

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into student income support

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Submitter: Ms Anna Frank, Team Leader and
Ms Barbara Shorthouse, Chairperson

Organisation: Napean Interyouth Services &
South Penrith Youth Inc

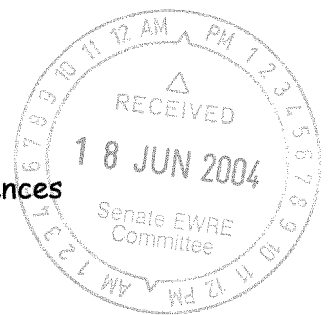
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To The Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References
Committee



We put forward this submission on behalf of our organisations, Nepean Interyouth Services auspiced by North St Marys Neighbourhood Centre Inc and South Penrith Youth and Neighbourhood Services Inc. Our organisations provide direct service to at risk young people as well as specialising in community development for young people in the Penrith Local Government Area.

The Penrith Local Government Area is situated in Greater Western Sydney and has significant pockets of extremely high disadvantage, namely Cranebrook, Kingswood and North St Marys (Penrith Suburbs SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage)

Penrith also has a very high number of young people, ABS Census data (2001) identified that Penrith has 27 466 young people aged 15 -24, which represents 16% of the total population and there has been an 11.4% increase in this age range between 1991- 2001.

According to data sourced from Western Sydney Institute TAFE, Penrith continues to have a lower than Greater Western Sydney average for people attending both TAFE and other Tertiary Educational Institutions.

Through interviews conducted with several local young people who are studying and receiving financial support from the government, we identified that barriers affecting this participation rate are varied and numerous, however financial barriers can be noted as a prime example that directly impacts the continued participation in education for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Whilst reduced capacity to meet living expenses remained the most significant issue, one of the emerging themes that was highlighted by all the young people interviewed was their limited access to educational resources through financial constraints.

The young people expressed their concerns regarding access to educational resources feeling this was not fair and equitable due to financial constraints. The educational resources young people felt were most affected by limited income are

- photocopying
- printing
- computer and Internet usage
- text books
- stationary supplies
- equipment needed for specialised areas of vocational study

Another barrier experienced by young people was the cost and accessibility of public transport. It is often the case that young people who travel to educational institutes by public transport are affected by indirect routes and long delays that are costly as well as time consuming.

Young parents who are studying raised the considerable issue of the cost of childcare for their children - this places young parents under significant financial strain and affects their ability to continue their study.

In addition to cost of childcare, the availability of childcare near or at educational institutes is generally limited. This is compounded by the cost of additional transport and the inconvenience of travelling to another suburb or area.

The overall impact on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is that they are forced to survive below the poverty line. We need to identify ways to break the cycle for young people as we continue to construct barriers that can often be insurmountable and impede the young person's participation in economic and social life.

The recommendations put forward by the young people interviewed are:

- To increase Government income support for students
- To introduce a registered allowance for students experiencing financial hardship that can be credited to that specific student's card for photocopying, printing and Internet usage
- Uniform allowance for specialist areas of study
- Raise age to 25 years of age for free public transport for students, i.e. bus and train passes
- One off payment towards cost of stationery items and textbooks.

Written by

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and

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