

Media Release —

3 in 4 Independent Tertiary Education Providers Expect Local Enrolment Drop

— 8 April 2020
For Immediate Release

The massive impact of measures to contain the Covid-19 virus outbreak on the independent tertiary education system has been assessed – and it’s devastating. A survey of independent providers in the higher education, vocational education, training and skills sectors shows that 75% of them expect enrolments to fall. The survey was undertaken by the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA), the sector’s peak body.

“While social distancing is obviously a necessary measure to contain the Covid-19 outbreak, it presents genuine challenges in delivering students the quality outcomes they have come to expect from ITECA members. The consequence is a predicted drop in enrolments,” said Mr Troy Williams, ITECA Chief Executive.

The ITECA survey asked independent tertiary education providers to assess the impact of measures to control the Covid-19 virus outbreak on enrolments and commencements. The results showed that:

- 57% of providers had seen domestic students cancel their enrolment;
- 64% of providers had seen domestic students postpone their scheduled commencement; and
- 75% of providers expect to see a reduction in domestic students.

The impact of social distancing measures was highlighted by the fact that 32% of independent tertiary education providers reported students being quarantined (within Australia) as they had potentially contracted the Covid-19 virus.

“These data highlight the need for government to step-up and back Australia’s independent tertiary education sector. ITECA members are doing it tough as students cancel their enrolment and defer their study, and although many have transitioned to online learning, this isn’t always a practical option for many courses,” Mr Williams said.

ITECA has provided government with the *Covid-19 Response – Backing Independent Tertiary Education Providers* action plan. It sets out twenty-two recommendations to support independent providers in the higher education, vocational education, training and skills sectors.

“From removing red-tape and providing financial assistance, to better support for students as they transition to online learning, the ITECA action plan gives government a roadmap to support the sector,” Mr Williams said.

According to ITECA, government will rely upon the independent tertiary education sector as economic recovery efforts get underway.

“As government turns its mind to getting Australians back to work, the independent tertiary education sector will play a major role. ITECA members have the geographic spread, industry links and experience to provide the education and training to support jobseekers and those seeking career transition. To do this, we need to ensure that government backs the independent tertiary education sector today, so it can deliver support across the economy in the months ahead,” Mr Williams concluded.

Independent providers support around 10% of the 1.5 million students in higher education and around 80% of the 4.1 million students in vocational education and training.

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