



Office of the Vice-Chancellor

Friday, 26 November 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: ewer.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Inquiry into the Social Security Amendment (Income Support for Regional Students) Bill 2010

Southern Cross University (SCU) is a regional university, with campuses located in Coffs Harbour, Lismore and Tweed Heads, and a newly established campus in the southern Gold Coast. We have over 16,000 domestic and international students, with one of the highest participation rates in the sector of students from regional locations (60 percent). Of these, an estimated 50 percent, equating to 6200 domestic students, fall into the "Inner Regional" category.

The challenges faced by many regional students and their families in looking to take up university studies are well-known, with one outcome being significantly lower participation rates. Regional universities such as SCU are critical if Australia is to overcome the metropolitan – regional divide and to meet the Government's participation and attainment targets. While the presence of substantial regional campuses is one factor in overcoming this divide, this should be supported by reducing the financial barriers experienced by young people and their families.

Accordingly, I would welcome any financial assistance to regional students that helps them overcome the disadvantages they face in undertaking higher education studies. However, there is a substantial need for capital funds within the sector, particularly for regional universities, and therefore I do not support the proposal to appropriate the funds from the Education Investment Fund.

Yours sincerely

Peter Lee