



Projects

Economic contribution of the independent higher education sector

Quantifying the national economic and social value of Australia's independent higher education providers

LOCATION

Canberra

CLIENT

Independent Higher Education Australia

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

Background

Independent Higher Education Australia represents a diverse and rapidly growing group of private universities, university colleges and specialist higher education institutions operating within Australia's national quality and regulatory framework. While the independent higher education sector educates a significant share of Australia's tertiary students and plays an important role in postgraduate education, industry-aligned training and international education, its broader economic contribution had not previously been assessed in a comprehensive, economy-wide way.

Against a backdrop of heightened public and policy interest in skills, productivity and international education, Independent Higher Education Australia sought robust, evidence-based analysis to clearly articulate the sector's contribution to Australia's economy. This required more than a standard impact assessment. It needed a rigorous approach capable of capturing not only direct activity, but also supply-chain effects, labour market interactions and longer-term productivity benefits associated with education and research.

Our role

NineSquared was engaged, in partnership with Qaive, to deliver a comprehensive assessment of the economic contribution of the independent higher education sector to the Australian economy. The engagement focused on producing a credible, policy-relevant evidence base that could be used by industry stakeholders, policymakers and the broader public.

NineSquared and Qaive led the design and delivery of an economy-wide modelling framework using a computable general equilibrium (CGE) approach. This allowed the analysis to capture how independent higher education activity interacts with households, businesses, labour markets and government across the entire economy, rather than being confined to the education sector alone.

The modelling incorporated multiple impact channels, including institutional operating and capital expenditure, international student living expenses and associated visitor spending, labour supplied by

students while studying, temporary reductions in domestic labour supply, and productivity gains linked to graduate skills and research activity. Together, these channels provided a holistic picture of how independent higher education supports economic activity, employment, incomes and public revenue.

The final report clearly communicates headline results, explains the underlying methodology, and situates the quantitative findings within a broader discussion of social and economic benefits that extend beyond what can be captured through modelling alone. The work has provided Independent Higher Education Australia with a robust, defensible narrative on the sector's economic significance and its contribution to Australia's long-term prosperity.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, find one of our experts at ninesquared.com.au/people