Affairs, must be provided with sufficient resources to continue their recent proactive audit initiatives and see through legal appeals to their jurisdictional decisions. In equal measure, active visa cancellation campaigns against overseas students who engage in constant course-hopping, would assist in reinforcing our sector's reputation for strong integrity measures.



2. Economic Development and Skills Integration

Now, more than ever, Australia is in a global skills race with competitor study destination countries. While the majority of our international students return home, transparent and achievable migration pathways will be crucial to retaining outstanding overseas talent and world class research outputs. To this end, IEAA calls on Government to:

- **Ensure international education and international students are in scope for JSA:** Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) has the key advisory role to the Federal Government on data-driven analysis of our future workplace expectations and requirements. It would be appropriate for JSA to provide clear communications to international students and providers about potential pathways to permanent residency before, during, and after their studies.
- **Prioritise Higher Degree by Research students:** Most of Australia's world-leading research outputs now involve teams of domestic students undertaking research with students from overseas. If our nation is to maximise the benefits of hosting overseas Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students, then more supportive visa approval, provider allocation and migration policies must be a priority for our knowledge economy.
- **Promote long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the regions:** Many regional communities have proven to be far more welcoming of international students and their skill sets than their city counterparts. IEAA would welcome a greater policy focus in support of regional communities' ability to retain overseas student talent.
- **Facilitate linkages and understanding with employers:** Most education institutions attempt to facilitate linkages to prospective employers and employer groups for international students. Notwithstanding this, Government through entities such as JSA could have a greater role in assisting employers understand how to engage with and employ overseas students.
- **Support for long term investment decisions:** Education institutions, agents and student accommodation providers are required to make long-term, capital-intensive investment decisions. Constant changes to our nation's visa policies, combined with the vagaries of our Federation's complex taxation regimes, all serve to diminish the appetite for investment in our sector. We call on the Federal Government to provide greater leadership and facilitate more investment-friendly policies for our \$51 billion per annum industry.



3. Soft Power Diplomacy and Community Integration

Through its original fee-free scholarships under the post-war Colombo Plan, to its full tuition fee-paying focus in more recent years, Australia continues to provide world-class education outcomes to young people, particularly from our own Indo-Pacific region. In turn, education program delivery has provided our nation with undeniable soft power diplomatic benefits. Going forward, it is in our national interest that the wider Australian community gains greater insight into the benefits that accrue from having a dynamic and financially sustainable international education sector. To this end, IEAA calls on Government to:

- **Better support government and independent schools' sector engagement:** It is well known that if international students enrol in Australia's school system, they will be much better integrated into the wider community before they proceed to post-secondary study. In New Zealand, approximately 20% of their overseas students are enrolled across their nation's schools. However, in Australia the figure varies between only 2 to 3%. Our nation requires, at least for marketing purposes, one national school certificate (as they have in New Zealand) rather than our current competing separate state/territory Year 11 and 12 Certificates.
- **Internationalise VET:** Together with specialist private vocational education providers, our public TAFE Institutes deliver outstanding VET skills in demand.

Public TAFE's focus on fee-free tuition for domestic students has sidelined efforts to enrol international students and enhance offshore delivery. In the meantime, other nations such as Germany, Japan and The Netherlands have filled the void left by the withdrawal of many of our TAFE Institutes from Transnational Education and cross-cultural programs. Government needs to re-incentivise our TAFE Institutes to grow their nascent internationalisation programs.

- **Support Australian students in learning abroad:** Whether it be through school exchange visits, semester based post-secondary study programs or short-term learning abroad scholarships, our nation's domestic students have shown an increased appetite to study overseas. Intercultural skills and soft power diplomacy accrue to our nation if

Government supports young Australians in their study abroad ambitions. Retention and expansion of current, highly-regarded Government scholarship programs such as the New Colombo Plan will be vital to keeping Australia's future leaders globally connected.

- **Support overseas students coming to Australia for short-term learning programs:** The decision in last year's Federal Budget to increase non-refundable student visa application charges to the highest in the world (from \$710 to \$1,600) has created negative perceptions about Australia's willingness to engage in meaningful education exchange. IEAA calls on the Federal Government to reduce by 50% the student visa charge for overseas students pursuing short courses, executive education, English language

programs, exchange programs and other courses of study of less than one year's duration.

- **Maximise the dividends to the Australian community:** Our sector fully supports the need for policies and regulations that show due regard for how international education can deliver the greatest economic, social and cultural dividends to the Australian community. Unfortunately, in recent times, international students have been unfairly blamed for a range of issues that have been caused by many diverse factors. IEAA calls on Government to co-invest with our sector in a public relations campaign that highlights the above-mentioned benefits of international education to the wider Australian community.



Conclusion

Constant policy changes inflicted on our dynamic international education sector have damaged our nation's standing with our Indo-Pacific neighbours and caused a withdrawal of both human and financial capital investment.

IEAA takes pride in living its values as a socially responsible, evidence-based, inclusive, accountable and representative member organisation. On behalf of our 4,000+ members, we call on whichever Party forms government to support these Integrity and Good Governance, Economic Development and Skills Integration, and Soft Power Diplomacy and Community Integration recommendations.

We look forward to continuing to actively engage with all levels of government, business and the wider community on policy reform and renewal. Our world-class international education sector deserves nothing less.






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IEAA is Australia's leading association for international education. We strive to empower professionals, engage institutions and enhance Australia's reputation as a provider of world-class education.

We provide advocacy; deliver high quality professional learning; and drive new research to highlight emerging trends, inform strategy and policy, and enrich the sector's knowledge.