

December 3, 2010

Committee Secretary of the Senate Standing Committee
on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, PO Box 6100,
Parliament House,
ACT 2600.

Submission:

My son finished his HSC in 2008 and decided to work for a year before entering University. After working in several different positions for the 12 months he was ready to start at his chosen University and enrolled at UNE. Prior to doing this we were under the impression he only had to work for 12 months before he could access Tertiary assistance.

We had a change of Government and with that a change in the rules so that he would have had to work for 18 months instead. He started at UNE and worked during semester break. He tried on several different occasions to get assistance for his Tertiary education. Either he is unable to fill in a form or each time he completes the rules are changed.

Until about two years ago I worked with my husband in our business and this used to get us by. I now find in order to get by I work full-time so that I can pay for my son to attend UNE. This is not what I envisaged. Whilst I would like him to complete his education the certainty of having a full time job is not at all certain. I have two other children and a house to maintain. I do not know for how much longer I can keep this up.

I have tried to instill in my children that they need to work things out for themselves and Alex, my oldest son, attending UNE, he has gone to Centrelink by himself to seek assistance. He has never been given the assistance in completing a form or finding out information. I find this very hard to comprehend.

I want my children to, if they want to go to University, to be able to have that experience but I find it is a financial burden that I can no longer keep up and some assistance in this matter would be helpful.

We live in Guyra, which is 35 km from Armidale. My son attends UNE, which is based in Armidale. For the first two semesters he travelled to Armidale to attend UNE. The cost of fuel and the wear and tear on vehicles made this quite difficult. So he moved into one of the Colleges. This was costing over \$202.00 per week and this was just the basics before we added a meal pack and data allowance..

I don't want a hand out and neither does my son. During the holiday period he takes on casual work where ever he can find it in order to contribute to the cost of living.

Regional children should not be penalized for having the same dream as most teenagers, and that is to be able to access a better education and use it.

I would ask that all children be given the same access to education and especially those from regional areas that whilst they may not live and work on a farm, their family derives its income from providing services to those that work and live on the land.

This is about equity of services and at the moment I do not see equity. I see the divide between City, Regional and Rural just getting bigger. We should not be penalized for taking the step to make a 'tree change' and alleviate the burden on metropolitan areas. We already suffer regionally with access to health services and other services by being in a regional area, we should not have to suffer further just because we want to have an education.

I would urge the current government to relook at its funding options and encourage more children to seek assistance to attend University. This would assist with the population staying in rural areas. If you are educated in your own back yard you are more likely to stay in your own backyard and with good education you can add value to the community in which you live.

Regards

Aileen MacDonald