



2 December 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
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The University of South Australia (UniSA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Senate Inquiry into the *Social Security Amendment (Income Support for Regional Students) Bill 2010*.

The Bill amends the *Social Security Act 1991* to add 'Inner Regional Australia' to the list of zones to which Independent Youth Allowance would be applied. The effect of this will be to enable students whose family home is located in 'Inner Regional Australia', to claim a Youth Allowance payment. The estimated cost to the Federal Government is \$90 million per annum.

UniSA recognises that many of the exciting developments for South Australia are occurring in regional areas. Initiatives in mining, agricultural developments and energy and transport are underpinned by strong regional communities.

UniSA is supportive of the Bill and offers the following specific comments.

Impacts on Regional Students

UniSA acknowledges the *Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities Report*, which found that many rural students must relocate to urban areas in order to access tertiary education, at approximate costs of \$15,000 - \$20,000 per year. That report also found that 55% of students in metropolitan areas access tertiary education, in comparison with 33% of students in regional areas. This disparity is largely attributed due to the costs of relocation.

This Bill enables students in Inner Regional areas to access the same income supports as those in other regional locations. UniSA is supportive of measures that promote the equity of regionally-located students.

Impacts on South Australia

The University of South Australia prioritised regional engagement as a strategic direction in 2004. UniSA has a very strong commitment to education, research and the development of robust and sustainable regional communities. Its Centre for Regional Engagement is based at its Whyalla campus and the Mount Gambier Regional Centre. UniSA recognises that studying in a regional location offers benefits such as: smaller class sizes, more personable interactions between staff and students, an enriched sense of community, and ongoing established support networks.

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To assist students with the transition to higher education, the Centre for Regional Engagement offers a one-year, no-fee bridging course through the Foundation Studies Regional Strand.

The Centre for Regional Engagement also undertakes research endeavours with business, industry and community partners that reflect rural and regional priorities and interests. The Centre has a strong Research presence with innovative, nationally and internationally significant research being undertaken into community and regional development, rural and indigenous health and community wellbeing, at the Centre for Rural Health and Community Development. Opportunities such as these enable students to stay in regional communities to offer their expertise following completion of their education.

With the measures proposed in the Bill, more students in South Australia would be able to access a tertiary education. This will contribute to achieving the recommendations of the Bradley Review, in particular its target of 20% of undergraduate higher education enrolments by students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, and target of 40% of 25- to 34 year olds having attained a qualification at bachelor level or above by 2020. Inner Regional areas include the Fleurieu Peninsula and Murray Bridge; these are potential growth areas for the state.

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