



# **Education Without Compromise:** How Chisholm Institute Saved \$2.25M with ERA Group

*A CEO's guide to safeguarding education  
through more innovative cost management*





Chisholm



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# Rising Costs, Shrinking Revenues

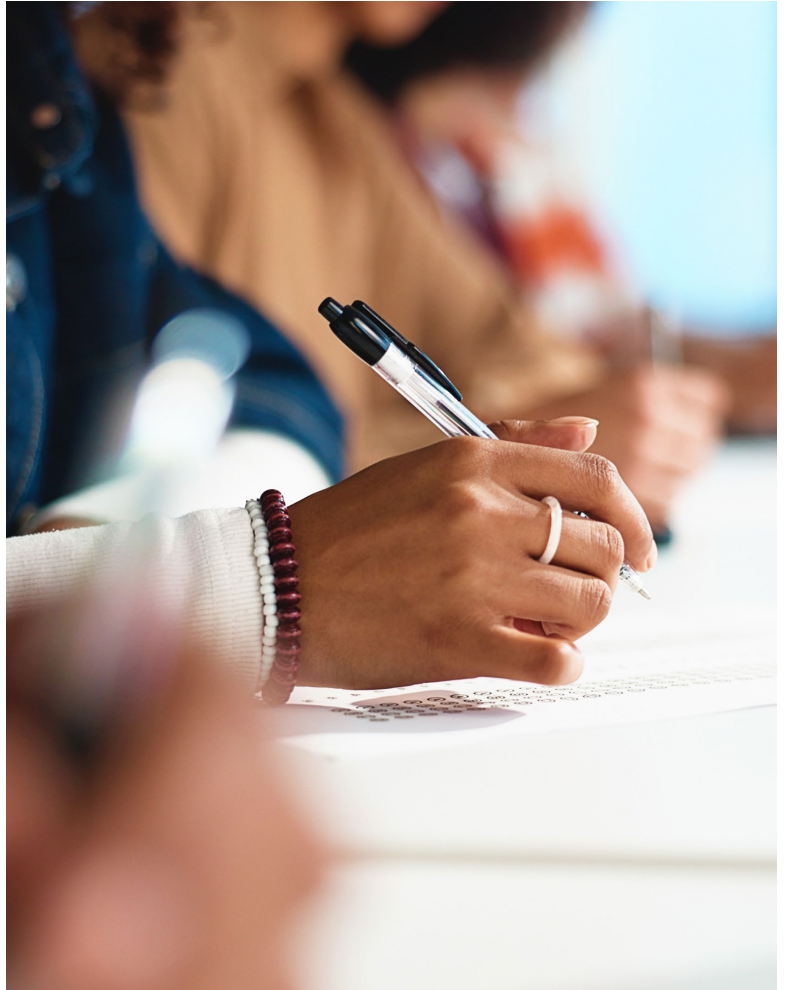
Australia's vocational education and training sector, including Chisholm Institute, has been facing a critical financial challenge. The decline in international student revenues and uncertainty in government funding have created a pressing need for cost management solutions.

For instance, the Institute was struggling to manage the increasing costs of utilities and telecommunications, which were consuming a significant portion of their budget.

At the same time, operational costs were rising. From utilities to reprographics, cleaning supplies to telecommunications, the day-to-day costs of running multiple campuses were eroding financial stability.

The Board set a clear directive: enhance financial self-sufficiency. For the newly appointed CFO, reassurance was needed immediately, along with specialist expertise to review expenditures across categories that internal teams lacked both the time and capacity to address fully.

**That's when Chisholm turned to ERA Group.**





## Costs Hidden in Plain Sight

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Chisholm's indirect costs were spread across nine categories - electricity, telecommunications, industrial gases, cleaning supplies, uniforms and PPE, reprographics, office supplies, records management, and travel.

On the surface, nothing seemed out of control. But without systematic benchmarking, anomalies in supplier pricing, fragmented contracts, and inefficiencies in technology platforms meant hidden overspending was draining budgets.

### **The challenge was twofold:**

- Achieve rapid and substantial cost savings.
- Strengthen processes and supplier agreements to protect service quality and ensure business continuity.

# Turning Insight into Action



ERA Group's team, led by Principal Consultant Tim Woods, undertook a comprehensive analysis of major cost categories, demonstrating their thorough approach and expertise in cost management.

## Data and Benchmarking:

Supplier pricing and contract terms were compared against market benchmarks, exposing gaps and inconsistencies.

## Technology and Processes:

ERA identified outdated systems and platforms that limited transparency and compliance.

## Supplier Rationalisation:

Contracts were streamlined, suppliers consolidated, and terms renegotiated to improve competitiveness and quality.


## CSR and Continuity

In sensitive categories like uniforms and PPE, ERA ensured compliance with institutional standards while securing better value.

One particularly complex challenge came in telecommunications and utilities. Fragmented legacy contracts across multiple campuses made costs opaque and difficult to manage. ERA consolidated agreements, introduced clearer structures, and negotiated more favourable terms. The result was not only financial savings but also simplified management for the CFO and procurement team.

Throughout, ERA shouldered the operational transitions. By managing vendor engagement and contract handovers directly, the project required minimal input from Chisholm's management and staff—a crucial factor in maintaining focus on education delivery. The CFO and procurement team played a key role in this process, providing valuable insights and feedback.





A wood explains:

“ We were also able to introduce better processes, quality of supply, vendor agreements and technology platforms for nearly every expense category. This was all done with minimum time input by their management and staff, which made the process easy for them. ”

## \$2.25 Million Saved, over 30% Average Reduction



ERA delivered an average of over 30% savings across nine categories, equivalent to \$2.25 million in annual savings.

### Breakdown of results included:

- Savings of up to 55% in some categories.
- More modest but meaningful results of 15% in others.
- An overall stronger and more sustainable cost base, verified over 24 months through ERA's monitoring.

ERA's solutions not only delivered substantial savings but also provided something less tangible but equally valuable: assurance. The CFO and Board now had the confidence that costs were understood, controlled, and strategically managed, relieving them of the burden of financial uncertainty and providing a sense of security.

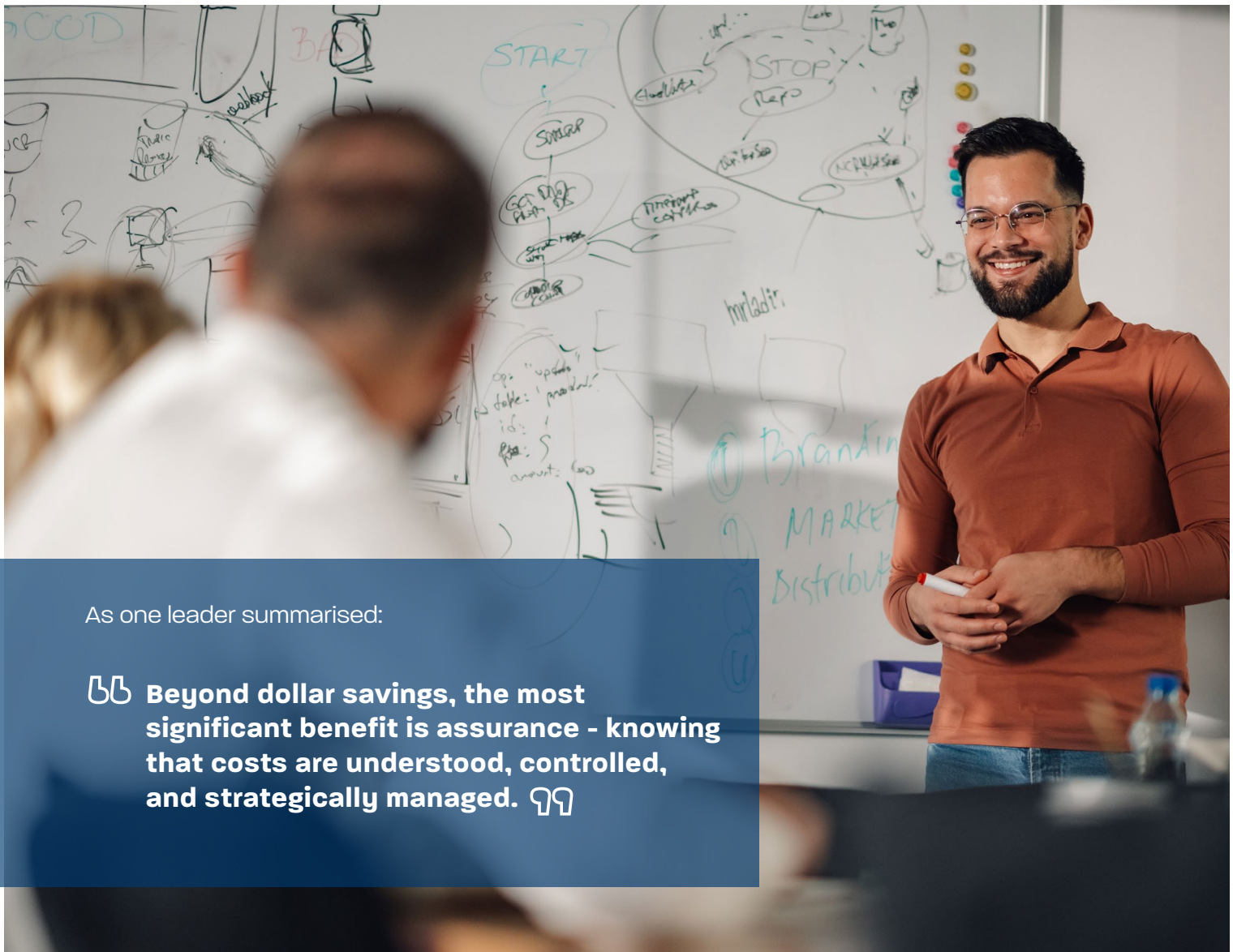
# Long-Term Value: Assurance, Not Just Savings

ERA's ongoing role is a testament to our commitment to Chisholm's financial resilience. By monitoring supplier performance, validating savings, and reporting to leadership, ERA ensures Chisholm remains financially resilient despite external uncertainties, providing a sense of security and instilling confidence in the Institute's future.

The project has also freed senior management to focus on Chisholm's core mission - delivering high-quality education - rather than becoming entangled in cost control, providing a sense of relief and reassurance about the Institute's future.

## The transformation has:

- Enhanced financial self-sufficiency.
- Improved supplier transparency and compliance.
- Simplified operations and reduced administrative burden.
- Protected service quality while delivering substantial savings.



As one leader summarised:

**BB Beyond dollar savings, the most significant benefit is assurance - knowing that costs are understood, controlled, and strategically managed. QQ**

# Investing in Education by Controlling Costs



For Chisholm Institute, the ERA partnership demonstrated that cost savings and educational quality can coexist. By tackling indirect costs strategically, ERA unlocked millions in annual savings while strengthening processes for the long term.

With \$2.25 million saved, a over 30% average reduction, and greater confidence in leadership, the Institute can now direct more resources toward its students and mission.

For education leaders facing similar pressures, the lesson is clear: hidden opportunities exist in every organisation. ERA finds them, secures them, and ensures they last.

**ERA Group finds savings where you least expect them - freeing capital to invest where it matters most: in education.**



*Chisholm*



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