

* The position at the moment:

Country students are already at a disadvantage compared to city students.

Figures given by Prof. Margaret Alston of Monash University during an interview on the ABC -
51% of city VCE students go on to Tertiary study cf. 30% of country students.

Only 8% of city students defer Tertiary study cf. 21.6% of country students, to enable them to qualify as independent, before commencing their study.

These figures are testimony to the extra cost burden on students forced to live away from home for University study and their extra travel costs.

* The position for the future:

* We believe the opportunity to undertake Tertiary study will become even more difficult for country students under the new scheme of Youth Allowance.

This is supported by David Battersby, the University of Ballarat Vice Chancellor.

In the Wimmera Mail Times (21.10.09) he is quoted as saying that "rural students would be disproportionately affected by aspects of proposed Federal Government changes."

Our Reasons for objecting to the proposed changes:

1. The requirement to undertake 30 hours of work for 18 months:

- means that study must be deferred for 2 years and universities usually will only defer student courses for 1 year.

- is very difficult in rural areas because jobs with 30 hours a week for 18 months are unavailable in most rural areas. Any work available is seasonal.

Students would have to move to regional or city centres for work.

The associated costs of renting and travel would make it hard for students to save for their time of study.

- Students will probably have to work in areas which do not suit their talents, which would be frustrating.

- means that young people will be another year older before they start study and before they finish it and begin to contribute their taxes to our government.

(Fortunately this requirement has been waived by Julia Gillard for those who committed themselves to a gap year in 2009)

But many country 2009 VCE students are presently sitting exams knowing that there is little chance of being able to fulfill their dreams.

2. The Parental Income Threshold is still too low-

- Although the threshold set on Parental Income has been raised - to c. \$44,000 depending on family circumstances

- the cost of keeping a country student at a city university has been estimated at \$22,000 - \$25,000.

This places an enormous burden on families or requires the student to work for many hours whilst studying full time.

3. Parental Assets:

- Although there is a considerable allowance made for farming assets, there seems to be little understanding of the fact that these assets cannot be sold without severely affecting farm profitability.

I trust that your committee might find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely

Dulcie Loats