

2/10/09

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

SUBMISSION RE: Proposed changes to Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships

The proposed changes to the Commonwealth Scholarship allowances to a “Student Start-Up Scholarship” and “Relocation Scholarship” will adversely affect my child, who has to leave home to live in the city for higher education, from being able to pay her way through university as she will have to pay for her rent which at current rates is a minimum of \$100 per week. Most shared rentals are over that. Each year, at a minimum, she will need to find \$5200 for rent plus all other cost of living, including computer expenses and books.

The new changes will mean after the first year of study a reduction of about \$1000 from the existing Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship where students receive about \$4400 per year for each year of their course. Should she be able to qualify for independent status, which as I have stated in another submission, is highly unlikely, this with the reduced amount per year after the first year of study will make it even more difficult for rural students to be able to concentrate on their studies.

At this time in their lives their focus should be on study when it is university time. During breaks they can work to help supplement their youth allowance to help cover the higher cost of living away from home. Many lecturers from different universities note that the standard of work is decreasing as more students spend more time working rather than studying.

The criteria for support for rural students should be that if the student has attended a country high school and has to leave home to further their education then a Rural Higher Education Allowance should be automatically available which should be equivalent to the Youth Allowance and the Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship allowances.

I urge the Senate Committee to re-evaluate the proposed changes to Youth Allowance and make genuine allowances for rural students so that these students are not penalized from pursuing higher education away from home after they have completed school.

Yours faithfully

Roberta Meiklejohn, (Dip Teaching, B. Ed., Grad Cert. LDs, Level 3 Teacher)