

The Senate

Rural and Regional Affairs
and Transport
References Committee

Rural and Regional access to Secondary and
Tertiary Education Opportunities

December 2009

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACOT | Australian College of Outback Tourism |
| ACT | Australian Capital Territory |
| AIC | Assistance for Isolated Children |
| BCEF | Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW |
| CAP | Country Areas Program |
| COAG | Council of Australian Governments |
| Department | Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations |
| DEEWR | Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations |
| Diversity Fund | Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund |
| EFTSL | Equivalent Full Time Student Load |
| HECS | Higher Education Contribution Scheme |
| HELP | Higher Education Loan Program |
| HREOC | Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission |
| HSC | Higher School Certificate |
| ICPA | Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia |
| LAFHA | Living Away from Home Allowance |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| NT | Northern Territory |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| RHINO | Rural Health in the Northern Outback |
| RTO | Registered Training Organisation |
| Select Committee | The Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities |
| SES | socio-economic status |

| | |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SiMERR | National Centre for Science, ICT and Mathematics Education in Rural and Regional Australia. |
| TAFE | technical and further education colleges |
| VET | vocational education and training |
| WA | Western Australia |

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2.100 The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission an investigation into the barriers to rural and regional secondary educational opportunities with a view to developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia.

Recommendation 2

2.101 In developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary education opportunities in rural and regional Australia, the committee recommends that consideration should be given to strategies for ensuring that literacy and numeracy programs, once introduced into schools, are able to be maintained within those schools.

Recommendation 3

2.147 The committee recommends that as part of the investigation into the barriers to rural and regional secondary educational opportunities with a view to developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia, consideration should be given to whether the current level of funding under the AIC Scheme is appropriate.

Recommendation 4

3.94 The committee strongly recommends that the Australian Government introduce a Tertiary Access Allowance for students who are required to move away from home to access tertiary education.

Recommendation 5

3.103 The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate the establishment of a capital works program to assist tertiary institutions to increase the stock of affordable housing for students.

Recommendation 6

3.105 The committee therefore recommends that the Australian Government investigate the implementation of a form of temporary income support for students while they are on clinical placements or block release.

Recommendation 7

4.27 The committee recommend that a review be undertaken in 2013 to assess the impact of funding compacts, student-driven demand funding and the Structural Adjustment Fund on regional universities.

Recommendation 8

4.76 The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate options for attracting students to regional institutions, and encouraging graduates to work in rural and regional locations, through programs which provide for reduced HELP-HECS liability.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The inquiry

1.1 On 16 June 2009 the Senate referred the following matter to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report.

An assessment of the adequacy of Government measures to provide equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education opportunities to students from rural and regional communities attending metropolitan institutions, and metropolitan students attending regional universities or technical and further education (TAFE) colleges, with particular reference to:

- (a) the financial impact on rural and regional students who are attending metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE;
- (b) the education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas;
- (c) the implications of current and proposed government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas;
- (d) the short- and long-term impact of current and proposed government policies on regional university and TAFE college enrolments;
- (e) the adequacy of government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post-secondary study;
- (f) the educational needs of rural and regional students;
- (g) the impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities; and
- (d) other related matters

1.2 An interim report for the inquiry was tabled on 28 August 2009, in which the committee extended the reporting date to 29 October 2009. On 27 October 2009 the reporting date was extended to 11 December 2009.

1.3 The committee advertised the inquiry in *The Australian* on 11 July 2009. The committee also advertised the inquiry in *Farm Weekly* (WA), *The Land* (NSW), *Queensland Country Life* (Queensland) and *Stock Journal* (SA) on 9 and 23 July 2009, *Tasmanian Country* (Tasmania) on 10 and 24 July 2009 and the *Northern Territory News* (NT) on 11 July 2009. The committee also wrote directly to a number of key stakeholder groups, state and federal government departments and agencies, and peak bodies inviting submissions.

1.4 The committee received 759 submissions (see Appendix 1). The committee also decided that submissions and evidence to the committee's inquiry into the Social

Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 will be considered as submissions and evidence to the current inquiry.

1.5 The committee held hearings in Tweed Heads on 2 September 2009, Perth on 21 and 22 September 2009, Adelaide on 23 September 2009, Albury on 24 September 2009, Townsville on 10 November 2009, Melbourne on 11 November 2009, and in Canberra on 12 November 2009.

Definitions

1.6 In this report the committee has used the term 'rural and regional' in a general sense to denote areas which are not metropolitan areas. The use of the term 'rural and regional' includes remote areas. The committee feels this is appropriate, given that it intends this report as a broad overview of the challenges facing students in rural and regional areas, and not as a definitive analysis of particular issues facing particular areas. However the committee notes that some evidence it received did use the terms 'rural', 'regional' and 'remote' which have specific definitions in terms of geography and/or population.

1.7 The committee uses 'tertiary' to denote both the university and TAFE sectors.

Scope of the inquiry

1.8 The majority of submissions to the inquiry dealt with the issue of the proposed changes to student income support, in particular the proposed changes to Youth Allowance. The committee has tabled a report on the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009, which would implement these changes.¹ The committee will not cover the issues covered in that report in any detail in this report.

1.9 Although the majority of submissions related to Youth Allowance, the committee spent considerable time during the hearings discussing the issues in relation to the broader inquiry. In particular, the committee considered:

- the barriers that secondary schools students face in accessing educational opportunities, and
- the financial and social costs that face rural and regional students in accessing tertiary education opportunities, and
- the means by which regional tertiary institutions can expand course offerings and attract greater student numbers.

1.10 Throughout this inquiry the committee has been acutely aware that education in rural and regional areas is not something that can be considered in isolation.

1 See Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [Provisions]*, October 2009.

Education, and in particular access to educational opportunities, is a key factor in establishing and maintaining sustainable and vibrant rural and regional communities.

Structure of the report

1.11 Chapter 2 of the report discusses the barriers to students in rural and regional areas accessing educational opportunities. Key issues in that discussion are the difficulties in attracting and retaining suitably qualified teachers to rural and regional areas and the importance of communities to developing and raising students' aspirations in relation to further education.

1.12 Chapter 3 of the report contains the committee's consideration of the financial and social costs of rural and regional students accessing tertiary education. The chapter has a brief overview of issues in relation to the proposed changes to Youth Allowance, and considers how the inequity in tertiary access between rural and regional, and metropolitan students can be addressed.

1.13 Chapter 4 of the report focuses on the role of tertiary institutions in regional communities. The chapter discusses the challenges that these institutions face in terms of funding course delivery and also look at options for expanding course offerings and attracting students to these institutions.

1.14 Chapter 5 of the report sets out the committee's conclusions and recommendations in relation to this inquiry.

Previous studies

1.15 Submissions and witnesses identified a number of previous studies and inquiries relevant to the committee's current inquiry. This report makes reference to the deliberations and findings of the following reports:

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), *Emerging Themes: National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education*, March 2000.
- The National Centre of Science, Information and Communications Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR), *The SiMERR National Survey*, Prepared for the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, 2006.
- Naomi Godden, with The Centre for Rural Social Research and Monash University Department of Social Work, *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education*, November 2007.
- Victorian Parliament Education and Training Committee, *Inquiry into the Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education*, July 2009.

Chapter 2

Secondary School Education in Rural and Regional Australia

The 'elephant in the room' when considering equitable education provision for rural and regional Australia is cost. However, the question...should not be "How much does it cost to provide quality mathematics (or any other) education in rural and regional communities?", but rather should be "How much does it cost to **not** provide quality mathematics (or any other) education in rural and regional communities?"¹

Introduction

2.1 Secondary schools students in rural and regional Australia face significant barriers in accessing educational opportunities. Those barriers include difficulties in attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff, developing and raising aspirations in relation to further learning and substantial costs in accessing educational opportunities.

2.2 While much of the focus of submissions to this inquiry was on the issue of access to tertiary education for rural and regional students and the impacts of the proposed changes to Youth Allowance, the committee did spend considerable time during the hearings investigating the challenges faced by secondary students in rural and regional areas.

2.3 The committee heard evidence and received submissions of rural and regional schools achieving excellent academic results. The committee was also told of many of the initiatives in place to address the inequities faced by students in rural and regional areas. However, despite the work that is being done on this issue by governments, by schools, by families and by communities, the inequity remains and that inequity has impacts on students, on their families and on their communities.

2.4 This chapter of the report starts with an outline of some of the alternatives for secondary school education for rural and regional students. The report then moves on to look at the disparities in performance and completion rates for students at rural and regional secondary schools. It then outlines some of the challenges that face rural and regional students in accessing secondary education. The chapter then sets out some of the government measures in place to assist rural and regional students, and concludes with a discussion on the adequacy of these measures.

1 The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers, *Submission 685*, p. 1. Emphasis in original.

Education alternatives for rural and regional secondary school students

2.5 There is a range of options for rural and regional secondary school students to access education opportunities. In addition to attending local government or non-government secondary schools, options include:

- distance education, either as a full-time student, or taking single courses to extend the range offered by the local school.
- living away from home at a larger regional or metropolitan centre to attend school. This could involve attending boarding school, living in a hostel, private boarding or the family establishing a second home where the children live while attending school.

2.6 Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages for students, their families and communities and are discussed below.

Local secondary schools

2.7 The committee spent considerable time during the inquiry discussing with witnesses the challenges and barriers in relation to accessing education opportunities, particularly in relation to students at local rural and regional schools. Those issues primarily centred on attracting and retaining suitably qualified teaching staff, but also included the issue of limited subject choice and the additional costs faced by families in rural and regional areas to access educational opportunities. These matters are considered later in this chapter in the section 'Challenges and barriers in relation to accessing educational opportunities'.

2.8 The committee heard from school communities outlining the very positive aspects of their schools. For example, Manjimup Senior High School Council's submission to the committee outlined the achievements of that school:

Manjimup Senior High School is situated approximately [300] kilometres South West of Perth and is the only Senior High School in the inland corridor of the Warren Blackwood Education District. It has a current student population of 670 students...with [a socio-economic index] placing the school in the second lowest [socio-economic index] band; indicating that students do not come from an affluent background.

Manjimup Senior High School has attained outstanding results in Tertiary bound Entrance courses over the past 10 years and has consistently ranked as the highest achieving Country Public School for students achieving a scaled score above 75% and for the number of students finishing in the top third of the state in Secondary [Tertiary Entrance Examination] League Tables.²

2 *Submission 680*, p.1. See also Mr Kevin Wager, Principal, Ingham State High School, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 65 explaining to the committee that his school performs above the state average for high schools.

2.9 The committee also heard the positive experiences that teachers have in teaching in these areas:

I have been a teacher for over 33 years and...a principal for 20 years at schools such as Mullewa District High School, Corrigin District High School, and Katanning Senior High School. I have now been at Broome Senior High School for the past six years. During this time I have raised and educated my family in the country...

I have enjoyed my time teaching in the country but I have had to work hard at building and supporting a quality workforce in those schools. Students in rural and remote areas are often much friendlier and more respectful than their city counterparts and they can achieve results equal to any other students, given the opportunity and the support to develop pride in themselves and the encouragement to take responsibility for their own learning. The staff I have worked with have always been dedicated and competent but they too require support and understanding of their needs.³

2.10 However, there are reasons that families may choose not to send their children to the local secondary school. The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia's (ICPA) submission stated that not all secondary schools offer an education that is appropriate to all students' individual education needs:

The spectrum of 'appropriate education' can span from the academically talented (gifted), through English as a Second Language school to a student with learning difficulties and disabilities. In smaller centres the education facilities frequently do not have the resources to meet the needs [of] all their students. Subject choice is often limited to a range which potentially narrows the student's career choices. Lack of competition, interaction and learning with class members are all things which leave these teenagers at a disadvantage when class sizes are small. Some schools do not have core subjects taught face-to-face with a teacher presenting in the classroom, and many schools are adversely impacted upon by community social problems. This creates a very difficult learning environment. In these circumstances, students either receive an education locally that is not appropriate, or their families elect to move them away to access a more appropriate educational facility in another centre.⁴

Distance Education

2.11 At the committee's hearing in Tweed Heads, Mr David Cox of the Southern Cross School told the committee how distance education caters to secondary students who are isolated by both geography and circumstances. Students isolated by circumstances include students suffering from a mental illness, students with a long-term illness such as cancer and students enrolled on behavioural grounds and

3 Mr Gary Downsborough, Principal, Broome Senior High School and representative of Australian Secondary Principals Association, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, pp 76-77.

4 *Submission 264*, p. 5.

vocationally talented students, such as elite sports people, where their vocation makes it difficult for them to attend school.⁵

2.12 Mr Cox also explained to the committee that distance education is used by full-time students, that is, students who do all their schooling through distance education, and by students enrolled in a single unit. Mr Cox noted that where students enrolled only in a single subject, it was generally because this subject was not available at their local school:

Usually, in some of the smaller high schools, it is where the curriculum cannot provide for something such as a particular language. We offer a full range of languages, including Spanish, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese...We also offer subjects which may not readily be available in a smaller high school or may not have been chosen by certain students. They can be anything from music, engineering studies, physics and chemistry or any of the humanities subjects.

...The main ones are extension English and maths. We offer those too. As I said, some of the smaller high schools and some of the central schools cannot always offer them. They may have a particularly good student in one of those subjects and we will support them.⁶

2.13 The committee was told of the successes of students through distance education. Open High School, a Sydney-based specialist language secondary school providing distance education language programs to students in NSW and the ACT, set out in its submission the success its students had in the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Examinations:

In 2008 Open High School entered 622 students in 27 courses over 10 languages for the Higher School Certificate Examination...

Open High School students achieved 9 Firsts in State and in 14 of the 27 Higher School Certificate courses offered by Open High School 30 students were placed in the top five places in the state. This consisted of 9 1sts, 6 2nds, 4 3rds, 6 4ths and 5 5ths.⁷

2.14 In terms of students transitioning from secondary to tertiary studies, Ms Bronwyn Stubbs, President of the Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools, informed the committee that the feedback from secondary students is that distance education provides them with the skills to be successful at university.⁸

5 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, pp 3 and 5. See also Ms Bronwyn Stubbs, President of the Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 19, who told the committee that Victoria has 500-plus secondary students enrolled in distance education in Years 7 to 10, with a significant component of those being due to medical reasons, either physical or social and emotional.

6 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, pp 2-3.

7 *Submission 627*, Attachment B, pp 2-3.

8 *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 18.

2.15 Mr Cox noted that in New South Wales (NSW), distance education students receive an additional six points towards their university admission score to assist them to move into tertiary study.⁹ Mr Cox also told the committee that his school has a teacher employed almost full-time ensuring that students 'go to a reasonable alternative' when they finish at distance education:

Our biggest failures, I always think, are when we lose students or when students do not continue their enrolment. So one of the most important parts of our work is to have somewhere for students to go to. We have a teacher employed almost full-time to work on transition so that the students go to a reasonable alternative when they leave us.¹⁰

2.16 Mr John Clark, Principal of the School of Distance Education, Charters Towers, gave evidence to the committee of the vocational and training courses that his school offered as a means of giving students the opportunity to stay in the region:

...we have a strong vocational education and training component. There are not many secondary high schools that would have a range of certificate III courses, but we do. We deliver in business, education support, agriculture and a whole range of issues using partnerships with external agencies, purely for the reason that quite simply there are many students out there in the senior secondary pathways who do not want to go down the traditional boarding schools structure. I understand that that will always be a very strong highway for those with academic and maybe even different social aspirations, but there is a core group who wishes to stay in the areas. For them to get appropriate education past senior secondary, or even relevant senior secondary, is a challenge.¹¹

2.17 The committee also explored the impact that improved communication technology has had on distance education. Open High School outlined in its submission the introduction and possible impact of the 'Connected Classrooms program' in NSW:

Commencing 2007 NSW [Department of Education and Training] initiated its Connected Classrooms program to provide students in all public (metropolitan and rural / primary and secondary) schools with greater access to curriculum and opportunities to collaborate with fellow students in other localities through the use of interactive whiteboards, video conferencing and use of collaboration software tools.

This initiative is expected to reduce existing reliance on the traditional distance education model which at times has been unable to provide the kind of collaborative tools that engage students in their learning more successfully. Distance education schools in NSW were included in the first stage rollout of the interactive technologies of the Connected Classrooms Program and have played a leading role in the development of related

9 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 6.

10 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 6.

11 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 46.

online learning management systems, video conferencing and other interactive technologies such as collaborative desktop sharing to support rural and regional students in their learning.¹²

2.18 Ms Stubbs noted that technology was changing the role of the teacher in distance education:

It then raises the question: if the content is there, what is the role of the teacher? That is another one of the questions we ask, because I think there is very much a changing role for teachers about motivating students and providing them with the independent learning skills to be able to access and utilise what they can get online. It is about teaching them organisational skills. It is about all of those issues that enable students to access education full stop. That is the underpinning issue for low [socio-economic status (SES)] students, because frequently they are not bringing those skills to their education at the start. They are behind the eight ball in the skills required for learning. Even being able to sit and engage with a topic can be problematic for a child who has not been brought up to read a book or whatever. So it is about developing what I suppose you would call 21st century skills. They are skills that we have gained because we are in a different world. We did not have the technology in the past. We were forced to sit. We could not just skip backwards and forwards between things. There are a whole range of issues around parenting that gave many middle-class and upper-class students the skills to be able to access education, whereas it has consistently been an issue for low SES students. I think it is the internet access but also the ability to access education because of those underpinning skills.¹³

2.19 Submissions to the inquiry also noted the disadvantages of distance education. In her submission, Ms Narelle Whittaker stated that had her children remained at the local high school for secondary education they would have been required to undertake several subjects through distance education. According to Ms Whittaker, her family felt that 'this does not substitute satisfactorily for a qualified teacher face to face in front of a class'.¹⁴

2.20 One submitter noted that distance education was not a suitable method of learning for all students:

...for the vast majority this is not an acceptable method of teaching and is very isolating and requires a huge amount of self discipline and motivation beyond their age and experience. For those choosing education of this sort there is need for more mentoring for the student and the supervisor, especially during secondary education.¹⁵

12 *Submission 627*, pp 1-2.

13 *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, pp 17-18.

14 *Submission 407*, p. 1.

15 Mrs Jeanette De Landgraft, *Submission 565*, p. 1. See also Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Western Australia, *Submission 443*, p. 3.

2.21 Mr Cox also told for the committee that distance education is expensive and resource intensive:

...it is quite expensive when you consider the cost of educating a student through distance education. For a student to do secondary schooling up to year 10 in a school, it is around \$8,400; for a distance education student it is about \$17,000. So it is more expensive, and the staffing ratio is much better. High schools are staffed at a ratio of one to 14 - one teacher to 14 students. In distance education centres it is about one to seven. So it is quite expensive and labour intensive.¹⁶

2.22 The Western Australian Catholic Education Office told the committee that in Western Australia, access to distance education for non-government school students could be expensive:

For a student in year 12 to study a subject – such as Chemistry – through [distance education], the cost is about \$2,200. For 4 students in a school the cost is therefore \$8,800. Most Catholic schools charge less than \$2,200 for an entire year's fees and the costs for [distance education] are therefore not affordable.¹⁷

2.23 In its supplementary submission the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Association described distance education as an option for 'dedicated' students and noted that there are often logistical and staffing difficulties at the school level, such as provision of learning space, access to technology and supervision.¹⁸

Leaving home to attend school

2.24 Primarily, submissions and evidence that the committee received in relation to secondary school students leaving home to access educational opportunities related to students attending boarding schools, as opposed to students moving to hostels associated with secondary schools or families establishing a second home near a secondary school that suits the needs of the student.

2.25 The Independent Schools Council of Australia noted that while families were often reluctant to send their children to boarding school, '92 per cent of them would still choose boarding if making the decision again'.¹⁹ The submission of the Independent Schools Council of Australia went on to outline some of the benefits that families found in boarding schools:

The vast majority believe boarding leads to a well-rounded, balanced person. They believe this is due to living in a more structured and disciplined environment, and from having a sense of belonging within a

16 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, pp 7-8.

17 *Submission 292*, p. 4.

18 *Submission 250*, Attachment (Supplementary Submission), p. 2.

19 *Submission 744*, p. 7.

community. Most parents also believe that boarding helps teach children to be independent, self-reliant, tolerant and compassionate.

Where parents have a choice of school, the school's values play a significant role in their decision. A school's academic credentials may figure prominently, however parents attach equal importance to both the management and leadership of the boarding house, and the relative importance of both boarders and the boarding house within the wider school community.

They also look for tangible measures of a school's commitment, including academic support provided to boarders during study time, full-time boarding house staff, access to facilities, and after hours activities and events.²⁰

2.26 The ICPA's submission highlighted the negative impacts that moving away from home to pursue educational opportunities can have on students and their families:

The negative emotional impacts endured by rural and regional students and families in the situation of a student needing to relocate to pursue their education, must also be recognised. Usually the decision to send a child away to obtain an appropriate education is made reluctantly, and finally decided upon when all other options prove to be unsuitable for the child's needs. Not being able to be with your child to guide and support them as they assimilate and meet the challenges of living within a very different school community, can be very distressing for the whole family. The extent of the financial and emotional strain associated with the process of separation can sometimes culminate in health issues for all concerned, and/or poor academic and sporting performances for the student.²¹

2.27 The committee also received some evidence about the impact that students moving away from home to attend school has on rural and regional communities. For example, the North Burnett Regional Council in Queensland made the following observation about the impacts on the community of students moving away to pursue secondary education:

The exodus of students to boarding school...creates a significant hiatus in the community. Student and youth leaders are essentially lost to other communities (regional or metropolitan centres) and their social interaction change focus to those new communities. They become visitors in their home town during school holidays and often do not return to the community post secondary and/or tertiary study.²²

2.28 The committee was told that students and their families were now looking at alternatives to boarding schools because of the prohibitive costs, particularly non-

20 *Submission 744*, p. 8.

21 *Submission 264*, p. 3.

22 *Submission 490*, p. 2.

government boarding schools in metropolitan areas. Dr Peter Havel, Principal of Albany Senior High School, indicated that families were now sending their children to his school, and utilising the hostel in Albany, because it is a cheaper option than 'sending them to Perth to some of the elite private schools'.²³

2.29 However, for students in New South Wales, there are only limited hostel places as the Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW (BCEF) explained in its submission:

...the system has been in terminal decline possibly due to rural decline occasioned by drought and changed farming practices. Towns where hostels have operated include Tibbooburra, Walgett, Bourke, Cobar, Forbes, Broken Hill...The two remaining hostels at Broken Hill and Dubbo are full to capacity in 2009.²⁴

2.30 The NSW Farmers' Association noted that where boarding schools are not a financial option a family may establish a second home closer to the school and students then live there part-time:

Particular reasons for second house establishment sometimes focus on access to a broader and face-to-face senior secondary curriculum [generally] to a school which had the subject range and support that the student needs for tertiary entrance.²⁵

Disparities in performance and completion rates for rural and regional secondary schools

2.31 As outlined in paragraph 2.8, the committee heard from schools where students were achieving excellent academic results. Despite these positive examples, the committee was also told that the academic performance of students tends to decrease with increasing distance from metropolitan centres. At the hearing in Tweed Heads, Professor John Pegg of the National Centre of Science, Information and Communications Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR), talked the committee through comparative test data on numeracy benchmarks for students in years 3, 5 and 7:

23 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 11. See also the Remote Area Planning and Development Board, *Submission 695*, p. 9, which quotes from a study (M. Alston and J. Kent, Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University, *The impact of drought on secondary education access in Australia's rural and remote areas – report to the Department of Education, Science and Training and the rural education program of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal*, 2006) which noted that students were being held back from boarding school when they reach high school and are either attending a hostel or continuing with Distance Education.

24 *Submission 235*, p. 6.

25 *Submission 555*, p. 7. See also the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia which indicated that another alternative where the local school could not offer an appropriate education for a student is the entire family relocating, *Submission 264*, p. 3.

The states and the federal government have established benchmarks at years 3, 5 and 7 and they want percentages of children to be above those benchmarks. When you look at the breakdown - metropolitan, provincial, remote, very remote - from 2003 to 2007 you notice a couple of things. As you move further and further away from metropolitan areas in Australia the numbers of kids reaching benchmarks decreases - and I must say that the benchmarks are pretty piddly, to be polite about it. If you take the worst-case scenario - very remote schools - that means that about 30 per cent of children are not hitting these very minimal benchmarks in year 3.²⁶

2.32 In terms of these differences in academic performance, the SiMERR National Survey made the following observation in relation to student achievement in science and mathematics:

The significant variations in the academic achievement of students in different parts of Australia may not be a recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, evidence of the variation has emerged in recent decades.²⁷

2.33 The SiMERR National Survey also notes that there are growing indications that education in rural and remote areas of Australia has begun to receive more attention in recent years. In addition, there appears to be a renewed recognition of the valuable economic and social contributions made by rural communities to the national output and wellbeing.²⁸

2.34 However, it is not only in academic performance where students at rural and regional schools can be disadvantaged. In 2000, HREOC found that country students were less likely to finish school than their metropolitan counterparts.²⁹ More recent studies of retention rates of students in Victoria have found that this trend continues:

Evidence shows that higher numbers of young people drop out of school prior to completing Year 12 in the rural areas in comparison to metropolitan. Based on 2008 figures there is a 11.1% difference in the retention rates of grade 10 to grade 12 students between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools, being 83.3% vs. 72.2% respectively.³⁰

26 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 29. In answers to questions on notice, Professor Pegg provided the committee with further information to explain the definitions of metropolitan, provincial, remote and very remote used in this analysis, see Professor John Pegg, answer to questions on notice, 2 September 2009 (received 10 October 2009).

27 National Centre of Science, Information and Communications Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR National Centre), University of New England, *The SiMERR National Survey*, 2006, p. 24.

28 SiMERR National Centre, University of New England, *The SiMERR National Survey*, p. 8.

29 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Emerging Issues: National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education*, March 2000, p. 8.

30 Victorian Farmers Federation, *Submission 747*, p. 6.

2.35 In August 2008, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the importance of school completion:

There is a well-established link between Year 12 completion and post-school achievement. Access Economics estimates that young people who leave school before Year 12 are approximately six times more likely to make a poor transition to post-school activities than those who complete senior schooling.

Evidence across [Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)] nations demonstrates that completion of senior schooling, or its vocational equivalent, is a key factor influencing future economic opportunities and engagement in life long learning. In Australia the incidence of unemployment among 20–24 year olds who have not completed upper secondary education or its equivalent is more than double for those who have.

Early school leaving can also be correlated with significant personal and social costs, increased potential contact with the health and criminal justice systems, and intergenerational disadvantage.³¹

2.36 The committee heard that these disparities in academic outcomes and completion rates are a result of a number of factors. As Ms Kimberlee Ryan of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development explained to the committee:

...rural schools can offer students a range of advantages, including more individualised attention, cooperative learning opportunities, close relationships with teachers and peers and strong ties with the local community. While the educational outcomes of rural students are lower than those of their urban counterparts, particularly for Indigenous students, this is due to a range of factors, including socioeconomic status, and does not imply that the learning outcomes in some rural schools are inadequate.³²

Challenges and barriers in relation to accessing educational opportunities

2.37 The committee spent considerable time during the course of the inquiry discussing with witnesses the challenges and barriers to students in rural and regional areas accessing educational opportunities at a secondary school level. Predominantly the issues which arose related to attracting and retaining suitably qualified teachers. The next section of the report contains a discussion of the issues in relation to attracting and retaining teachers in rural and regional areas. Other issues that were

31 The Australian Government, Quality Education: the case for an Education Revolution in our schools, 27 August 2008, p. 18, launched by the Prime Minister the Hon. Kevin Rudd and Deputy Prime Minister the Hon. Julia Gillard at the National Press Club. Available at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Resources/Pages/QualityEducation-ThecaseforanEducationRevolutioninourSchools.aspx>, accessed 26 November 2009.

32 *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 67.

raised with the committee included the need to raise students' aspirations to further study and the costs involved for students to access educational opportunities.

Attracting suitably qualified teachers to rural and regional areas

2.38 The committee heard a substantial amount of evidence relating to the difficulties in attracting suitably qualified teachers to regional, rural and remote areas and the impacts that this had on the educational opportunities for students in those areas.

Incentives and initiatives to encourage teachers to relocate to rural and regional areas

2.39 The committee heard that financial and other incentives are often put in place to encourage teachers to take on rural or regional teaching placements. For example, Mr Gary Francis of the Queensland Department of Education and Training stated:

...we have the Remote Area Incentive Scheme, which provides a range of additional benefits to people who do work in rural and remote schools - ...The financial [incentives] are provided through the Remote Area Incentive Scheme. Opportunities for promotion come by going into those locations. We certainly do actively market that as to a young motivated teacher.³³

2.40 Mrs Helen Walton of the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales spoke of some of the other types of incentives that could be offered to teachers:

One of the big pushes that we have always had is around providing things like low-rent housing, because in some communities there really is no accommodation, particularly in the really isolated communities where, as I said, the school may be the primary employer. The township is not that large. With things such as that, there have been incentives in some areas to have additional holidays so that teachers can get back and visit their families, because historically a lot of staff have families on the east coast. If you move further west, particularly into far western New South Wales, it is a long way from there to wherever your family is - 1,200 kilometres or so. So there are additional periods when they can go back to visit their family. There has been some financial assistance to these people to encourage them to move out.³⁴

2.41 Witnesses representing state governments explained to the committee some of the other strategies that they had put in place to attract teachers to rural and regional areas. For example, Mr Colin Pettit of the Western Australian Department of Education and Training, explained that state had sought to attract teachers from overseas to fill vacancies:

33 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 57.

34 *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 8.

In 2007 we were some 250 teachers short across the year. That translated into 200-plus short in country locations. Of those, significant numbers, greater than 50 per cent, were secondary. So we do have an issue about attracting people to the country, particularly secondary teachers and well-qualified secondary teachers. We commenced an international search in countries such as Scotland, Ireland, England, Canada and South Africa. At the beginning of this year approximately 80 came in under 457 visas and others to fill vacancies that we knew we had specifically for the country. Most of those have been very successful...That is one strategy that we have used...

That was tagged and targeted to secondary education, particularly around science and mathematics. Some very experienced teachers put their hands up to come across and we were very happy with that. It still did not help the full picture, so to support that we have also had fairly strong recruitment advertising on TV over the last six weeks, which the marketing people tell me is starting to have an effect. Time will tell, though, next year when people want to actually go. We also have other programs such as the Remote Teaching Service, where we pay significantly more for teachers to go to particular locations. We also have a Country Teaching Program and a Metropolitan Teaching Program - and they are predominantly tagged for secondary at this stage...where we pay significantly more for teachers to go to various locations. That has had some success, but the extra money and the conditions are not always what people are looking for to attract them to certain locations, so we are still looking at how else we can deal with that...³⁵

2.42 A representative from the Queensland Department of Education and Training told the committee that state had been working on strategies to raise awareness among Year 11 and 12 students of the career opportunities of working as a teacher. The Queensland Department of Education and Training has also been working on improving the transfer teachers by setting regional targets for transfers internally and for bringing new people into regional areas.³⁶

Retaining teachers in rural and regional areas

2.43 However, the committee heard it is not just a matter of attracting teachers to rural and regional locations, but also retaining them in those areas for more than a couple of years. Professor John Pegg of the SiMERR National Centre gave the

35 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 11. The Western Australian Department of Education and Training also allocates additional teaching places to schools, depending on the size of the school, to accommodate for the fact that the schools can not necessarily attract the numbers of teachers required to run a comprehensive program throughout the school.

36 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, pp 56-57. See also Mrs Helen Walton, Publicity Officer, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 8, discussing campaigns run by the NSW Government to increase awareness of teaching opportunities west of the Blue Mountains.

committee the following example of the impact that continual turnover of staff could have on a school, particularly in a very remote area:

We have this program called QuickSmart which we have again developed through the national centre. In 30 weeks children can grow two to four years in literacy or numeracy. We went into an Indigenous school in the Northern Territory that had never had a child above the benchmark. They put 19 kids on the program. At the end of the program, 18 were above the benchmark and one missed out on the benchmark by one mark.

...Everybody was so excited. Then we went back the next year to see how it was going and found the program was not being offered in the school. When I asked why, it was because every teacher, including the principal and deputy, had transferred out. So the whole staff had left and a brand new principal and staff had come in...We know that in these areas it takes over a year for teachers to come to grips with the issues of working in that area.³⁷

2.44 Professor John Pegg indicated that a period of five years was ideal in terms of a teacher remaining at a rural location and seeing an improvement in student outcomes:

Somewhere around five years in the game - and it might be true in a lot of professions - it starts to show and you bring this additional experience and know-how to the situation. What happens in rural areas is that we have teachers for one, two or three years. If you think about it, what organisation in the world could survive where you keep turning over people every couple of years? The parliament would not work; nothing would work if you did not have a corporate memory following on and support people. Yet in rural schools it gets tolerated that people are there for just a couple of years. We have to be careful because, if we said that we do not have young teachers, then we would not have teachers at all. There is a lot of effort going on that but you have to appreciate that in the first year of teaching it is about thinking about yourself as a teacher, about your class, about discipline, about trying to come to grips with things. You know the subject area but how you are going to transmit that.³⁸

2.45 The committee discussed with witnesses whether a system of 'bonding' teachers to rural and regional areas, that is, where teachers commit to serving a particular period in a rural or regional area and in return receive a reward, such as payment of university fees, or preferential relocation to an area of their choice when their term expires. The committee notes the concern that Mr Robert Fry, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, raised in terms of 'bonding' teachers to a placement for five years:

...it would certainly have an effect. But it could have a detrimental one, too, because one of the challenges is getting them here in the first place. For a person who is 22 years of age or whatever, five years seems a heck of a

37 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 38.

38 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 36.

long time in their life...But it is a psychological thing. I think the problem would be that some people would be a little bit averse or scared of entering into what effectively becomes a five-year contract. But it would have some merit.³⁹

2.46 To this end, Mr Fry noted the impact of previous policies of compulsory rural placements had been a 'mass exodus' at the end of two years:

You used to hear conversations with teachers saying, 'I've only got six months to go.' They were counting it down. I think that is so negative and it is negative for the kids too. Some were quite open about it in saying, 'I've only got six months to survive in this place now and then I'm out of here.' I do not think that is what it is about. When you move to the place you are taking it on as your home for whatever period of the time that might be but to put time lines around it from the beginning does generate some risks and problems.⁴⁰

2.47 Professor John Pegg of the SiMERR National Centre spoke to the committee about the factors which attracted teachers to non-metropolitan areas are not necessarily the factors which kept them at the school:

...the incentives that got teachers into rural areas were not the same ones that keep them there. What got teachers to go to rural areas was money, lower class sizes and promotion opportunities, but what kept them there was their love of the community, their involvement in the community and their sense of place in the community...⁴¹

2.48 The committee spoke with some witnesses about the role of local governments and other community organisations in retaining teachers in rural and regional areas. Mr Colin Pettit of the Western Australian Department of Education and Training stated that his department worked with a range of agencies:

For example, the Wheatbelt Development Commission is extremely proactive in working with us to try and establish a 'welcome to the bush' approach. They have been very good at trying to get their communities on song to welcome not only teachers but also nurses and police and the like. They have been working pretty closely with us for the last two or three years.⁴²

2.49 Professor Pegg also informed the committee about one of the 'sobering' reasons which caused teachers to leave rural communities:

The other thing we found out - and I found this one of the most sobering things, which I tend not to share very often - was to do with the reasons why people leave rural areas. One is that their spouse has got employment

39 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 57.

40 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 59.

41 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 31.

42 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 12.

somewhere else. That is acceptable. That happens everywhere. But the next reason, which was very, very close - almost identical - statistically was that teachers left rural areas because of their concerns about their own children's education. I do not know how that strikes you, but here are people who have gone out to live in rural areas and yet they are leaving because of their concern. They are actually fighting the good fight out there and doing the right thing and yet they are leaving because [of their] concerns about their own children.⁴³

2.50 The committee notes the evidence of Mrs Helen Walton of the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Association that this experience is not limited to teachers:

What we are finding in some of our regions and what is being reported to us is that there is [a] turnover of professional staff in many areas, particularly in health. That is one area where people do come out for a few years and then say, 'I've done my years now; I'm going back to the city.' Some families are sending their children off to boarding school. The parents are saying, 'My child wants to be a doctor, the same as I am, but can't choose the subjects within the curriculum of the area that I am in because the school does not offer a wide enough range of subjects within the curriculum because there are not enough students to access it.'⁴⁴

2.51 The committee notes the evidence it has received that highlights the importance of a sense of community can play in retaining teachers in an area. To this end, the committee is troubled by the evidence it has heard in relation to the turnover of teachers, and other professionals, in rural and regional areas because of concerns that those families have about the education of their own children.

2.52 As was described by Professor John Pegg in relation to the Quicksmart program, this turnover can impact significantly on the academic performance of students at a school – within the period of a year a promising program addressing literacy and numeracy issues is lost to the school because no teachers remain to continue the program.

2.53 With the turnover of other professionals in an area, this impact spreads, not only through the education sector, but through health and business sectors.

Providing support to teachers

2.54 One important factor for teachers in rural and regional areas is the provision of support and professional connectedness to other teachers. For example Ms Kimberlee Ryan of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development noted to the committee that one of the reasons that teachers may be

43 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 32.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 14.

reluctant to take up positions in rural areas is a perception of isolation and having fewer colleagues with which to interact.⁴⁵

2.55 In this context, the committee also notes the comments of Mr Frank Italiano of the Western Australian Catholic Education Office in relation to providing teachers not only with financial incentives to teach in rural areas, but also support and mentoring:

The mentoring of those teachers in those schools once they go to those areas is really important. If you are isolated and lacking the opportunity to obtain materials and information from others, that makes your job a little bit harder so the chances of you staying on would be lower.⁴⁶

2.56 The committee notes the work that the Western Australian Catholic Education Office is doing to address this concern:

...new graduates and new teachers in those schools...they are encouraged to join associations. For example, if you are teaching history or English you would try to join the teacher association where that provides you with networking opportunities, professional development through the year, courses that are available through the year.⁴⁷

2.57 The committee also heard from witnesses describing the difficulty for teachers in rural areas to access professional development opportunities.⁴⁸

2.58 The committee also notes the evidence of Professor John Pegg of the SiMERR National Centre of other factors that may make teaching in rural schools more challenging for teachers, such as teaching outside their subject areas and teaching composite Year 11 and 12 classes.⁴⁹

2.59 The SiMERR National Survey made a number of recommendations in relation to the provision of support for rural teachers, including:

- That state and territory education systems sponsor the establishment of a professional Association of Rural Educators.
- The establishment of a Rural School Leadership Program, by education authorities in collaboration with universities and professional organisations. The program would target teachers with significant leadership potential.

45 *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 68.

46 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 40.

47 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 42.

48 See Mrs Jane Fuchsbichler, Executive Portfolio Holder, Western Australian Farmers Federation, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 63, and Mrs Therese Byrne, Principal, Charters Towers State High School, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 70.

49 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 36.

- The establishment of a Centre of Excellence in rural and regional pre-service teacher education at universities in each state and territory.
- That education authorities, in collaboration with professional organisations, develop and monitor induction and orientation strategies to support the particular needs of teachers new to rural and regional schools.⁵⁰

2.60 The committee discussed with a number of witnesses a possible role for teachers who are retired, or nearly retired, to return to teaching in rural and regional areas. Mr Pettit of the Western Australian Department of Education and Training explained to the committee that such a program already exists in that state:

...in the Murchison we are running a trial that is now in its second year where we have retired teachers going into classrooms, dealing specifically with literacy and numeracy right through to year 10. They are retired teachers who have been long-serving, good quality teachers. They go in for two weeks at a time. They come out for two weeks and then they go back in for two weeks, but they work side by side with the teachers. We have found that that has been a very positive program and we are looking at expanding that into other locations.

...We do have a flying squad - principals, deputies and teachers - and where we have short-term vacancies occur, for whatever reason - up to, say, a term - these people are prepared to go to any location for a term and be very supportive. They are all retirees and their expertise and experience are just invaluable in those communities. So we do use them on a regular basis right across the state.⁵¹

2.61 Mr Robert Fry, President of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, highlighted for the committee the importance of having a 'good balance' of teachers:

Graduates are great - they usually come with a lot of enthusiasm - but lack experience. That is why you need to have your experienced teachers working beside them, and that is something that I know a lot of rural and remote teachers struggle with. When they get out into the field on their first assignment, there is a lack of support around them. That support can be the other teachers with the experience to help them through. It is a challenging one, but some sort of bonding arrangement may work. But I think it may be something that works better with a more mature person than with younger people.⁵²

50 SiMERR National Centre, University of New England, *SiMERR National Survey*, pp x- xiii.

51 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 17. See also Mr Gary Downsborough, Principal, Broome Senior High School and representative of the Australian Secondary Principals Association, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 82, Mrs Helen Walton, Publicity Officer, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 9.

52 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 57.

Developing and raising aspirations

2.62 An significant barrier to students pursuing educational opportunities can be a lack of aspiration within the community. For example, Mr Garry Costello of The South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services explained to the committee the impact of low aspirations in relation to the area of Mount Gambier:

the tertiary educational rates are significantly lower here. I think the quote was about six per cent compared to something like 20 per cent. We know that that is a very significant factor in determining the aspirations that the students in this area have for their tertiary education. As the principal of a large school, my concern has always been with our most disadvantaged young people. Particularly if no-one in the family has had a tertiary education, we really need to incentivise ways of getting people who have the talent. I look at my own children and I know that some of their friends have as great a talent or ability to go on but they have not done so because there was not that kind of social capital in the family and not that understanding that you need to make the sacrifices longer term for your children to have those kinds of benefits.⁵³

2.63 The committee spent considerable time discussing with witnesses the role of aspirations in a student's desire to continue to further education, and how those aspirations could be raised.

2.64 Many witnesses highlighted to the committee the importance of family and community aspirations and an individual student's aspirations in relation to further education. For example, Mr Joe Piper, a member of TAFE Directors Australia, told the committee:

The aspirations of a community, or those young people in a community, are often linked to the experiences in their own home. In the 2006 census for the Barwon region, which covers from Geelong in Victoria all way through to the South Australian border, 45 per cent of 44- to 64- year-olds were found to have no formal qualifications post secondary school, and many of those did not do year 12. It is 30 per cent for 20- to 44-year-olds...often young people will suffer, through a lack of aspiration to go on to tertiary education, because they have no guidance. They have no mentors in their homes.⁵⁴

53 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 65.

54 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 64. See also Professor Neil Otway, Director, Centre for Regional Engagement, University of South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 41, Mr Garry Costello, Regional Director, Limestone Coast District, Department of Education and Children's Services, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 65, Mr Colin Sharp, Director, Planning and Audit, Charles Sturt University, *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 3, and Professor Jennifer Nicol, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Humanities, Curtin University, answer to question on notice, 21 September 2009 (received 19 October 2009).

2.65 Witnesses noted the importance of tertiary education providers engaging with secondary school students as a means of developing and raising aspirations.⁵⁵ Submitters provided the committee with examples of how tertiary providers are engaging with secondary students. For example, Newcastle University outlined in its submission how it has invested in outreach programs which have proven to be valuable in assisting students, particularly those from regional and rural areas, to build aspiration, to realise their potential for higher education and to understand the opportunities provided by tertiary study. Programs included:

- Higher School Certificate Study Days in Newcastle and the Central Coast to assist Year 12 students with their Higher School Certificate studies.
- A residential summer school, the Year 9 Girls + Maths + Science = Choices Summer School. This initiative targets female year 9 indigenous and non-indigenous students from equity target groups such as students from regional and rural areas, low socio-economic status and non-English speaking backgrounds and/ or students with a disability.
- UniLink which helps to address the Hunter region's growing youth unemployment problem by encouraging more local school students to complete Year 12 and then consider further education.
- the SMART (Science, Maths, And Real Technology) program which in August conducted science shows in nine remote Arnhem Land communities. The program provides resources for teachers, including a workshop discussing ideas about science and technology in the classroom. SMART reaches around 20,000 people across Australia each year. It is a partnership between the University of Newcastle's Faculty of Science and Information Technology, the Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Engineers Australia and the Arnhem Land Progress Association.⁵⁶

2.66 RMIT University in Melbourne outlined how its role as a dual sector university is important in engaging secondary students:

At RMIT we are, of course, a dual sector university, rather like Victoria University, but we also have within our [technical and further education college (TAFE)] component quite a significant [vocational education and training] and [Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning] group of students, about 500 students - so we have the equivalent, if you like, of a reasonably large high school among our university population. It would seem to me that initiatives like that are perhaps one way of bringing to students'

55 See for example Mrs Elizabeth McGregor, member of TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, pp 56-57 and Professor Andrew Taggart, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Education, Murdoch University, answer to question on notice, 21 September 2009 (received 19 October 2009).

56 *Submission 364*, p. 7. See also University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Academy, *Submission 519*, p. 4, which discusses the Claremont College project aimed at raising the awareness of the value of continuing on to higher education study among students, staff, parents and members of the community in the College's catchment area.

attention the transformative nature of education if that is in fact something with which they wish to engage. That of course applies not only to regional and rural students but also to metropolitan, urban, students. Given that we are a dual sector university, we do have in place pathways for students from VET courses into higher [education] courses.⁵⁷

2.67 Professor Lin Crase, Executive Director of the Albury-Wodonga Campus of La Trobe University, outlined how as part of this engagement it is important to provide students with 'real-life' examples, which can be difficult in rural and regional communities:

...the formulation of those aspirations appears to happen very early, and part of the challenge with regional communities is that often they are of such a size that it is actually quite difficult to provide real-life examples for some of those students in small communities about what success looks like. So regrettably we see enrolments that chase TV shows. We see people queuing up to do forensic psychology because of some TV show because that is the only thing they can relate to. In real life communities we do not have a forensic psychologist that we could trot out and look at and see what they actually do versus what they do on television. In a regional context those challenges are even greater because we often do not have the role models close at hand in small communities of a thousand people to demonstrate the benefits of education. At the end of the day we simply try to emphasise to people that those who have degrees on average earn about a million dollars more over their lifetime, ostensibly are healthier, ostensibly are happier - you can record happiness in that context. So we can emphasise that to people, but they do need to see real-life examples that they can attach to at a very young age and that is quite difficult.⁵⁸

2.68 The committee also notes the observation of Mrs Helen Walton of the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations in NSW that TAFEs have had a better profile and link with secondary schools, and universities are now beginning to realise the importance of this engagement:

I think some of the universities are actually recognising that they do need to go into areas and perhaps be a little bit more proactive in linking in with the high schools and possibly the TAFEs, just to offer more of a range. Also, to give kids the opportunity to recognise that, as I said, in some communities the link between TAFE and high school often means that kids say, 'Oh yes, well, I'm going to TAFE after I've finished school,' whereas I think universities are now going, 'Maybe we need to have a profile in those schools as well for kids to maybe have a look at the opportunities they have got to link with us as well.' But, as I said, the experience that we have had is probably the stronger link between TAFE and high schools and it is only

57 Professor Joyce Kirk, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students, RMIT University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 2.

58 *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 12.

now they are starting to get that external university movement into the high schools.⁵⁹

2.69 The committee also received evidence in relation to tertiary institutions engaging with secondary school students and providing them with an alternate pathway to university as a means of raising aspirations. For example, Mr Chris Jones of Great Southern TAFE told the committee of a pilot program that his institution had been running with students at Katanning Senior High School:

...we have looked at the poor progression of students to [Tertiary Entrance Examinations] - that is matriculation...- and we have worked with schools to provide an alternative entry pathway that combines a certificate IV in [vocational education and training] with a Western Australian Certificate of Education, and that meets the minimum entrance requirement for several universities in Western Australia.

I think it is really important to acknowledge that it is no good sending someone to university who has no aspirations to go there in the first place. The students have already said, 'We want to go to university.' What has happened is that at the end of first semester they start to think, 'Maybe I am not going to get to university this way,' or they persevere and perhaps do not do as well as they should. So with Katanning Senior High School we have put together a combined program between TAFE and the high school. Students attend school for 50 per cent of the time and TAFE for 50 per cent of the time. While they are at TAFE, they do a certificate III or a certificate IV VET qualification. This gets into the area of management of VET in Schools. But, prior to this pilot, nobody would do a certificate III or a certificate IV qualification while they were at school. They would have to leave school to do that because the time constraint was too great. We have combined the two, with the support of the high school, the TAFE and the parents.

...there are universities that accept as a minimum entry requirement, other than the [Tertiary Entrance Examination], a certificate IV and a...Western Australian Certificate of Education. The certificate IV contributes 50 per cent towards the Western Australian Certificate of Education. The students are coming out of their three years at high school with a certificate III or a certificate IV VET qualification. At Katanning it is a certificate IV in information technology. They also have their [Western Australian Certificate of Education], which means that they have had some academic rigour on the way through, particularly in English, which we think is important. They have also met the minimum entry requirements of university.⁶⁰

59 *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 11.

60 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, pp 17 and 24-25. See also Professor Joyce Kirk, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students, RMIT University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 4, discussing the university's non-entrance examination admission scheme.

2.70 Some witnesses also highlighted that aspirations could be increased by virtue of the physical presence of a university in the town. For example Mr Paul Barnett, of the University of Tasmania outlined the impact that the opening of the Cradle Coast campus of that institution had on aspirations in Northern Tasmania:

...we established the Cradle Coast campus maybe 10 years ago. Over that period, the number of students on the campus has grown from about 140 full-time students to over 400 full-time students. The other impact of that - and I think it reinforces the point about establishing aspirations in that community - is that, on top of the enrolments at the Cradle Coast campus, we have also virtually doubled the number of students from that region who are now studying at other campuses of the university. In 2000, there were about 1,000 students from that region studying at Launceston or Hobart, but now we have almost 2,000 students in that situation. A number of those students developed their initial confidence through doing their first year at the Cradle Coast campus and then they moved on. I think just our being involved in the community has increased the aspirations in that area.⁶¹

2.71 Mrs Elizabeth McGregor, a member of TAFE Directors Australia, also noted that cultural factors can be very important in forming aspirations. Mrs McGregor described for the committee the 'Deadly Days' festival which were being used as a means of engaging Indigenous students in vocational education:

Today I was at a federally funded festival called Deadly Days, which is the culmination of a range of programs that we have been running for young Aboriginal people to help them stay at school and get involved in vocational education while they are at school to ensure that they have aspirations, which is the key element to success. For Aboriginal people that is intimately connected to identity...

My point is that, in working particularly with Aboriginal communities, that other stuff around identity and how you build aspirations - if you accept that, and international research indicates that as well as people having options they have to have a belief that they have a right to education - has to connect to their sense of themselves and then they are right as they are on a pathway.⁶²

2.72 Developing and raising the aspirations of students is of critical importance to setting them on the path to lifelong learning. As is the case with attracting and retaining teachers, this is a matter which needs to be addressed not just at the level of the school, but at the level of the family and the community.

2.73 The committee is impressed at the innovative and progressive solutions that are being found to raise the aspirations of students in rural and regional areas. However, the committee notes that the current approach lacks a coordinated and

61 *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 87. See also Mr Colin Sharp, Director, Planning and Audit, Charles Sturt University, *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 12.

62 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, pp 56-57.

cohesive structure, with secondary schools being reliant on whatever outreach program they may be able to access from a tertiary institution.

Costs

2.74 The committee received some evidence about the costs associated with accessing secondary educational opportunities for rural and regional students. However, as most submissions focussed on the costs of tertiary education for rural and regional students, the committee will only cover this issue briefly.

2.75 A number of submissions commented on direct costs, in particular, in relation to boarding schools.⁶³ The Isolated Children's Parents Association of Queensland also commented on additional costs for students and their families associated with boarding school, including:

...limited family attendance at school events due to the high cost of travel and the inability for both parents to be absent from the family business at any one time...Attendance at parent organisation meetings, information evenings and parent-teacher interviews is most difficult.

It is helpful financially if it is possible to rely on other family members for accommodation when attending school functions.⁶⁴

2.76 However, there are additional costs that students and their families may face, even if they remain living at home and studying at a local school or by distance education. For example, the Open High School highlighted that few of its rural and regional students travel to Sydney for tutorials and study days, because of the cost:

The majority of students in rural and regional areas are unable to travel to Sydney as the travel and accommodation costs are prohibitive with many parents not able to take time off work. A small number of families do travel long distances to Sydney and incur travel and accommodation expenses. These costs are not reimbursed by the school. The school has a Student Assistance fund which is used to support families experiencing financial hardship with fees and textbooks. The use of the fund does not extend to subsidising travel and accommodation costs.⁶⁵

63 See for example, the Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW, *Submission 235*, pp 1 and 6, Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Submission 264*, p. 3, and Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, *Submission 292*, p. 1.

64 *Submission 402*, p. 2.

65 *Submission 627*, p.1. See also Name Withheld, *Submission 15*, p. 1, where the submitter discusses sending both children to Adelaide during holidays in Year 12, at a cost of \$5,000 per child, to access tutoring, and the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA, *Submission 443*, p. 3 which gives the example of a Year 12 student travelling to Perth for Tertiary Entrance Exam revision seminar, which cost the family \$3,000 for flights and accommodation.

Other matters

2.77 The committee heard from submitters and witnesses about other concerns they had in relation to the access of educational opportunities for secondary students in rural and regional areas.

2.78 Submissions highlighted the limited educational opportunities that might be available in rural areas in terms of the curriculum on offer, due to either difficulties in getting qualified teachers, or there being a limited number of students wanting to study a subject. For example, Mrs Wendy Sawyer wrote to the committee of her family's experiences:

The numbers are so small in years 8 to 10 that the local school offers only the basic curriculum and we believe our boys, all being fairly academic, would benefit from a wider subject choice and continuity of teaching staff and consistency in discipline, which we believe were not available locally.⁶⁶

2.79 Ms Debbie Irwin, who has been a teacher for 30 years, wrote in her submission of how she recently became aware of the disadvantages faced by students in country NSW:

I moved to Westport High School on the North Coast at the end of 2007. The reduction in educational opportunities is astounding. No access to HSC revision lectures and courses, reduced access to HSC marking for teachers, minimal access to universities for extension activities such as Siemens Science Experience, Astronomy Lectures, Nyholm Youth Lectures etc and massively increased costs and time required to attend museums, galleries, conferences and courses to name a few.⁶⁷

2.80 The committee notes some of the innovative measures that are being undertaken to expand the curriculum in rural and regional areas. For example, the committee was told of the work of Murdoch University which is working with five high schools to provide higher maths courses:

In our Rockingham region we are working very closely with five senior high schools...the five high schools came to us and said, 'Can you do hard maths at university?' The five high schools could not get a cohort to teach 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D maths in year 11 and 12. We said, 'Yes, we can.' So now the five high schools have their maths program delivered from our Rockingham campus. That serves 13 students in five senior high schools.⁶⁸

66 *Submission 267*, p. 1. See also Ouyen P-12 College Parents' Association, *Submission 532*, p. 1, and Parents Victoria, *Submission 533*, p. 2.

67 *Submission 697*, p. 1.

68 Professor Andrew Taggart, Dean Faculty of Arts and Education, Murdoch University, *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 56.

2.81 Mr David Cox, Deputy Principal, of the Southern Cross School explained to the committee that one factor which he felt was often missing at rural and regional schools is an element of competition between students:

I taught at Nyngan in central New South Wales when I was first promoted as a social science head teacher. I taught some very intelligent students there. I was very aware that they do not know how good really good is - in some of those schools who have teachers who are really enthusiastic. They still do not know how bright the really bright students are. I am not saying they do not work hard to get the best out of them, but it is hard to compare. One of the things that works in schools, if you are an intelligent student, is to have intelligent students around who push you. If there is not that competition quite honestly you do not always get the best out of students.⁶⁹

2.82 The committee was also told of students travelling great distances to school each day. For example, the Tasmanian Principals Association noted that students from Dover, south of Hobart, are travelling into Hobart for school each day, a journey requiring that they leave home at 7am and did not return home until 5pm. In addition, this trip costs students \$18 per day.⁷⁰

Indigenous Secondary Students

2.83 The committee was provided with some information in submissions regarding issues in relation to secondary education opportunities for Indigenous students. The committee also sought further information from witnesses at the hearings in relation to this matter. This section of the report gives an overview of some of the issues raised with the committee. The committee does not intend this as a comprehensive analysis of secondary education opportunities for Indigenous students. Further, the committee also recognises the work of the Senate's Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities (Select Committee). The Select Committee is inquiring into, amongst other things, the impact of the Australian Government's Emergency Response, and specifically on the state of health, education, welfare and law on regional and remote indigenous communities.⁷¹

69 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 6. See also Professor John Pegg, SiMERR National Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 32, noting that when there are capable students at a school, other students will look at them and say 'I can do that'.

70 *Submission 540*, p. 1. See also North Burnett Regional Council, *Submission 490*, p. 2 and Mrs Charlotte Della Vedova, *Submission 746*, p. 1.

71 For more information on the Senate Select Committee for Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, see the Select Committee's webpage:
http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/indig_ctte/index.htm.

2.84 The committee heard from a number of witnesses in different states in relation to the participation of Indigenous students in secondary education and programs in place to assist Indigenous students. The Northern Territory (NT) Government provided the following information to the committee :

At the senior secondary level the NT is starting to see some improvement for Indigenous students, but there is a long way to go. While the percentage of 15-19 year olds in the NT population is around 40% only 31% of the year 10-12 cohort attending school is Indigenous and only 14% of NT [Certificate of Education] completers are Indigenous. Of these only 28% reside in remote areas.

From a government service delivery point of view the challenge of delivering quality services for this group is also the biggest logistical and resourcing challenge.⁷²

2.85 Ms Jan Andrews of the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services provided the following information to the committee on the provision of educational opportunities to Indigenous students in that state:

The experience of the education department here is as follows. We effectively have residential accommodation, the Wiltja centre, for Indigenous students coming to Adelaide for secondary school. We have three regional hostels for secondary students. For Indigenous families in particular that offers a great assurance. We also have culturally appropriate housekeepers, minders and supports. That has, time and again, saved a young Indigenous person and put them into another year of study in the senior-secondary transition.⁷³

2.86 Mr Frank Italiano of the Western Australian Catholic Education Office discussed with the committee the problems caused by the low literacy levels of Indigenous students in remote communities:

We have evidence that the literacy levels are very low, so trying to provide secondary courses for those students is difficult because, perhaps, literacy levels for a person in year 9 or year 10 would be at the year 4 level...it is generally in the remote Indigenous communities.⁷⁴

2.87 Secondary school principals in far north Queensland detailed for the committee the disparity in the number of Indigenous students continuing to university, compared with the broader school population:

In [Charters Towers] we have an Indigenous population of about eight per cent and in my school it is about 30 per cent. About one student per year will go on to university, so it is not very many. There are lots of reasons around that. Some are not eligible to go to university, but leaving home is a

72 *Submission 301*, p. 2.

73 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 4.

74 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 37.

big thing for our Indigenous students. We find that they really do not want to leave their home.⁷⁵

...Last year we had one Indigenous student who went on to university out of six who were in that year 12 cohort. Basically one-third of the mainstream students were eligible to go on to university. There is a significant disadvantage for Indigenous students there as well as the disadvantage of the number being retained from grade 10 through to grades 11 and 12.⁷⁶

2.88 However, the committee also heard some positive initiatives in relation to educational opportunities for Indigenous students. Mr Ernest Christie of the Townsville Catholic Education Office spoke to the committee about Indigenous communities sending students to schools where the students could learn skills that are of value to the community:

Each of those communities had different reasons for wanting to send their students to the school. It was not just one size fits all.

In the Torres Strait, for example, they do not grow any vegetables. They wanted their boys to learn how to grow vegetables hydroponically, so they were attracted to the rural setting of Abergowrie College. In Charters Towers and Hope Vale, they have a real tradition of working with cattle and on cattle properties, so that community would send their kids to Columba Catholic College because it has animal husbandry in cattle, veterinary work in cattle and the Cattle Club. Often the schools would build their own capacity to service those students. The curricula they offered served the community.⁷⁷

2.89 The schools have excellent retention rates and also offer valuable pastoral care support to the students:

We have Indigenous staff. We employ people from those communities, who also work with the kids in the boarding capacity. That is so essential. The schools have built transition houses so that families can come down if the kids are homesick, can stay on campus and can work with those kids through those difficult times. Again, it is all at a cost, but it is improving their chances of success.⁷⁸

2.90 The committee also heard from Mr Dale Murray of Edmund Rice Education Australia about the outreach program that organisation is currently running in Mount

75 Mrs Therese Byrne, Principal, Charters Towers State High School, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 67.

76 Mr David Morris, Principal, Northern Beaches State High School, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 68.

77 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, pp 38-39.

78 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 41.

Isa. Next year Edmund Rice Education Australia will establish a flexible learning centre in Mount Isa, catering for Indigenous students:

We are currently aware of about 75 to 80 young people in Mount Isa who are probably in the middle school age, are all Indigenous and are not in school. They are the ones we know of. We are also aware of a range of another 50 or 60 kids heading toward the senior phase of learning not being at school and not having been at school for a fairly long time. How we know that is we have an outreach running there at the moment. We are knocking on doors in the morning, picking kids up, taking them to a site and working with them. Their brothers and sisters are running out, saying, 'We want to come to school.' We are saying, 'No, you're too little.'

Over the last couple of years we have been working mainly with the education department in the Isa and the Kalkadoon nation to develop a response there. As fate would have it, the Mount Isa Christian College closed and it became available for purchase. Edmund Rice Education Australia bought it...Now we have to refurbish it. This leads into some of the questions. Staffing it is complicated, as you would be aware; as soon as you step outside of the metropolitan areas, it is complicated, particularly around incentives for staff and particularly in places like mining communities, where rent is extraordinary. For us to buy facilities to house people is complicated, so we have to work out how we do that.

We have been lucky with our staffing arrangements, though, because we are quite specialist in the nature of the work that we do, so we are getting more and more people who have a sense of dissatisfaction with the mainstream classroom environments and are looking for something different.⁷⁹

2.91 The committee notes that the Australian Government has in place measures aimed at addressing the disparity in educational outcomes for Indigenous students and these will be discussed in the next section of the report.

Committee view

2.92 The barriers to secondary school students in rural and regional areas accessing educational opportunities are numerous and complex. They are matters that are not solved only through money – money is not enough to retain teachers in rural and regional communities and money is not enough to make a student aspire to further education.

2.93 Sometimes, money can provide opportunities – students can travel to metropolitan areas to boarding school, to revision courses to universities for extension activities. The committee recognises that some families are willing to pay for their children to have access to these opportunities, but those opportunities obviously come at a cost – not only in financial terms, but in terms of time and in terms of effort for both the student and their family. However, there are still many people in rural and

79 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 75.

regional areas who also want their children to access these opportunities, but can not afford to pay.

2.94 The committee is particularly concerned at the disadvantages faced by Indigenous students. As the committee heard, these students face some of the biggest hurdles in accessing education, particularly once they have become disengaged from mainstream schooling. The committee recognises the importance of outreach and flexible learning projects, such as those run by Edmund Rice Education Australia, which centre on a social-inclusion agenda.

2.95 The committee is concerned at what it sees is a growing disparity in educational opportunities between rural and regional, and metropolitan areas. A situation where those who have the option, chose to leave rural and regional areas – a choice which, while beneficial for the students and families involved, reemphasises the disparity to those who remain.

2.96 The committee notes the grim picture painted by Mr Gary Downsborough, Principal of Broome Senior High School and representative of the Australian Secondary Principals' Association, of how education systems in these areas can deteriorate:

There is little support to tackle inherent problems such as the high percentage of inexperienced teachers, the lack of local professional development for staff, few relief teachers, high staff changeover in schools, low expectations and goals of parents for their children, lack of vocational pathways within the area where the students live and rumours and negative press affecting attitudes. Students in high socio-economic groups go away for schooling, hence poor students have to be integrated into the classrooms and there are no centres or alternatives in a lot of these places for extreme-behaviour students.⁸⁰

2.97 The committee shares the vision of Professor John Pegg of the SiMERR National Centre of rural and regional education:

...we want parents to be able to send their children to rural schools and not feel that they are giving them second best. We want kids to go to rural schools and get the same sorts of marks that they would get if they lived in Sydney, and we want teachers to be in rural areas and not feel professionally isolated.⁸¹

2.98 The committee recognises that governments, communities and other organisations are all taking steps to address this issue. Some of those steps are positive for example, the establishment of outreach programs that universities and TAFEs are developing to connect with secondary school students. Some of the initiatives that the committee were told about are making great progress only to fail through a lack of

80 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 77.

81 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 31.

long-term planning. The committee notes the fate of the Quickstart program in a remote school, in which students made great leaps forward in literacy and numeracy, and then was not run the next year because of an entire change of staff in the school. The committee sees this as an opportunity lost.

2.99 The committee is not in a position to put forward any solutions to these issues. The nature of this inquiry has been awareness-raising. From the limited time that the committee has had, it is of the view that the barriers to secondary education at a rural and regional level requires a comprehensive and systematic investigation, in the style of the recent Review of Australian Higher Education. The focus of that inquiry should be how to establish a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia.

Recommendation 1

2.100 The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission an investigation into the barriers to rural and regional secondary educational opportunities with a view to developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia.

Recommendation 2

2.101 In developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary education opportunities in rural and regional Australia, the committee recommends that consideration should be given to strategies for ensuring that literacy and numeracy programs, once introduced into schools, are able to be maintained within those schools.

Government measures to provide for rural and regional students

National Youth Compact

2.102 Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), States and Territories have established a 'Compact with Young Australians'. Part of the Compact with Young Australians is the introduction of a National Youth Participation Requirement to ensure that all young people complete Year 10 and participate in education, training, employment or a combination of these activities until the age of 17. The Compact with Young Australians entitles all Australians under the age of 25 to an education or training place.⁸²

2.103 This section of the report discusses funding available for schools as well as students to assist them to access educational opportunities.

82 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), *Submission 523*, pp 29-30.

Funding for secondary education in rural and regional areas

2.104 The Australian Government has a number of funding initiatives which provide institutional funding to rural and regional areas.

*Remoteness Loading*⁸³

2.105 Non-government schools receive a remoteness loading on their per capita recurrent grant funding if they have students studying at eligible locations. The funding is provided in recognition of the higher cost of delivering education services in regional and remote regions of Australia and the negative impacts that this can have on student achievement levels.

2.106 Non-government schools or campuses classified as 'Moderately Accessible', 'Remote' or 'Very Remote' receive an additional five per cent, 10 per cent or 20 per cent respectively of the funding entitlement associated with their socio-economic status score. In 2008, 439 non-government schools received the loading, across 469 campus locations.

*Country Areas Program*⁸⁴

2.107 The Country Areas Program (CAP) also provides assistance to rural and geographically isolated students at non-government schools to cover the additional costs associated with schooling from geographically isolated areas. In 2008, 1,413 government, Catholic and independent schools received CAP funding of \$30.5 million for 5,586 projects.

2.108 State and Territory educational authorities determine their own eligibility criteria and priorities for disbursing CAP funds to individual schools. Funding cannot be used as substitute funding for resources and services but may be used as supplementary funding for:

- curriculum enhancement (eg excursions, music and attendance at sporting events);
- information and communication technology;
- professional development;
- school support; and
- purchase of tangible items.

83 *Submission 523*, p. 15.

84 *Submission 523*, pp 15-16

*Drought Assistance for Schools*⁸⁵

2.109 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (the Department) submission notes the 'Drought Assistance for Schools' Program, which is designed to benefit students and was introduced in recognition of the impact of years of drought on farming families.

2.110 In 2007-08 a total of \$24,000,030 in funding was delivered to 3,030 government and non-government schools in rural and remote locations across Australia. In 2008-09, 2,318 government and non-government schools received \$17,417,170 in funding. In 2009-10, approximately \$25 million is available under the program:

The funding is intended to make it easier for rural families to meet ongoing education expenses and the cost of educational activities such as student excursions which may be cost prohibitive for families experiencing financial hardship as a result of prolonged drought.

*Assistance for the Northern Territory*⁸⁶

2.111 The Australian Government provides specific assistance to students in the Northern Territory in an ongoing effort to close the educational gap. That assistance includes:

- The School Nutrition Program which delivers breakfast and lunch to school aged children.
- The investment of \$11.2 million over one year for teacher accommodation to address housing shortage and to increase teacher employment and retention.

2.112 The Department's submission also highlights \$5 million in funding to the Wadeye community for additional teacher housing, and \$7 million in funding under the Building the Education Revolution funding for 15 additional classrooms in schools servicing remote communities in the Northern Territory.

Programs aimed at raising aspirations

2.113 A representative of the Department explained to the committee during the hearings the initiatives that the Australian Government has put in place to raise the aspirations of low socioeconomic (SES) status students to attend university:

...there is a new program worth approximately \$400 million in support of the participation of low-SES students at university. One element of that is what we call the participation and partnerships program. That will be allocated to universities to engage in what we call outreach activities, which will enable universities to engage with schools in various sorts of activities

85 *Submission 523*, p. 36.

86 *Submission 523*, p. 39.

designed to raise aspirations among students to go to university. It is anticipated that we will have guidelines for that program coming out fairly shortly.⁸⁷

2.114 The Department's submission also outlines specific programs designed to engage and support students to complete secondary education:

- the Local Community Partnerships initiative established to support young people from 13 to 19 years of age to achieve a successful transition through school and from school to further education, training and work.
- Youth Pathways targeted at young people aged 13 to 19 who are the most at risk of not making a successful transition through school and from school to further education, training and employment. The program is aimed at reducing the number of early school leavers who are not employed or in education in the 12 months after leaving school.
- Connections which provides a full-time education and personal development program for young people aged 13 to 19 who are disconnected from mainstream schooling.⁸⁸

2.115 Ms Kimberlee Ryan of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development indicated that raising aspirations and engaging students in education is a challenge for all governments:

...there would not be a jurisdiction in the world that does not face that challenge of lifting the aspirations of students, particularly in disadvantaged areas, to stay engaged in education and training and transition to meaningful employment and further learning. So we are working on that from a systems point of view in terms of the whole school improvement agenda here, really building teacher capacity to engage students more effectively, broadening curriculum options and pathways available to students and wrapping around a broad student engagement and welfare framework around that work to keep kids able to engage in different contexts for education and training...all of our efforts in our school improvement agenda and our blueprint are aiming at that retention and engagement of students as far as they can go.⁸⁹

Other Programs

2.116 The Department's submission outlines a number of initiatives that Australian governments, through COAG, have put in place to 'transform schools and schooling for teachers, students and the community'.⁹⁰ These initiatives include The National

87 Mr Phil Aungles, Acting Branch Manager, Equity, Performance and Indigenous Branch, DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 65.

88 *Submission 523*, pp 48-49.

89 *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, pp 68-69.

90 *Submission 523*, p. 29.

Partnerships to address disadvantage in low SES school communities and the National Education Agreement. Under the auspices of these programs, the Australian Government has committed more than \$47.7 billion in funding for both government and non-government schools to:

- attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and school leaders and support schools to run as professional organisations working with their community;
- ensure students have access to a national curriculum;
- raise parental and community expectations of educational outcomes;
- introduce transparent and more robust accountability to improve student performance by providing parents with clear information on how their child is progressing at school and how they compare with others in their community and across Australia;
- support teaching and learning in schools through appropriate infrastructure;
- review funding and regulation across government and non-government school sectors; and
- provide support to students with additional needs.⁹¹

2.117 The Department's submission also highlighted work being done through the following programs which may assist schools, students and families in remote, rural and regional areas:

- Building the Education Revolution program,
- the Australian Government's Capital Grants program,
- The Le@rning Federation,
- Improving the Practical Component of Teacher Education Program and
- The National Secondary Schools Computer Fund.⁹²

2.118 The Department's submission also notes \$577.4 million in funding for the *National Action Plan on Literacy and Numeracy*. \$540 million of this funding has been allocated to the *Smarter Schools: National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy* to ensure an increased focus and commitment to improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes of students. Initial funding for the *National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy* is being used for literacy and numeracy pilot initiatives which are trialling or expanding on initiatives to lift the literacy and numeracy performance of students in disadvantaged communities.⁹³

91 *Submission 523*, p. 29.

92 *Submission 523*, pp 46-47.

93 *Submission 523*, p. 15.

2.119 The committee notes that these initiatives are not specific to rural and regional students, however they may benefit rural and regional students.

Funding for secondary students required to live away from home

2.120 The Department's submission outlined some of the funding available for secondary students who are required to live away from home for secondary study.⁹⁴

2.121 Students aged 16 years and over may receive youth allowance or ABSTUDY to study away from home for Years 11 and 12 and for vocational education and training.

2.122 There is also the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC), which provides allowances to geographically isolated families with primary, secondary and certain tertiary students who cannot attend an appropriate state school on a daily basis because of geographic isolation.

2.123 The AIC has several allowance types which are tailored to assist a range of education options for isolated families. In 2009, the basic rate of the AIC Boarding Allowance is \$6,824. In addition, the AIC Additional Boarding Allowance (\$2,261 in 2009) is available. The AIC Additional Boarding Allowance is specifically targeted at lower income families whose geographically isolated children board away from home to access schooling.

2.124 Other AIC payment types are:

- the second home allowance where a family maintains a second home so that student can attend school daily. In 2009, the second home allowance is \$198.80 per fortnight, per student, up to a maximum of three students in a family.
- the distance education allowance of \$3,412 per year, and the distance education allowance supplement of \$1,045 per year, which assists families whose children live at home and study via distance education.⁹⁵

2.125 In 2008, 11,212 students received AIC allowances at a cost of \$62 million. Of these students, 2,031 received the AIC Additional Boarding Allowance.⁹⁶

94 *Submission 523*, p. 24.

95 Centrelink, *Assistance for Isolated Children Payment Rates webpage*. Available at http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/aic_rates.htm, accessed 9 December 2009. Payment rates are effective from 20 September. See also Centrelink, *Assistance for Isolated Children*, Brochure, pp 21-22. Available at [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/st008_0810/\\$file/st008_0810en.pdf](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/st008_0810/$file/st008_0810en.pdf), accessed 9 December 2009.

96 See *Submission 523*, p. 24.

2.126 State Governments also offer allowances which may supplement the AIC Scheme.

2.127 The Western Australian Government offers the *Student Boarding Away from Home Allowance* to families with students who do not have reasonable daily access to an appropriate primary and/or secondary school and are required to board away from home. The allowance of \$2,000 supplements the AIC and students who are eligible for the AIC are automatically eligible for the *Student Boarding Away from Home Allowance*. The *Student Boarding Away from Home Allowance* is also available to families receiving the AIC who have set up a second home. In 2008, there were 2,142 applications for the *Student Boarding Away from Home Allowance*, with a total of \$2.36 million provided to parents and boarding providers.

2.128 The Western Australian Government has also established boarding facilities adjacent to public senior high schools in nine regional areas. The full cost of the boarding service, provided by the Country High School Hostels Authority, is \$16,750 per student. The Western Australian Government subsidises this cost, with the net cost per student in 2009 being \$9,430. For students receiving ABSTUDY, the full cost of this boarding service is met by the Australian Government. For a student receiving AIC and the *Student Boarding Away from Home Allowance*, the net cost of boarding in 2009 is \$606.⁹⁷

2.129 The Northern Territory Government offers assistance for students who are boarding through the *Student Assistance and Supplementary Boarding Allowance Schemes*, which is designed to complement the AIC. It provides some travel assistance and supplementations of costs of boarding, but not for students already receiving similar subsidies under ABSTUDY.⁹⁸

2.130 The Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW (BCEF) also noted that the NSW Government offers a *Living Away from Home Allowance*. The allowance is valued at a basic rate of \$1,227 per year, with a Year 11/12 supplement of \$288.⁹⁹

2.131 The NSW Government also offers a *Boarding Scholarship for Isolated Students*, valued at \$4,100 for 2009. The *Boarding Scholarship for Isolated Students*

97 Western Australian Government, *Submission 528*, pp 5-6 and 10. The locations of regional hostels are: Albany, Broome, Esperance, Geraldton, Katanning, Merredin, Moora, Narrogin, Northam. The Western Australian Government provides a subsidy to maintain the viability of small boarding facilities in key service centres which receive insufficient revenue from fees to meet operating costs.

98 Northern Territory Government, *Submission 301*, p. 2.

99 *Submission 235*, p. 8. See also, NSW Department of Education and Training, *Living Away from Home Allowance: 2009 information and application form*. Available at: http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/studentssupport/scholarshipsmore/lafha_applicat.pdf, accessed 12 November 2009.

was established to assist students from rural areas who are disadvantaged by a low family income and geographic isolation.¹⁰⁰

Adequacy of government assistance

2.132 The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA) notes the average cost of boarding and tuition fees for secondary students is between \$25,000 and \$30,000 per year. The ICPA note that the basic AIC boarding allowance rate has not kept pace with boarding fee increases:

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Basic Boarding Allowance (2009) is \$6,824 per annum. Generating sufficient income to meet education expenses is extremely difficult for families. As the AIC Additional Boarding Allowance is linked to a Parental Income Test, many rural and remote families are not eligible, because the Parental Income Test (2009) is \$32,800 at the lower limit, and this figure is unrealistic in relation to wages/salary earned. AIC provides warranted support but the payments have not kept pace with boarding fee increases, which regularly exceed the [consumer price index].¹⁰¹

2.133 The BCEF informed the committee that traditionally students have had access to school-term hostels, linked to local high schools, where boarding fees range from around \$6,500-\$8,800 per annum. These boarding fees are manageable for families who are eligible for the AIC and NSW Government's *Living Away from Home Allowance*. However, the BCEF noted that there has been a decline in the hostel system are only two remaining hostels in regional NSW, in Broken Hill and Dubbo, and both are full to capacity in 2009.¹⁰²

2.134 The BCEF stated that in these circumstance many families were then limited to considering boarding schools in rural and regional areas, where fees for tuition and boarding ranged from \$8,592 (for an agricultural high school) to \$29,860 (for a non-government boarding school).¹⁰³ The BCEF also noted in its submission that boarding fees and tuition for metropolitan boarding schools could be around \$43,152, and for most students is prohibitive before any reductions or allowances are considered.¹⁰⁴

100 See NSW Department of Education and Training, *Boarding Scholarship for Isolated Students: 2009 information and application form*. Available at: http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/studentsupport/scholarshipsmore/bsis_applicat.pdf, accessed 12 November 2009.

101 *Submission 264*, p. 3.

102 *Submission 235*, p. 6. Previously hostels had operated in Tibboorburra, Walgett, Bourke, Cobar and Forbes.

103 *Submission 235*, p. 6.

104 *Submission 235*, p. 1.

2.135 The BCEF made the following observation on the adequacy of government assistance for rural and regional students who are required to live away from home for secondary school:

For some students the annual boarding fees could be offset by a maximum combined [Australian and NSW] government assistance allowance of \$10,660. While it covers the cost of boarding fees in hostels and Agricultural High Schools, it does not cover other hidden expenses such as elective subjects, laundry, sports uniforms, school [organised] week-end travel, excursions, visiting performers. Given that there is an unwritten expectation that parents contribute notionally towards their child's secondary 'board & keep' (*estimate of \$100 p/w*) it would be assumed that the AIC and the [*Living Away from Home*] allowances are adequate to more than adequate.¹⁰⁵

2.136 However, the BCEF go on to note that access to the hostel and government boarding schools where lower fee structures apply is extremely limited. Therefore, BCEF advocate for a number of measures, including:

- an increase in the AIC for isolated families who have been rejected for a place at a government boarding school or hostel and must enrol at a non-government school where tuition fees apply;
- raising the value of the AIC and the NSW Government *Living away from home allowance* to reflect more adequately the 'extras' that parents are required to pay; and
- raising the combined family income threshold to \$60,000.¹⁰⁶

2.137 Both the ICPA and the BCEF noted inconsistencies between the state and Australian Government assistance schemes:

The overlap of Federal and State Government responsibilities pertaining to education creates disorder. Inequities between states, in regard to accessing an appropriate education with financial assistance, are being caused by state education authority's definitions of an appropriate school under the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme. ICPA has lobbied the Federal Government...to revise the AIC guidelines, to enable a child to access an education by receiving the AIC allowance when a school, within the context of a rural or remote community, cannot meet the educational needs appropriate to that child.¹⁰⁷

105 *Submission 235*, p. 8 (emphasis in original).

106 *Submission 235*, pp 9-10.

107 *Submission 264*, p. 7. See also Bush Children's Education Foundation, *Submission 235*, p. 10, which advocates a common definition of 'isolation' and 'remoteness' with regard to aspects of the criteria for Assistance for Isolated Children and the NSW Government's *Living away from home allowance*.

Bypassing of Local Schools.

2.138 One issue raised with the committee in terms of accessing additional funding for rural and regional students living away from home, was the 'bypassing' of local schools. Mr Colin Pettit of the WA Department of Education and Training explained to the committee how bypassing operated in that state:

To receive both [the Western Australian government student boarding away from home allowance, approximately \$2,000, and the AIC] the school within their community has to be deemed not able to provide a sound education program for their students...if you are a hundred kilometres away in a small district high school with only 10 students, we cannot provide you with best possible education so we will offer that as a bypass, and if you are offered a bypass then you are eligible for these two subsidies.¹⁰⁸

2.139 The committee was informed that in Queensland the bypassing of the local school requires community consultation. This can lead to community conflicts between those who want the school to be bypassed, and those who do not:

Those living in towns in Central Western Queensland are not able to access the same allowances as those out of town unless the whole community has agreed that their local school is a 'bypass' school. Whole of community meetings involving the local schools are held when a community expresses a desire to become a bypass school...

There are arguments for and against bypassing as providing allowances for people living in towns allows them choice IF the local school does not suit their real (not perceived) needs e.g. if there is a bullying issue, or their child is gifted and talented and not being catered for locally. But, if bypassing became an easy option it may severely detract from resourcing of the local school (which is based on numbers).

There are many families who cannot afford the extra costs (on top of the allowances) required to pay the full cost of sending a child away to boarding school and need to and or WISH to attend their local school.

...

The issue of bypassing is one fraught with danger for rural and remote areas, as a decision to bypass, by a community, may have negative impacts on the local schools resourcing, in turn reducing the quality on offer and also creating a two tiered community.¹⁰⁹

108 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 4.

109 Remote Area Planning and Development Board, *Submission 695*, pp 6-7 (emphasis in original).

2.140 The committee received evidence that the requirement for bypassing of the local school could also impact on gifted and talented students being able to access educational opportunities in metropolitan areas. Mrs Roxanne Morrissey of the ICPA gave this example of a gifted and talented student:

They have these wonderful programs here in WA, scholarships for gifted and talented children. There is a source of accommodation, but there is only that one source. If you live in a regional area and you qualify for a gifted and talented program - for instance, if you live nearer to Port Hedland and your child qualified for a music program at Perth Modern School here - you would not qualify for any assistance to actually move to Perth to be able to do that program, because you have a high school in your area. It does not matter that it does not offer a music program as such; the fact is it is deemed an appropriate school so, therefore, you do not qualify for the assistance for isolated children allowance.¹¹⁰

2.141 The WA Department of Education and Training provided the following explanation of its policy in relation to gifted and talented students and the bypassing of local schools:

We do it case by case, and they are not all accommodated. We need to be very clear there. Particularly with gifted and talented children - that is something that we will put to the inquiry- perhaps that is something that the federal government might need to have a look at. It is deemed that we can provide the gifted and talented children from country locations with support up to year 10 through isolated and distance education - so through electronic means. However, some of the parents are indicating that that is not as fulfilling for these students as is needed. Because of the rules between the state and federal levels, we have not actually moved too far on that. Once that child reaches year 11, they automatically qualify and will be given access to these programs, because the quality of the program they need, particularly at year 11, is far superior to what others need, so we just have to make sure that we provide them with that opportunity.¹¹¹

Committee view

2.142 The committee notes the evidence that it has received in relation to the adequacy of the financial assistance available through the AIC and associated State and Territory allowances. The committee notes that the concerns in relation to the adequacy of the AIC is mainly in relation to boarding school fees. The prices of government hostels appear to be set at a level which, with the assistance of the AIC and any State government supplement, are affordable.

2.143 The committee believes that the costs incurred by families in accessing secondary educational opportunities, belies the larger problem of families feeling the

110 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 20.

111 Mr Colin Pettit, Executive Director, Regional and Remote Schools, Western Australian Department of Education and Training, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 6.

need to send children away to school because of the lack of educational opportunities in rural and regional areas.

2.144 The committee recognises that sending students to boarding schools will be a matter of necessity for a small number of families because of geographical isolation. For a small number of families the decision to send children to boarding school is a matter of preference, based on factors other than cost, such a family tradition of attending a particular school. For the vast majority of families however, the decision to send children to boarding schools is one they feel forced into making because of the limited opportunities at local schools.

2.145 As the committee noted above, these choices that families are forced to make, have a flow on effect to the community they live in. When students leave a regional area, it results in lost opportunities and resources for local schools with flow-on effects to the wider community.

2.146 The committee's view is that the solution to this issue does not lie in necessarily increasing the value of the AIC, but in providing families with a real alternative to sending their children away to school. However, providing families with real alternatives to sending their children away to school is not an issue that can be resolved in the short-term.

Recommendation 3

2.147 The committee recommends that as part of the investigation into the barriers to rural and regional secondary educational opportunities with a view to developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia, consideration should be given to whether the current level of funding under the AIC Scheme is appropriate.

Chapter 3

Barriers to accessing tertiary education opportunities in rural and regional Australia

Restricted access to education, especially higher education, has been identified in the 'increasing social exclusion of many rural young people', resulting in their being 'shut out of the global marketplace and limited to local labour market opportunities'.¹

Introduction

3.1 The Review of Australian Higher Education (the Bradley Review) stated that: People from regional and remote parts of Australia remain seriously under-represented in higher education and the participation rates for both have worsened in the last five years.²

3.2 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (the Department) submission stated that the underrepresentation of regional and remote students in higher education is more related to their lower likelihood of applying for higher education than their likelihood of receiving or accepting an offer.³

3.3 In responding to the Bradley Review, the Australian Government has set the following targets for participation and attainment:

- that by 2025, 40 per cent of all 25-34 year olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above; and
- that by 2020, 20 per cent of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level will be of people from a low socio-economic status (SES) background.⁴

3.4 In relation to this second target, the Department's submission noted that regional institutions will play an important role in achieving this ambition, given the higher proportion of low SES students in regional areas.⁵

1 National Centre of Science, Information and Communications Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR), University of New England, *SiMERR National Survey*, 2006, p. 7.

2 Professor Denise Bradley et al, *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report* (Bradley Review), December 2008, p. 31

3 *Submission 523*, p. 27.

4 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), *Submission 523*, p. 22.

5 *Submission 523*, p. 22.

3.5 However, the committee has heard during this inquiry that rural and regional students face significant barriers in participating in tertiary education. The committee has considered these challenges from two perspectives:

- the financial and social costs to students, their families and their communities in accessing tertiary education opportunities; and
- the barriers to tertiary institutions providing tertiary education opportunities to students in regional Australia.

3.6 This chapter of the report looks at access to tertiary education opportunities from the perspective of the student, their family and their community. The chapter starts with a brief overview of the tertiary education alternatives for rural and regional students and then discusses some of the financial costs to students accessing education opportunities. The context of this discussion is that a large number of students from rural and regional areas are required to move away from home in order to access tertiary education, and this imposes substantial costs on the student and their family. The chapter then moves to a discussion of the government assistance available to students to assist them in accessing tertiary education. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the financial and social costs to students, families and communities of students moving away from home in order to access tertiary education opportunities.

3.7 Chapter 4 of the report discusses the barriers to tertiary institutions providing education opportunities to students in regional Australia.

Tertiary educational alternatives for rural and regional students

3.8 Submissions to the inquiry highlighted the lack of alternatives in terms of educational alternatives in rural and regional areas. For example Gippsland East Local Learning and Employment Network put the tertiary options in that area into the following context:

If a young person from East Gippsland wishes to attend university, they are forced to move away. The closest university, Monash Gippsland, is two hours travel (one way) from Bairnsdale, 3 hours from Orbost and even further from the Omeo Region and Mallacoota, so young people from these parts of East Gippsland need to live away from home to study, even to attend their closest university. The only viable commute would be from Sale to Monash, which is a distance of 70 kilometres, with an approximate driving time of one hour and ten minutes. Some Far East Gippslanders study in Canberra or Albury. A portion of these students return to their communities on weekends to participate in work, sport and community life.

...Locally, East Gippsland TAFE (EGTAFE) offers a range of courses from Certificates I – IV, and a limited range of diploma courses are offered. Degree level courses are not offered at EGTAFE. Most Year 12 completers

who are able to go onto tertiary study must leave the region to pursue courses of their choice...⁶

3.9 Similarly, the Remote Area Planning and Development Board, located in Central Western Queensland outlined the limited training options in that area:

Students from this region currently have no option but to leave the region to attend TAFE or University. The Australian Agricultural College (Longreach campus) provides practical training and development of people working in rural and associated industries. Areas of training include: rural business management, mechanics and welding, building construction, sheep and wool, goat production, cattle and horses, and station activities.

...A new initiative in the region, the Australian College of Outback Tourism (ACOT), aims to supply training in hospitality and tourism. It has a cooperative approach to addressing skills and training shortages in the tourism and hospitality industries in the central west region. ACOT is a partnership between industry, [the Remote Area Planning and Development Board], schools and training organisations with the aim of building capacity in the region and retaining the population through the local delivery of quality accredited training.

ACOT is currently working towards becoming a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) [but there is currently] no funding available for an organisation to become an RTO.

Other issues relating to provision of such training in Central Western Queensland, lies in tourism being exempt from current Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), training funding. A proposal for a mobile trade training centre has been halted as tourism is not regarded as a trade (and therefore not eligible for funding) and yet tourism is one of the main industries and employers in this region.⁷

3.10 The submission from Charles Sturt University stated that course availability was the major factor in students choosing to relocate from rural and regional areas to metropolitan universities.⁸ The issue of course availability at regional institutions is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of the report.

3.11 However, the committee also notes the comment in the submission of the University of New England that a 'large proportion' of students move to metropolitan

6 Gippsland East Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission 522*, p. 6. See also Gannawarra Shire Council, *Submission 556*, pp 5-6 which outlines the distances and travel times to tertiary education providers and concludes that young people in that shire 'do not have the option to obtain a university degree or further education while living at home', and Glenelg and Southern Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission 474*, p. 5.

7 *Submission 695*, pp 8-9.

8 *Submission 537*, p. 25.

areas for 'social reasons' or out of preference for a metropolitan university and not because they are required to do so to find the course of choice.⁹

3.12 The committee also spent time during the inquiry investigating distance education options for rural and regional students. A number of universities have a significant proportion of their students studying via this means. For example, Southern Cross University has one third of its students studying externally¹⁰ and the University of New England has 80 per cent of its students studying by distance education.¹¹ The committee notes the observation of Professor Bryan Rothwell, Head of Campus, Tweed and Gold Coast, Southern Cross University that 'distance' education is not only for the geographically isolated:

I have been with external or distance education - whatever words you want to use - for many, many years. We really have to forget about those terms. My colleagues here know exactly what I mean about this. The real problem is that we are educating for circumstance - persons who have circumstances which dictate what and how they study. The fact that we call it 'distance' education is wrong; it is not necessarily distance at all. It could be just 10 minutes away. We are having to fund and deliver to persons who have circumstantial difficulties. They can be anywhere, of course.¹²

3.13 Further, the committee was told that many students want the face-to-face experience. For example Ms Barbara Black, Director of the University of Western Australia's Albany Centre, highlighted the importance of face-to-face contact for students studying for their first post-secondary qualification:

School leavers often want more of a social interaction. There is research...that for the first degree, particularly for school leavers, they want the face-to-face experience. Usually after students have done their first degree they cope better with online courses for postgraduate study.¹³

3.14 The committee recognises that there is a place for distance education study, but does not feel that it should replace on-campus study where that is a student's preferred study option. The committee further explores the role of distance and multi-model delivery of courses in Chapter 4.

3.15 The lack of educational opportunities in rural and regional areas means that many students from these areas are forced to move away from home, either to a metropolitan area or another regional area in order to access tertiary education

9 *Submission 558*, p. 3.

10 *Submission 244*, p. 2.

11 *Submission 558*, p. 6.

12 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, pp 49-50.

13 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 51. See also Professor Phillip Steele, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Campus Coordination, Campus Director Berwick and Peninsula, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 10 who stressed the importance of the on-campus student experience.

opportunities. The remainder of this chapter examines the barriers to students being able to make this move in order to pursue tertiary education. The main barrier which was raised with the committee and is discussed in this chapter, is the financial costs involved with relocation. The discussion also includes an outline of the financial assistance available to students and the adequacy of this assistance.

3.16 In addition to the financial costs associated with moving away from home, students, their families and their communities face social costs. These social costs are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Financial costs of students moving away for tertiary education

3.17 Overwhelmingly, the committee heard that the greatest barrier to rural and regional students pursuing tertiary education was the financial cost if the student was required to move away from home in order to pursue the course of their choice.

3.18 The *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education* report estimates the annual cost for students to study away from home to be \$15-20,000, plus a vehicle. Those costs include:

- Start-up expenses of \$3-6,000 for travel and accommodation to enrol, attendance at Orientation week and sourcing accommodation, bond, computer, moving costs, setting up a house and a vehicle.
- Living expenses of \$250-400 per week either in private rental accommodation, or university residential accommodation, parking fees, phone, transport, clothing sporting fees, work uniform and travel, health, socialising and unexpected expenses.
- Study related expenses such as printer, internet connection, stationary, lecture notes and text books, short courses, and student association fees.
- Travel home and travel and accommodation costs for family to visit.
- Tuition fees including upfront TAFE fees and Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS)- Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) fees (if not deferred).¹⁴

3.19 A number of submissions also quoted figures of \$15,000-\$20,000 per year for students to relocate for tertiary studies.¹⁵ Some witnesses put the figure in the range of

14 Naomi Godden, with the Centre for Rural Social Research and Monash University Department of Social Work, *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education*, November 2007, p. 10.

15 See for example Ms Clare Wagner, *Submission 102*, p. 2, Ms Susan Matthew, Careers Advisor, Young High School, *Submission 369*, p. 1, St Joseph's College Mildura, *Submission 745*, p. 1, and Professor Neil Otway, Director, Centre for Regional Engagement, University of South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 34.

\$25,000 or more.¹⁶ It was not always clear if these figures included HECS-HELP course fees. However, in relation to HECS-HELP fees the Bradley Review stated:

Any discussions of financial support must start with the recognition that the current option to undergraduate students to defer payment of fees or student contributions through income contingent loans removes one of the most significant financial barriers to participation. However, the additional living and study costs associated with higher education enrolment, particularly for those students who need to move away from home to study, are considerable.¹⁷

3.20 The committee accepts the findings of the Bradley Review that the HECS-HELP removes one of the significant financial barriers to participation. The committee intends to focus on those additional costs faced by rural and regional students relocating for tertiary study.

3.21 In relation to TAFE courses, the committee does note that it received evidence to the effect that the payment of up-front fees for these courses can be a disincentive to participation.¹⁸ However, it was also noted that the move towards income-contingent loans and vocational education and training (VET) FEE-HELP scheme would assist these students.¹⁹

Accommodation costs while studying

3.22 The main expense for students relocating to study is the cost of accommodation. In addition to the expense of accommodation, the committee was also told of the lack of affordable on-campus accommodation and the difficulty in sourcing suitable private rentals for students.

3.23 The two most common options for rural and regional students discussed in the course of the inquiry were on-campus accommodation and private shared rentals. The

16 See for example Ms Jessica Baikie, student at Launceston College, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 53, quoting figures from the Monash University website, Mr Denis and Mrs Margaret Riddle, *Submission 61*, p. 1 and Ms Janet Westland, *Submission 152*, p. 1. The Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee estimated the study and living costs for a student living away from home for a three year degree to be \$82,382-\$101,519, depending on whether the student lived in shared rental accommodation or on-campus accommodation, see Victorian Parliament, Education and Training Committee, *Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education*, July 2009, p. 171.

17 Bradley Review, December 2008, p. 47.

18 See Ms Margaret Mibus, General Manager, Aboriginal Access Centre, TAFE SA, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 20 and Dr Ruth Schubert, General Manager, TAFE SA Regional, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, pp 24-25.

19 Mrs Robyn Dyer, Institute Director, Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, pp 33-34.

committee got some indication of costs of different types of on-campus or university residence accommodation at various locations around Australia:

- Residential fees at Murdoch University Student Village in 2010 will range from \$95 per week for a double (share) room in a self-catered apartment of 5-6 residents to \$290 per week for a one bedroom apartment. Additional fees include an application fee of \$35; a one-off 'residential program fee' of \$170; a utility fee of \$15 per week; and an annual security fee of \$500.²⁰
- Residential fees at James Cook University's Western Court in 2009 were \$260 per week for full board in a single room for the academic year (40 weeks). Compulsory additional fees included an administration fee of \$220-300; a Resident Student Association fee of \$80; and a security deposit of \$300.²¹
- Fees at Aquinas College in Adelaide are \$330 per week for the academic year (fully catered). Other fees include telephone rental at \$50 per term; and application fee and bond of \$625.²²

3.24 Submissions and evidence highlighted the benefits of the pastoral care aspects of on-campus accommodation for students living away from home, particularly in their initial years of tertiary study:

For a student who has just finished school and left home to attend university or TAFE this type of accommodation is crucial for the academic and social success of the student and is an ideal first step to independence.²³

20 Murdoch University Student Guild, answer to question on notice, 22 September 2009 (received 24 September 2009). The annual security fee is potentially refundable and will be refunded at the end of the year if the final inspection following departure is satisfactory, and all apartment and room furniture and fittings are considered to be of satisfactory condition, taking account of general wear and tear.

21 Rural Health in the Northern Outback, Tabled Documents, 10 November 2009. A semester rate (18 weeks) is available at \$280 per week and a calendar year rate (52 weeks) is available for \$250 per week. Discounted rates also apply for pre-payment. Full board rates include a meal component of 21 meals a week during the academic year.

22 South Australian Government, *Submission 436*, p. 14. Aquinas College is affiliated with the University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the University of South Australia. The application and bond are only payable by students entering the college for the first time and the bond of \$500 is refundable.

23 Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA, *Submission 443*, p. 9. See also Ouyen P-12 College Parents' Association, *Submission 532*, p. 1 and Ms Susan Barrett, *Submission 597*, p. 2, Ms Jan Andrews, Deputy Chief Executive, Schools and Children's Services, Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 3, Professor Andrew Vann, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, James Cook University, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 25. See also Professor Phillip Steele, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Campus Coordination, Campus Director Berwick and Peninsula, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 12, discussing the support offered by Monash Residential Services including student mentors, student wardens and a range of academic and social support for students.

3.25 Submissions and evidence highlighted the limited availability of on-campus residential accommodation.²⁴ Professor Phillip Steele of Monash University noted that one of the challenges facing the universities is finding the capital to fund an increase the level of residential accommodation.²⁵ Professor Andrew Vann of James Cook University noted that university had been investigating the possibility of public-private partnerships to build new residences on-campus, however, these plans are currently on hold.²⁶

3.26 Ms Karen Dickinson, Managing Director of Kimberley TAFE, spoke to the committee about funding which has been provided for accommodation in the north-west of Western Australia:

There is quite a large investment being made in the north-west of Western Australia. We have residential accommodation. It is not just going to TAFEs; it is going into educational facilities, so it can be used for TAFE or for any other registered training organisations.

...It is the Western Australian government - the Department of Housing and Works and the Department of Education and Training - and the Australian government...I think the initiative is 'Safer Housing for Indigenous Australians'. We will have 74 beds available specifically for students to come in from areas and study; they will be at Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Derby and Broome.

...We are negotiating some of the scope at the moment, because often when groups come in there will be a mixture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, so there has to be some flexibility. Primarily it will be available for Indigenous people coming in from the communities, but there will be non-Indigenous faces there as well.²⁷

3.27 Ms Wendy Burns, Managing Director of South West Regional College of TAFE, noted that a particular issue in relation to TAFE students is their age and ability to self-cater:

...university students are old enough for self-catering facilities, but TAFE students are younger and are not really old enough - or have questionable abilities - to self-cater. They need supervision or whatever, and that is quite expensive.²⁸

3.28 The committee also notes there is concern surrounding the increase in universities outsourcing accommodation services to private operators. The President

24 See for example University of NSW, *Submission 467*, p. 2, Dr Stephen Weller, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students, Victoria University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, pp 12-13.

25 *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 12. See also Professor Joyce Kirk, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students, RMIT University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 13.

26 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 24.

27 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 67.

28 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 68.

of the Edith Cowan University Student Guild explained to the committee that this arrangement could leave students in a tenancy 'loophole':

Under the Residential Tenancies Act, higher education facilities are exempt because they are covered by the university's pastoral care requirements, appeals processes et cetera. But when the university outsources it, which has happened in the last couple of years, [students] are suddenly not covered under the Residential Tenancies Act and they are not covered by the pastoral care and appeals processes of the university. The buck does not stop with the university; it stops with this commercial provider and whatever is in their contract. If you complain and you do not like it, they will kick you out and put in another student.²⁹

3.29 At its Perth hearings the committee was told that students sometimes did not find out if they had a place in university residences until December the previous year, or even early in the year they commence study. This leaves students who do not get a place in a university residence limited time to find alternate accommodation.³⁰

3.30 For many students, the alternative to residences is private rental accommodation, often shared with other students. Similarly to the situation with on-campus or university residences, private rental accommodation comes with start-up as well as ongoing costs:

If renting privately Bond (4 weeks rent) plus an additional 2 weeks rent in advance. Bond or deposit maybe required for telephone line, water and electricity. Rent is payable for the full year even during the University holidays whether they are there or have come home for the holidays. Set up costs of the rented premises, such as furniture, household items and food from scratch, purchasing a whole 'pantry' of basics to start off with...The cost of phone calls, emails or text messages actually keeping in touch.³¹

3.31 Private rental places can be limited and students need to compete with others on the rental market, meaning that rents can be expensive.³² The comment was also made to the committee that rental agencies look less favourably on university students

29 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 50.

30 See Mr Dwayne Richards, Member, Albany Youth Advisory Council, *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 29 and Miss Basha Stasak, President, Guild of Students, Murdoch University, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 49.

31 Ms Narelle and Ms Paige Riley, *Submission 412*, p. 1.

32 See for example Miss Anna-Jane Gordon, Publications Officer 2009, Rural Health in the Northern Outback, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 8 who stated that in Townsville while there is the opportunity for students to live off-campus places are limited and prices expensive because the Defence Forces based in the area also require accommodation. See also Ms Jan Andrews, Deputy Chief Executive, Schools and Children's Services, Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, pp 3-4 and Dr Peter Havel, Principal, Albany Senior High School, *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 9

as tenants. Students also need to continue to pay for rental accommodation through holiday periods when they return home if they want to retain the accommodation.³³

3.32 Aside from the affordability and availability of accommodation for students at their primary campus, the issue of the cost of accommodation for students on block release or clinical placements was also raised with the committee. For example, the University of Sydney in its submission outlined how this impacts on its final year veterinary degree students:

The cost of attending rural placements appears a major concern for most students completing their veterinary degrees. In their final year, student 'interns' are required to spend almost half their working year in the Sydney and Camden clinics...These units ensure our graduates develop an understanding of rural community issues prior to graduation, but our surveys of their learning experiences consistently identify that the costs of frequent relocation are considerable and increased debt burdens on new graduates, particularly as the relocations compromise their ability to hold part time employment positions in Sydney to support their training. There is limited financial support for these students during this important year of experiential learning.³⁴

3.33 It was noted that for some courses assistance is available to cover these costs, for example, medical students at James Cook University receive some assistance with travel and accommodation while on clinical placement.³⁵ However, similar assistance is not available for nursing, allied health and pharmacy students, who do clinical placements largely at their own expense:

Nursing students, allied health students, pharmacy students and so on will undertake placements all around northern Queensland and indeed elsewhere in the state and the country. They do so largely at their expense. If you are dependent upon a minimum wage job in the hospitality industry of an evening but you then need to be away for eight, five or two weeks, it puts that employment at risk. You cannot give your share house accommodation up. You will need to keep paying that rent. You may well have to also pay for accommodation in the clinical placement site to which you are going.³⁶

3.34 The submission of the TAFE Directors Australia also noted a similar issue in relation to block release for TAFE students:

33 Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Queensland, *Submission 402*, pp 3 and 6. See also Beth and Peter Simpson, *Submission 215*, p. 2 who noted the reverse problem with on-campus accommodation not being available during holidays and students needing to find alternate accommodation if they were going to stay and work.

34 *Submission 524*, pp 3-4.

35 Ms Heather Hanks, Year 4 Medical Student, James Cook University, Rural Health in the Northern Outback, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 12.

36 Associate Professor Richard Murray, Head of School, School of Medicine and Dentistry, James Cook University, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 8. See also TAFE Directors Australia, *Submission 527*, p. 5.

The costs of travel and accommodation for students attending universities away from home are prohibitive for many, possibly the majority of, people in many regional and rural communities. In terms of TAFE provision this affects not only those who move to larger centres for full time study, but the majority of part-time students in the trade programs that require blocked periods of institution-based training for rural students who cannot attend on a daily or weekly basis.³⁷

Travel Costs

3.35 In addition to accommodation costs while at university, transport costs are also an important factor in a student's budget. Types of transport costs which add significantly to budgets are the purchase and maintenance of a car and the cost of travelling to and from home during semester or on semester breaks.

3.36 Witnesses and submissions described for the committee the reasons that rural and regional students could not necessarily rely on public transport and needed their own transport. For example, Ms Susan Matthew, the Careers Adviser at Young High School, stated that the lack of public transport in Young meant students were required to provide their own transport:

There is NO public transport in Young. We do not have rail or coach services. The last remaining coach link between Young and Canberra was terminated last year. Rail services are only available to Harden, (30km), Cootamundra (50km) or Yass (85km) There are no buses which link with these services to Young. This means that students have to have their own transport which is an additional major cost.³⁸

3.37 The committee heard that students often felt it necessary to purchase a car to use while studying in situations where public transport is inadequate and students needed their own transport to ensure safe travel at night.³⁹

3.38 The committee also heard that not owning a car can, along with other factors, impact on a student's ability to undertake work during semester. For example, Ms Robin Muller explained that a lack of transport contributed to her son's difficulty in finding part-time work:

He has experienced more difficulty than he expected finding part time work to supplement his payments. The economic downturn has impacted on the availability of part time hospitality work in the inner city area. He is limited to the inner city because he does not have a car in Melbourne as it costs extra to garage a car at his accommodation. His course has 25 hours a week in contact hours, with some lessons finishing as late as 9pm as well as

37 *Submission 527*, p 4. See also Mrs Roxanne Morrissey, Federal President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, pp 19-20.

38 *Submission 369*, p. 1.

39 Ms Narelle and Ms Paige Riley, *Submission 412*, p. 1.

homework and a fieldwork component. This also limits his availability for part time work.⁴⁰

3.39 In addition to the cost of purchasing a car, students would then need to be able to fund the incidental costs such as maintenance and parking.

3.40 The committee heard in Western Australia that air travel was often the only practical way for students to travel from home to university on breaks:

Albany is a 'mere' 400 kilometres from Perth, but if a student is living up north the distances are huge and the only way they can travel - apart from spending two days driving, if they can afford a car, or on the bus - is by flying, and regional airfares in WA are a lot more expensive than they are in the rest of the country.⁴¹

3.41 Submissions also noted that, due to transport costs, students were not able to travel home as often as they might like:

It is too costly for her to return home for the mid semester breaks. Needless to say she misses all the family celebrations.⁴²

Income support for students

3.42 There are a number of different types of income support that are available to students. This inquiry has principally focussed on Youth Allowance, which is discussed in depth in this section. The other forms of support that students may be eligible for are Austudy and ABSTUDY, and these are discussed at the end of this section.

Youth Allowance

3.43 The committee has recently tabled a report into the provisions of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009

40 *Submission 713*, p. 1.

41 Ms Barbara Black, Director, Albany Centre, University of Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 54. See also Mr Gary Downsborough, Principal, Broome Senior High School and Representative of Australian Secondary Principals Association, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 79, discussing the cost of airfares between Perth and Broome ranging from less than \$200 to \$300-\$400 each way.

42 Name withheld, *Submission 340*, p. 1.

(the bill).⁴³ In that report, the committee outlined the income support available for students through Youth Allowance.⁴⁴

3.44 Youth Allowance provides assistance for people aged 16-24 years old who are studying full-time or undertaking a full-time Australian Apprenticeship. The maximum rate of Youth Allowance for a single student living away from home is \$371.40 per fortnight.⁴⁵

3.45 Currently, eligibility for Youth Allowance is based on a parental means test, or by applicants meeting criteria that demonstrate their independence.

3.46 Students can demonstrate independence through family or economic (workplace participation) criteria. Family circumstances that qualify a student for the Independent Youth Allowance include: being married or living in a marriage-like relationship for at least 12 months; or having a dependent child.

3.47 Currently, for students to demonstrate independence through workplace participation criteria they must:

- (a) have worked full-time (at least 30 hours a week) for at least 18 months in the last two years (30 hours a week for 18 months criterion); or
- (b) have worked part-time (at least 15 hours a week) for at least two years since leaving school (part-time for two years criterion); or
- (c) have been out of school for at least 18 months and have earned at least 75% of the maximum rate of pay under Wage Level A of the Australian Pay and Classification Scale in an 18 month period (fixed amount in 18 months criterion).

43 The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 is currently being considered by the Senate. The Government has introduced another bill, the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No. 2] into the House of Representatives. The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No.2] contains the amendments that the Government proposed in the Senate to the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009, however, those amendments were not accepted by the Senate.

44 Except where otherwise referenced the following paragraphs are extracted from Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [Provisions]*, October 2009, paragraphs 3.6-3.9.

45 See Centrelink Factsheet, *Youth Payment Rates: Youth Allowance*, 20 September -31 December 2009. Available at: [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co035_0909/\\$file/co035_0909en.pdf](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co035_0909/$file/co035_0909en.pdf), accessed 25 November 2009. This factsheet sets out the rates of Youth Allowance and additional entitlements that a student may be eligible for as well as outlining the eligibility requirements for Youth Allowance.

3.48 The amendments to Youth Allowance proposed in the bill would remove the part-time for two years and the fixed amount in 18 months criteria as a means of establishing independence for Youth Allowance. If the bill is passed, the only workforce participation criterion which will be retained for students to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance is to work for 30 hours per week for 18 months in a two year period. The committee notes the evidence of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations that the intention in leaving the 30 hours a week for 18 months criteria in the legislation is not to encourage students to take a gap year:

The intention is to reflect that people who have been in the full-time labour market for a few years, who later form an intention to study, can return to study. Their independence as a full-time worker over a sustained period of time should be the basis on which they are granted independent status.⁴⁶

3.49 Aside from the changes to the workforce participation criteria in the bill, the bill would make the following changes to Youth Allowance:⁴⁷

- Increase the annual parental income threshold for non-independent Youth Allowance recipients to get the maximum rate of Youth Allowance from \$32,800 to \$44,165.
- The parental income reduction for Youth Allowance will also be changed from a taper rate of 25 per cent per person, to a taper of 20 per cent apportioned between the members of the family who are subject to the parental income test. This change will reduce the effect of parental income on a Youth Allowance recipient, particularly where the same parental income applies to multiple recipients in a family. It will also mean that the point at which a person's parental income disentitles them to Youth Allowance will be raised.
- The personal, income-free area for Youth Allowance and Austudy students and Australian Apprentices will increase from \$236 to \$400 per fortnight. This means that students and Australian Apprentices will be able to earn up \$400 per fortnight without having their payments reduced. The increased income-free area will be indexed to the CPI.
- The age at which a person is automatically deemed independent will be changed from 25 to 22 years. It is intended that the change will be phased in, so that the age of independence will be reduced to 24 years in 2010, 23 years in 2011 and 22 years in 2012.

46 Ms Robyn Shannon, Branch Manager, Income Support Policy Branch, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 50.

47 The following information is extracted from from Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [Provisions]*, October 2009, paragraphs 1.12-1.21.

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- All students receiving Youth Allowance or Austudy while undertaking an approved higher education course will receive a student Start-up Scholarship. In 2010, the scholarship will be \$1,127 for each six months of study – a total of \$2,254 for the year. In addition to the student Start-up Scholarship payment, some students receiving student income support will receive a relocation scholarship to assist with the cost of relocating for study. The scholarship will be \$4,000 for a student's first year, and then \$1,000 per year, in subsequent years, up to four years.⁴⁸
 - Merit and equity based scholarships will be exempt to a threshold of \$6,762 per year, and the threshold will be indexed.

3.50 The bill was amended and passed by the Senate on 17 November 2009. On 18 November 2009 the House of Representatives considered the amendments put by the Senate and agreed to the following:

- The inclusion of a Review of impact of student income arrangements in the legislation (the Review). The Review must start by 30 June 2012 and be completed within 3 months. A report of the Review must be tabled in Parliament.
- That in terms of the remaining workforce participation criteria, applicants will be required to work full-time, *on average* 30 hours per week, instead of working full-time, *at least* 30 hours per week.

3.51 On 24 November 2009, the Senate considered further amendments to the bill proposed by the Government. Those amendments were not accepted by the Senate. The Government has introduced an amended bill (Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No. 2]) into the House of Representatives encompassing the original amendments made by the Senate,

48 The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No. 2] provides that in 2010 the amount of the Student Start-Up Scholarship will be \$717 for each six months of study. See Schedule 2, Part 1, Item 4 of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No. 2] which inserts a new section 592H (Amount of student start-up scholarship payment) into the *Social Security Act 1991*.

as well as the proposed amendments by the Government which were rejected by the Senate. Both bills are still before the Parliament.⁴⁹

Austudy

3.52 A student may be eligible for Austudy if they are aged 25 or over and are:

- studying an approved full-time course at an approved institution, or
- undertaking a full-time Australian Apprenticeship.

3.53 Full-time secondary education courses, graduate courses, undergraduate courses, and some Masters, diplomas, and TAFE courses are approved for Austudy. Unlike Youth Allowance, there is no independence test for Austudy. If a person qualifies for Austudy they are considered independent. This means the parental means test does not apply.⁵⁰ The maximum rate of payment for Austudy is \$371.40 per fortnight for a single person.⁵¹

ABSTUDY

3.54 A student may be eligible for ABSTUDY if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, or identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and:

- were aged 14 years or more on 1 January and are studying at primary school, or
- are doing secondary school studies, or
- are studying full-time or part-time at a TAFE, university or tertiary institution, or

49 For more information on the progress of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 see:
<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query%3DId%3A%22legislation%2Fbillhome%2Fr4193%22>, accessed 11 December 2009. For more information on the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No. 2] see:

http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;db=;group=:holdingType=:id=:orderBy=priority,title;page=:query=Dataset%3AbillsCurBef%20SearchCategory_Phrase%3A%22bills%20and%20legislation%22%20Dataset_Phrase%3A%22billhome%22%20Decade%3A%222000s%22%20Year%3A%222009%22%20Month%3A%2211%22%20Day%3A%2225%22;querytype=:rec=7;resCount=, accessed 11 December 2009.

50 See Centrelink Website, *Austudy: Eligibility*. Available at:
http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/austudy_eligible.htm, accessed 25 November 2009.

51 DEEWR, *Submission 523*, p. 44. For more information on rates of Austudy see Centrelink, *Education Payment Rates: Austudy, ABSTUDY, Crisis Payment, Pensioner Education Supplement, Assistance for Isolated Children*, 20 September - 31 December 2009. Available at [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co033_0909/\\$file/co033_0909en.pdf](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co033_0909/$file/co033_0909en.pdf), accessed 25 November 2009.

- are undertaking a full-time Australian Apprenticeship, or
- are doing a distance education or correspondence course, or
- are studying for a Masters or Doctorate degree.⁵²

3.55 ABSTUDY recipients living away from home may receive and away from home rate payment that is aligned with the Youth Allowance rates for students under 21 years of age. Students aged 21 years and over, living away from home to study, can receive a maximum ABSTUDY Living Allowance of \$453.30 per fortnight.⁵³

Other income support measures

3.56 As part of the proposed reforms to income support for students, the Australian Government has also announced two scholarships:

- the Student Start-Up Scholarship will be available to all students receiving income support through Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY. The Student Start-Up Scholarship will be valued at \$2,254.⁵⁴
- the Relocation Scholarship will be available to students receiving Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY who are required to move away from home. The Relocation Scholarships are valued at \$4,000 in the first year of study, and \$1,000 in the subsequent years.

3.57 The Student Start-Up Scholarship and Relocation Scholarship replace the current Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship and the Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship respectively.⁵⁵

3.58 Students receiving Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY may also be entitled to a range of other payments, including:

- Rent Assistance of a maximum of \$111.20 per fortnight for a single person living alone or \$74.13 for a single person in shared accommodation.⁵⁶

52 See Centrelink Website, *ABSTUDY: Eligibility*. Available at: http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/abstudy_eligible.htm, accessed 11 December 2009.

53 DEEWR, *Submission 523*, p. 44. For information on rates of ABSTUDY see Centrelink, *Education Payment Rates: Austudy, ABSTUDY, Crisis Payment, Pensioner Education Supplement, Assistance for Isolated Children*, 20 September - 31 December 2009. Available at [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co033_0909/\\$file/co033_0909en.pdf](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/co033_0909/$file/co033_0909en.pdf), accessed 25 November 2009.

54 The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No. 2] provides that in 2010 the amount of the Student Start-Up Scholarship will be \$717 for each six months of study. See Schedule 2, Part 1, Item 4 of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [No. 2] which inserts a new section 592H (Amount of student start-up scholarship payment) into the *Social Security Act 1991*.

55 DEEWR, *Submission 523*, p. 20.

- Fares Allowance for tertiary students who live away from home for reimbursement of the cost of the cheapest practicable form of public transport to cover the cost of travelling to educational institution at the start of the course and travelling home once studies have finished for the year. Students may also be entitled to a return trip home during the year.⁵⁷

3.59 The Department's submission also includes information about the Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) which provides assistance to eligible Australian Apprentices in their first three years of an Australian Apprenticeship, if they have to move away from their parent's or guardian's home in order to take up or remain in an Australian Apprenticeship or to receive essential supplementary on-the-job training with another employer. Australian Apprentices eligible to receive the allowance receive \$77.17 a week for up to 12 months, \$38.59 a week for a further 12 months and \$25 a week for a third 12 months.⁵⁸

Discussion on the adequacy of income support available to students

3.60 The committee heard evidence and received submissions that the cost of students living away from home for study is so expensive, that many rural and regional students are unable to afford to relocate without some form of financial assistance, usually independent Youth Allowance. The following is an example outlining the importance of Youth Allowance to a student who has relocated for tertiary study:

I write to you from the perspective of student, from a Rural area, who had no choice but to leave home and study in a major centre university. At present I am in my 3rd Year of a Dental Degree at Griffith University and I receive Independent Youth Allowance. Initially I qualified for Dependent YA, when I started my degree. After great financial struggles...I am now in receipt of Independent YA. With absolute honesty I can say I would not be at University if I did not have the support of Independent YA. I also qualify for the Commonwealth [Accommodation] Scholarship. Even with these 2

56 DEEWR, *Submission 523*, p. 44.

57 Fares allowance for one return trip to the educational institution may also be available to external students who are required to attend a compulsory residential component of their course. See Centrelink, *Austudy Brochure*, p. 13, information accurate as of July 2009, available at [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/st003_0907/\\$file/st003_0907en.pdf](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/st003_0907/$file/st003_0907en.pdf), accessed 25 November 2009 and Centrelink, *Youth Allowance Brochure*, p. 15, information accurate as of June 2009, available at [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/st002_0906/\\$file/st002_0906en.pdf](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/filestores/st002_0906/$file/st002_0906en.pdf), accessed 25 November 2009. Different arrangements are in place for fares allowance for ABSTUDY recipients.

58 *Submission 523*, p. 43. See also TAFE Directors Australia, *Submission 527*, p. 5 which notes that in most jurisdictions apprentices receive assistance towards their costs for accommodation. See also Western Australian Government, *Submission 528*, p. 2 which describes the Travel and Accommodation Allowance that state has available for apprentices.

support mechanisms life is no easy street! With a part time job, that folded earlier this year with [Global Financial Crisis], I manage.⁵⁹

3.61 These are not costs that are faced by students in metropolitan areas who can continue to live at home while attending tertiary studies. On this point, the committee again highlights the evidence of Mr Kent Spangenberg, Principal of Loxton High School, which it referred to in the report on the bill, which illustrates this inequity:

...if you look at the inequity between two families on the same income, - one in a metropolitan area and one in a rural area - the rural family, by the mere fact that they are living rural, has to find some significant additional financial income support or whatever for their child to access the same quality of tertiary education as an urban family. There has to be a baseline there or a benchmark around where that increased cost for accessing tertiary education must be addressed in any sort of solution. It does not matter whether you are earning \$50,000 or \$70,000 in an urban or a rural setting, the rural person has to find additional moneys to have their child study in Adelaide.⁶⁰

3.62 As the committee stated in its report on the bill, it does not believe it is appropriate that a welfare measure, such as Youth Allowance has become the principal means of addressing the inequity between rural and regional, and metropolitan students.

3.63 The committee must point out that receipt of Youth Allowance, even at the maximum rate, does not cover students living costs. Students are supplementing Youth Allowance with part-time work and parental assistance.⁶¹

3.64 In addition, while representatives of the Department referred to students receiving rent assistance of \$111.20 throughout the hearing, the committee notes that this is a maximum amount, and also notes the circumstances in which rent assistance will be reduced:

...if they are a sharer - if they are living in a share house. Like most social security payments, there are different rates depending on your living circumstances, so, if you are living by yourself, the amount you get might be higher than if you are living in a share household, on the basis that you have the ability to split the cost of the rent amongst the renters. If you have private income, or I guess if you are at a point with your parental income, where all of your youth allowance has been withdrawn under the income

59 Name Withheld, *Submission 338*, p. 1. See also Name Withheld, *Submission 84*, p. 1, Ms Therese Francis, *Submission 158*, p. 1 and Ms Ashlinn Mason, *Submission 171*, p. 1.

60 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 70.

61 See for example Name Withheld, *Submission 7*, p. 1, Name Withheld, *Submission 16*, p. 2, Mr Paul Haarburger, *Submission 392*, p. 1, Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA, *Submission 443*, p. 5, and Mr Daryl Headlam, *Submission 636*, p. 1. See also Naomi Godden, with The Centre for Rural Social Research and Monash University Department of Social Work, *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education*, 2007, p. 92.

test and all that is left is your rent assistance, as the parental income goes up, what is left of your rent assistance will slowly fade out. Rent assistance is actually the last bit of your payment to be removed.⁶²

3.65 The committee was also informed of the inadequacy of ABSTUDY:

That income cap is really quite problematic for a number of students. Often Indigenous students come from rather large families, and so while the dollar amount might seem adequate in some ways it has to be spread across an awful lot of kids. It is a problem. In fact anecdotally the information is that Abstudy is hardly worth dealing with. A lot of people stay away from it; it is just too hard. I do not have any strong figures about that but clearly there is a very strong perception amongst our Indigenous academics that work with us that the changes to Abstudy which were made a number of years ago have impacted quite negatively upon achieving the goal of supporting Indigenous students, particularly in the higher education space.⁶³

3.66 Submissions also commented that the travel subsidies on offer were inadequate. For example, one submission stated that travel subsidies twice a year were not 'worth the trouble/effort to apply for'.⁶⁴ TAFE Directors Australia stated that the travel and accommodation allowances for apprentices were inadequate:

In most jurisdictions apprentices are given some assistance towards their costs but this is not sufficient to cover the costs of accommodation. There are several reports of young apprentices living in and out of their cars while on block study away from home. For part time students other than apprentices, there is no assistance available.⁶⁵

3.67 The committee notes that even prior to the announcement of the proposed changes to Youth Allowance in the Budget, the eligibility criteria for Youth Allowance were considered a barrier for rural and regional students in accessing tertiary education. The *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education* report described the overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards Youth Allowance of participants in that study:

Although payments are helpful, the eligibility criteria are far too strict, and Youth Allowance does not address the needs of regional Australians, creating a barrier to tertiary education. Participants feel unsupported, ignored, and believe tertiary education is inaccessible for middle-income regional families.

...

62 Ms Robyn Shannon, Branch Manager, Income Support Policy Branch, DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, pp 64-65.

63 Pro-Vice-Chancellor Don Zoellner, Vocational Education and Training, Charles Darwin University, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 51.

64 Ms Julie Fibbins, *Submission 36*, p.1.

65 *Submission 527*, p. 5. See also Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Submission 264*, p. 4, and Remote Area Planning and Development Board, *Submission 695*, p.11.

If young people are 'Dependent' Youth Allowance eligibility is assessed against their parents' assets and income. Universally, participants believe the income and assets thresholds are very low and unrealistic, as middle-income parents above the threshold cannot provide \$10-15,000 a year to each child studying away from home...The Dependence criteria make income support inaccessible for many regional families, forcing families to meet the independence criteria.

...

To meet the [fixed amount in 18 months criterion] regional young people defer their studies for one to two years to work...or work intensively during semester and university holidays. Participants identify many issues with the Independence criteria...all participants express concern that if young people defer, there is an increased likelihood they may not return to tertiary education...Further, the 18-month period is too long, as most young people who defer are not eligible for Youth Allowance until May of their first year of study, causing significant financial burden, particularly with high start-up expenses. Additionally, the income amount is too high, specifically for young people working during full-time study. Some students have failed university while working to cover living costs and meet the criteria. Finally, many regional young people cannot find consistent, well-paid work to earn the target amount, particularly in isolated and drought-affected communities. With unnecessarily complex requirements, the Independence Criteria is a significant barrier for regional access to tertiary education.⁶⁶

3.68 The committee has discussed at length in its report on the bill the concerns that it has in relation to the proposed changes to Youth Allowance and the impact that these changes would have on rural and regional students.⁶⁷ Those concerns centre around:

- The availability of work in rural and regional areas to meet the 30 hours a week for 18 months criterion.
- The impact of a two year deferral on a student's likelihood of commencing tertiary study.
- The level of the parental thresholds and whether students would be able to get an equivalent amount of support compared with if they received Independent Youth Allowance.
- The nature and perceptions in relation to students being 'dependent' on their parents income.
- The lack of any adjustment being made to the Family Assets Test.

66 Naomi Godden, with the Centre for Rural Social Research and Monash University Department of Social Work, *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education*, November 2007, p. 11.

67 Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [Provisions]*, October 2009, Chapter 3.

- The linking of access to the Student Start-up and Relocation Scholarships to eligibility for Youth Allowance.
- The replacement of the Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships with the Relocation Allowance.

3.69 The committee does not intend to further expand on these issues in any details and refers readers to the discussion of these points in its report on the bill.

3.70 In its report on the bill the committee indicated it would use its deliberations for this inquiry to explore other options to minimise the inequity for rural and regional students wanting to access tertiary educational opportunities.

A Tertiary Access Allowance

3.71 The committee was informed of a number of different models of 'Tertiary Access Allowance'. Such an allowance has been recommended in the *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education* report:

The Tertiary Access Allowance, a one-off payment for all regional young people when they begin tertiary education, would support regional young people in covering the start-up costs to relocate from their home (including furniture, travel and a computer), costs which are estimated at \$6,000.⁶⁸

3.72 The ICPA has also lobbied for a Tertiary Access Allowance:

The Tertiary Access Allowance advocated by ICPA (Aust) is to enable the student to access their place of study. Access would include securing a place of accommodation, assisting with relocation expenses, travel and other costs associated with leaving home to study. This allowance should ideally:

- Be an annual payment for the duration of the student's full time course on proof of initial enrolment.
- Be a minimum of \$6000 per year (indexed to [the Consumer Price Index]).
- Not be classed as income and hence not jeopardise the student's eligibility for existing support payments such as Youth Allowance.
- Be a non means tested allowance due to current means testing criteria being excessively restrictive.⁶⁹

3.73 The committee explored with witnesses the feasibility of a Tertiary Access Allowance and an appropriate structure for such an allowance. Many witnesses were supportive of the concept of a Tertiary Access Allowance. For example, Mr Gary Downsborough, Principal of Broome Senior High School and Representative of the

68 Naomi Godden, with the Centre for Rural Social Research and Monash University Department of Social Work, *Regional Young People and Youth Allowance: Access to Tertiary Education*, November 2007, p. 120.

69 *Submission 264*, p. 4.

Australian Secondary Principals' Association explained the difference that such an allowance would make to rural and regional students:

...A number of our students I know have not gone away to tertiary education, have stayed in town and have got jobs around town. They were good enough to do university. Their families may earn enough money to send them away, but they saw it as a burden on their families, so they did not go. If there were some incentive or assistance I believe more students from the country would go on to university, and maybe set their aspirations slightly higher or whatever.

If we lived in Perth, our daughter would be attending university. She would probably be living at home. The government already gives us a small amount of money towards accommodation and so on, which is fair enough. But to get some funding to what are called the extra costs of running a second home with the student away from your household would be beneficial. It would help her focus on her work and not have to do extra work. We obviously support her and she does not have to do much extra work. But I know that there are families out there who see it as a burden. They do not have enough money to actually do it.⁷⁰

3.74 Other feedback that the committee received on a proposed Tertiary Access Allowance is that it should not be means tested:

We would argue that any solution that involves a country student allowance based on a definition of rurality should not be means tested. If you have a doctor in the country who has a colleague living in the city and the country doctor says, 'I will have to pay \$30,000 or \$45,000 because I have two or three kids who are studying in the city,' they will compare that with their city counterpart and the decision will be pretty easy - they will go back to the city.⁷¹

3.75 An issue which was drawn to the committee's attention is that it is not only rural and regional students who are required to move away from home to access the tertiary education courses of their choice. The committee received a very small number of submissions relating examples of metropolitan students who would need to relocate to another metropolitan centre, or a regional centre, to access the course of their choice. Below are some examples from these submissions:

We point out that these proposed changes to the Independent eligibility test for Youth Allowance affects not just rural students, but also some city

70 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p.84. See also Mr Dominic Rose, Guild President, Student Guild, University of Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September, p. 46, Ms Barbara Lawrence, Director, Navigate, Central Queensland University, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, pp 26-27, Mr John Clark, Principal, School of Distance Education, Charters Towers, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, pp 44-45, and Ms Rachael Wilkinson, Student, Launceston College, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 56.

71 Mr David Crouch, Member, Renmark High School Governing Council, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 78. See also Mrs Gail McHardy, Executive Officer, Parents Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 62.

students, particularly those who wish to pursue a career in a discipline or course which is not often in their local city, eg Vet Science is not offered in Adelaide.⁷²

My city-based son has been accepted into Charles Sturt University, Bathurst to study a course that is offered at no other university in Australia. Therefore, for him to undertake this degree, he is not able to live at home and will need to bear not only the costs of attending university, but the basic cost of putting a roof over his head. We are a middle income family and we just do not have the means to provide him the necessary funds to do this.⁷³

3.76 The committee believes that these students face the same inequities in access as rural and regional students, and any Tertiary Access Allowance should also cover these types of situations.

3.77 Some witnesses raised with the committee issues in relation to the parameters of a Tertiary Access Allowance, in particular the extent of safeguards on the allowance to ensure that students who received the allowance were 'required' to move away from home to study. Mr John Clark, Principal of the School of Distance Education, Charters Towers noted that a Tertiary Access Allowance would need to be based on the student attending the nearest university offering the course in which they had been accepted, otherwise students would be 'picking and choosing which universities they wanted to go to based on social or family reasons'.⁷⁴

3.78 Ms Jessica Baikie, a student at Launceston College, highlighted that any Tertiary Access Allowance would need to be sufficiently defined so students who lived within a commutable distance of a tertiary institution were not excluded from receiving the allowance because they moved away to attend university because the local university did not offer the course they wished to study.⁷⁵

3.79 Associate Professor Richard Murray, the Head of the School of Medicine and Dentistry at James Cook University, also expressed concern that measures not be developed that provide an incentive for students to leave rural and regional areas:

For instance, we would be very much in favour of greater income support and eligibility for rural origin students going to university where they have to relocate. But we would want to be careful to make sure that that was not sort of an incentive to go to Brisbane. That would, in a sense, undo the things that are important about building regionally based production and

72 Kirby Financial Solutions, *Submission 728*, p. 1.

73 Ms Catherine Priestly, *Submission 605*, p. 1.

74 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 45.

75 *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 56.

intellectual capital that is community-building, nation-building and provides workforce.⁷⁶

3.80 Other options which the committee considered include automatic access to independent Youth Allowance for students required to leave home or a low interest or interest-free HECS-HELP style loan to assist students with living expenses.

Automatic access to independent Youth Allowance for students required to move away from home.

3.81 Many submissions suggested that the eligibility criteria for independent Youth Allowance should be amended to provide that a person was eligible for independent Youth Allowance if they were required to move away from home for their tertiary course. The following are examples taken from submissions of the reasons for such an amendment:

Our kids work harder and do more hours than most adults to try to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance under the current rules. Why make it any harder? The government should be looking at ways to encourage more Rural and Regional students to attend University and put in place ways to support them more readily – not making it more difficult. Any students wishing to attend University away from home should automatically qualify for Youth Allowance – no questions asked.⁷⁷

We have, and will consistently argue that rural and regional students should automatically receive full Youth Allowance because of the additional costs and barriers to accessing and succeeding in higher education. These measures would significantly aggravate the current inequity between rural and city students access and success at tertiary study.⁷⁸

All students from rural and remote Australia who have to relocate for tertiary study should be automatically eligible for the independent rate of Youth Allowance.

Rural and remote students face extreme financial and emotional hardships in their endeavour to access and complete tertiary education. Research suggests that these students are more likely to return to their communities of origin, helping to serve the health needs of rural and remote Australia. In order to build strong rural and remote communities with better health outcomes and access to education, we must ensure that students studying medicine, allied health, nursing, and other vital occupations such as teaching, law and accounting return to rural and remote communities.⁷⁹

76 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 4.

77 Ms Delia Jenkins, *Submission 37*, p. 2.

78 Loxton High School Governing Council, *Submission 446*, p. 4.

79 Rural Health in the Northern Outback, *Submission 559*, p. 20.

3.82 The committee notes that the Victorian Parliamentary Committee in its *Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education* recommended that young people who are required to relocate to undertake tertiary students be eligible to receive Youth Allowance. The Victorian Parliamentary Committee concluded:

...due to the substantially higher cost of living away from home, costs constitute a greater concern for young people from non-metropolitan and interface areas. Many participants from rural Victoria argued that the high cost of study, combined with inadequate financial support, were the most important causes of geographical differences in higher education participation rates.

The Committee believes that a fair and accessible system of student income support is of fundamental importance...The Committee believes that income support payments should be increased to take account of the costs of living and relevant poverty indicators. It is also the Committee's view that all students who are required to relocate to undertake tertiary studies should be eligible to receive Youth Allowance.⁸⁰

3.83 The arguments for automatic access to independent Youth Allowance outlined above centre on addressing the inequity of students being required to relocate to access tertiary education opportunities. As the committee has noted in paragraph 3.62, and in the bills report, the committee does not believe that it is appropriate that students rely on social welfare measures as a means of addressing the inequity in access to tertiary education options.

3.84 The committee's preference is for a measure that is aimed directly at addressing the inequity in access.

Low-interest or interest-free loans

3.85 The committee also discussed with witnesses the possibility of low- interest or interest-free, HECS-HELP style, loans being made available to students as a means of financial assistance. The committee was told how this system operated in other jurisdictions:

In the United Kingdom you are able to access a certain amount of financial assistance from the government that you pay back at zero per cent interest. This system is similar to HECS; however, it is targeted at retaining students by minimising disadvantage. This ensures that people who fall through the cracks in the system can at least access some kind of assistance off their own bat. The maximum anyone can get is close to £8,000 a year with the minimum being about £3½ thousand. This loan system minimises

80 Education and Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education*, July, pp 200-201.

disadvantage and allows students to take responsibility for their own debt. A similar system exists in New Zealand as well...⁸¹

3.86 Witnesses expressed the concern that this option would leave students in debt before they started to work.⁸² Some witnesses also suggested to the committee such a scheme would not appeal to students from low socio-economic backgrounds:

Our concern with that would be that a lot of rural and regional students - particularly low-socioeconomic students - are debt-averse anyway, so I do not think that a HECS system would assist them with overcoming the barrier of incurring a debt. I do not think it would address the issue for low-socioeconomic students to attend university. I think a HECS system would assist some students. Students like me, who do not come from a low-socioeconomic background, would probably be able to spend more time studying rather than working. But I do not think it would be of any assistance for students who are in absolute need.⁸³

3.87 The Bradley Review considered extending the income contingent repayment HECS-HELP scheme as a means of providing additional income support. The Bradley Review concluded:

On balance, while the advantages of extending income support with the use of income contingent loans is conceptually attractive there are currently important questions associated with how this might best, and most equitably, be adopted.

The panel is not drawn to making recommendations on the introduction of a loans supplement scheme or using FEE-HELP as an instrument for income support on the basis of the information available to it at this stage. However, these are matters which would benefit from further consideration and more detailed analysis of their impact on students.⁸⁴

3.88 The committee notes that the Victorian Parliamentary Committee in the *Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education* supports the conclusions of the Bradley Review.⁸⁵

81 Ms Rachael Wilkinson, Student, Launceston College, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 50.

82 See for example Mrs Gail McHardy, Executive Officer, Parents Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 63 and Mrs Helen Walton, Publicity Officer, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2009, p. 7.

83 Ms Michaela Edwards, President, Deakin University Student Association, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 42.

84 Bradley Review, December 2008, p. 65.

85 Education and Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education*, July, p. 197.

Committee View

Tertiary Access Allowance

3.89 One of the most significant stories in relation to the barriers for rural and regional students accessing tertiary education opportunities was related to the committee during the course of its hearings for this inquiry:

With regard to strategies to overcome some of the cost burdens of going to university, again, the majority of property owners will buy a house in Townsville and their child will stay there and then rent out the other rooms to get additional income to support them at university.

The strategy of students whose parents are average wage earners, or are basically wage earners, is scholarships. If they do not get a scholarship then their third option is a gap year. Anecdotally, from talking to a deputy principal who has been at the school for a while, the take-up rate once students start gap-year employment is then diminished probably by another 50 per cent. Those students are usually lost to full-time employment because their pathways and life choice change is around that.

As I have said, currently, out of our cohort of about 100, we probably have 20 students who are eagerly awaiting scholarship notifications. Probably 10 of those students have not even told their parents they have applied for university, because they know there is no affordable way that they can do it. Again, from talking to a deputy, anecdotally a lot of students do that; they just apply. If they get a scholarship they will tell their parents; if they do not get a scholarship, no-one knows anything about it.⁸⁶

3.90 It is the committee's strong view that students should not be forced to lessen or stifle their ambitions for a tertiary education because of financial barriers to accessing educational opportunities. The limited options for tertiary education in rural and regional areas mean that many students need to relocate to metropolitan or other regional centres in order to access tertiary education courses. This relocation comes at great financial cost to the students and their families. Until now, independent Youth Allowance has provided a means by which students could, to some extent, lessen the financial barrier that might otherwise prevent them from accessing tertiary education.

3.91 The potential loss of the fixed amount in 18 months criteria as a means of establishing eligibility for independent Youth Allowance has brought into sharp focus the fact that there are no specific means in current government policy through which to address the inequity in access that exists between rural and regional, and metropolitan students.

3.92 The committee notes that the proposed changes to the workforce participation criteria for independent Youth Allowance will particularly impact on middle income

86 Mr Jeffrey Capell, Acting Principal, Ayr State High School, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 64.

families in rural and regional areas. These are families whose household income means that students will not be entitled to the full rate of dependent Youth Allowance, yet the families do not have the financial resources to fully support a child while they are living away from home to attend a tertiary institution.

3.93 The committee is therefore strongly recommending that the government take action to address this inequity. The committee has considered a number of options for assistance that would be appropriate. As the committee has indicated, this is an equity and access matter, not a social welfare issue. The committee therefore recommends that the Australian Government introduce a Tertiary Access Allowance for students who are required to move away from home to access tertiary education. The committee believes that the Tertiary Access Allowance should be equivalent in value to the rate of independent Youth Allowance as the committee has heard that this amount, while not covering all a student's cost, does contribute in a substantial manner to those costs.

Recommendation 4

3.94 The committee strongly recommends that the Australian Government introduce a Tertiary Access Allowance for students who are required to move away from home to access tertiary education.

3.95 The committee recommends that a Tertiary Access Allowance be structured in the following way:

- Be a total annual amount of \$10,000, indexed to the Consumer Price Index.
- Not be linked to a student's eligibility for any other income support payment.
- Be available to any student required to move away from home to access the tertiary course of their choice.
- Not be subject to a parental means or assets test.

3.96 As noted above the total amount for the Tertiary Access Allowance would be \$10,000 a year. The Tertiary Access Allowance would be paid in instalments of \$5,000 at the beginning of the year, \$2,500 at the end of semester 1 and \$2,500 at the end of semester 2. Payment of the Tertiary Access Allowance would be conditional on the tertiary institution certifying that a student is making satisfactory progress in their course. For the majority of students, this requirement of 'satisfactory progress' would be met by demonstrating that they had passed their courses. The committee recognises that for a small number of students, grades may not be the best way in which to demonstrate 'satisfactory progress', and so the committee believes that a student can also meet this requirement if they satisfy their institution that they have applied themselves to their studies through other means such as attendance, completion of assignments and participation in practical components. The committee believes that linking the Tertiary Access Allowance to a requirement that students continue to make satisfactory progress in their studies will provide an important check in the system.

3.97 In terms of the condition that a student be 'required' to move away from home, the committee recommends that a student would not qualify for the Tertiary Access Allowance where an equivalent course to the one which the student wishes to enrol in is available at a tertiary institution within 90 minutes travel by public transport from the student's home. The committee believes that where an equivalent course is available to the student within 90 minutes of travel by public transport from the student's home, then the Tertiary Access Allowance should not be used to fund the student's choice to relocate.

3.98 The committee notes that it has previously recommended that the fixed amount in 18 months criteria for independent Youth Allowance be retained for students required to move away from home.⁸⁷ That recommendation was made in order to give the committee time to consider the merits of a Tertiary Access Allowance in the course of this inquiry. The committee considers that, in the event that the Government does implement a Tertiary Access Allowance in the terms set out in this report, it will not be necessary to retain the fixed amount in 18 months criteria for independent Youth Allowance.

3.99 The amount of \$10,000 a year provides an approximately equivalent amount of support to students as the independent rate of Youth Allowance, which the committee understands is sufficient in most cases to contribute towards addressing the inequity for rural and regional students in accessing tertiary education opportunities. The committee recognises that \$10,000 a year will not cover all a student's costs associated with relocation. The committee has heard that students receiving independent Youth Allowance also support themselves through part-time work, and in some instances supplementary financial assistance from parents. The committee does not intend that the Tertiary Access Allowance will replace these forms of assistance to students. The committee also notes that some students may also be entitled to dependent Youth Allowance, which will be of benefit to those students from families with low incomes. The committee believes that this is the proper context for Youth Allowance – as a social welfare measure for financially disadvantaged students.

3.100 In the absence of a Tertiary Access Allowance along the lines set out in this report being put in place, the committee maintains the position that the fixed amount in 18 months criteria for independent Youth Allowance should be retained.

Addressing the shortage of accommodation

3.101 As the committee heard in the course of this inquiry, it is not only the cost of relocation that students struggle with, it is also the difficulty in accessing suitable and affordable accommodation close to their tertiary studies that is an issue for students.

87 Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 [Provisions]*, October 2009, p. 43, Recommendation 1.

3.102 The committee notes the comments from universities with regards to the difficulties in accessing capital funds in order to establish more student accommodation on-campus.

Recommendation 5

3.103 The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate the establishment of a capital works program to assist tertiary institutions to increase the stock of affordable housing for students.

Support for students on clinical placements or block release

3.104 An important issue raised during the course of this inquiry was the financial difficulties that students face in covering expenses while they are on clinical placement or block release. The committee believes that this is an issue requiring further investigation with a view to implementing a form of temporary income support for students while they undertake these important components of their course. The committee does not envisage that this temporary form of support will cover all a student's expenses while they are on placement or block release but the committee does believe that some level of support is essential.

Recommendation 6

3.105 The committee therefore recommends that the Australian Government investigate the implementation of a form of temporary income support for students while they are on clinical placements or block release.

Family and community impacts

3.106 The committee heard that there are significant family and community impacts associated with students relocating away from home to attend tertiary studies. Some of these impacts are financial and some are social. These impacts are discussed in this section of the report.

Financial impacts on family and community

3.107 Submissions noted that plans for a student to leave home to study were often made a number of years before the student graduated high school and factored into the family budget. For example, Ms Lynne Patten-Malouf set out for the committee the planning and expense which went into her daughter's decision to do medicine:

Financial planning for the families of country students, who intend to study away from home at TAFE or university, is not done overnight. Our family planning for Saada (her desire to become a doctor) started in her year 10, with private school tuition fees, subject selection, extra tuition...and final Med Entry [Undergraduate Medical and Health Sciences Admission Test] course in year 12, all at added expense. It has cost us financially for her to even get into Monash medicine, let alone the cost of her studying in Melbourne...We also must consider our son Jakob who is also likely to go

to university and be there at the same time as Saada. Our family will have 2 students living away with associated costs.⁸⁸

3.108 It was also pointed out to the committee that money spent supporting a student towards and through tertiary studies, is money that is diverted away from local communities. For example, in its submission the South West Local Learning and Employment Network included notes from a community forum outlining the impact on the local economy of families supporting students:

[One participant spoke] on the amount of assistance required for students studying away from home and the impact on the local economy. He calculated that for about 1000 local students leaving home to study in the City, @ \$20,000 p.a., equates to \$20M out of the regional economy. Understanding the impacts of taking \$20M out of the local economy cannot be underestimated.⁸⁹

Social impacts on students and their families

3.109 In addition to the financial costs on a family and communities, submissions and evidence also stressed the emotional toll that moving away from home and their family and social support mechanisms could have on a student:

Regional students when they travel to the universities in the cities suffer cultural and family displacement. They are travelling hundreds of kilometres to attend university, thereby removing their source of financial and emotional support. It is a major disincentive with no family around and no family support, especially when things go wrong, which they invariably do at that age.⁹⁰

3.110 In this context, the committee notes the importance of support services for students. As Deakin University explained in its submission, this support comes at a cost to the institution:

Of the students studying at Deakin from rural and regional areas, a staggering 63% are the first in their family to study at university. School leavers and others from rural and regional areas embarking on university study for the first time require appropriate support. Deakin's experience is that with [the] right support to engage students early in their studies, this group goes on to achieve at the same level as other students. Residential

88 *Submission 136*, p. 1.

89 *Submission 507*, Attachment, p. 6. See also Ms Robin Muller, *Submission 713*, p. 2, who outlined the items that she believed her family would not be spending on in the local community while her son is at university including, vehicle replacement, participation in social events and membership of clubs and recreational activities.

90 Ms Merry Dickins, Parent Representative, Mount Gambier High School Governing Council, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 69. See also Dr Peter Havel, Principal, Albany Senior High School, *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 2.

accommodation can provide a supportive environment that helps students become engaged in their study.⁹¹

3.111 RMIT University explained in its submission the package of measures it has to support students once they are enrolled which include an online learning lab, English language elective courses for students who may experience difficulty with academic language and Peer Assisted Learning that supports the transition into higher education and improve retention and success of rural and regional students.⁹²

3.112 As indicated in paragraph 3.41, the cost of travel home often meant students did not get to return home as often as they might like to see family and friends. Another reason that students were unable to return home was that they had obtained work in the place that they were studying and were unable to take time off to return home.⁹³

Community impacts

3.113 One of the key community issues highlighted throughout this inquiry, was the importance of providing rural and regional students with access to tertiary education opportunities, so that they would return to the community to work. For example, Ms Anna-Jane Gordon of Rural Health in the Northern Outback (RHINO) of James Cook University told the committee of RHINO's survey results regarding the numbers of students wishes to return to practice in regional areas once they had graduated:

...an online survey that was distributed to approximately 1,500 students studying medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, pharmacy, nursing, and sports and exercise science. We had 232 surveys completed. According to the rural and remote and metropolitan area classification of postcodes for secondary schooling, 11 per cent of the respondents were from an urban area, 46 per cent were from a regional area, 30 per cent from a rural area and 11 per cent were from a remote location. Our research results have come from people who have faced the barriers to university education and 96 per cent of them have reported that they would like to return to a regional, rural and remote area upon graduation.⁹⁴

3.114 The committee also notes the work of the 2008 Graduate Pathways Study, referred to in University Australia's submission, supporting the submissions that the committee received in relation to the likelihood of rural and regional students to return

91 *Submission 691*, p. 5.

92 *Submission 546*, p. 3.

93 Ms Linda Phillips, *Submission 29*, p. 1.

94 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 2. See also Ms Kathy Maslin, *Submission 276*, p. 1, Ms Anne and Mr Steve Longworth, *Submission 377*, p. 1, Mr Grant and Ms Carol Ballam, *Submission 394*, p. 1 and Ms Melanie Williams, *Submission 421*, p. 1.

to regional areas following graduation.⁹⁵ The 2008 Graduate Pathways Study, commissioned by the Department, found:

By the fifth year following graduation, the majority of those who grew up in a remote area of the country are living in one of Australia's state or territory capital cities. Most of those who were from metropolitan areas were also living in capital cities. However, among those who grew up in regional towns, less than half were living in a capital city by the fifth year after graduation.⁹⁶

3.115 The committee also received some submissions from organisations outlining their experiences with students returning to regional areas following graduation. For example, Gippsland Lakes Community Health told the committee:

...we have been able to successfully recruit a podiatrist, dietician, IT worker, health promotion and nursing staff over the past two years – all who came from various regional areas and have moved back to the country as new or recent graduates.⁹⁷

3.116 The committee also notes that while the 2008 Graduate Pathways Study did show that less than half of the students who grew up in regional towns were living in a capital city five years after graduations, this still means that a number of graduates did not return to rural and regional areas following graduation. For this reason, the committee also recognises that a number of submissions and witnesses felt that if educational opportunities were not available to students in the regional where they lived, and they were required to move away from home to study, then students might disengage or disconnect from their community and be less likely to return to work in the area once they have completed their studies. For example, Mr Paul Barnett of the University of Tasmania told the committee:

One of the things that we really want to focus on is the need to support and develop regional communities - some of the solutions to access to higher education that might involve, say, students from the north-west coast in Tasmania all getting places in Hobart do not actually address those issues within the communities because many students who move away from home do not return to those communities. We are really keen to focus on links

95 *Submission 384*, p. 3.

96 Australian Council for Educational Research, Report for the Department of Education, Training and Employment, *2008 Graduate Pathways Survey: Graduates' education and employment outcomes five years after completion of a bachelor degree at an Australian university*, April 2009, p. 95. Available at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/Documents/2008%20Graduate%20Pathways%20Survey.pdf>, accessed 1 December 2009.

97 *Submission 681*, p. 2. See also Leslie Tilbrook, Career Adviser, St Philips College Alice Springs, *Submission 615*, p. 2.

back into those communities - work placements, practicum placements and whatever else within our programs helps to maintain that connection.⁹⁸

3.117 As discussed in Chapter 2, the committee was also told of the community impact of 'the churn of professionals' as families relocated from rural and regional areas to metropolitan areas to enable students to access education opportunities. In particular, this situation breaks the connection that students have with the community and means that they are less likely to return to the area following completion of secondary studies:

We know we have a churn of professionals in regional communities. People come for a short time and then they will leave or because their children need education they will go back to the city, or we have a one-way drain with youngest and brightest people because they cannot come back. This is a constant problem in our communities.⁹⁹

Committee view

3.118 The committee appreciates the immense financial and social cost that students moving away from home to pursue tertiary education options places on students, their families and their communities.

3.119 The committee is of the view that it is not always going to be possible for students to remain at home while pursuing tertiary education. However, the committee has significant concerns that in order for students to access tertiary education opportunities, families are considering relocation to metropolitan areas not only for the students, but for the whole family. As Mrs Jane Fuchsbichler of the WA Farmers Federation explained to the committee, this is a matter that impacts on the vibrancy and sustainability of the whole community:

Also, from an education point of view, we are farmers, but as farmers we want a vibrant community. The educational opportunities are not there for our accountants - we have not got an accountant in Bruce Rock anymore; we are a bit short of bank managers as well - or for all of those people. I think we will lose the physiotherapist soon, because the children are just getting to the stage where they will need to go away. If it is not possible to have equal opportunity in education because of where we are located, we lose the vibrancy of having other people in our communities. It is not just about the farmers; it is about everybody in our community.¹⁰⁰

98 *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 85. See also Ms Margaret Crisp, Chief Executive Officer, North East Local Learning and Employment Network, *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 24 and Ms Gail McHardy, Executive Officer, Parents Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 68.

99 Dr Ruth Schubert, General Manager, TAFE SA Regional, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 19. See also Ms Genevieve and Mr Michael Wells, *Submission 646*, p. 2.

100 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 74.

3.120 To this extent, the committee believes that the financial assistance offered by a Tertiary Access Allowance will go a long way to assisting families to meet the financial costs of a student moving away from home to access tertiary education, and therefore allowing families to reconsider the need to relocate from a regional area. Retaining families in rural and regional areas, and maintaining students' links to these areas through their families, will ultimately benefit rural and regional communities.

Chapter 4

Delivery of tertiary educational opportunities by regional institutions

The significant contribution of universities with campuses in regional Australia is undeniable. They play a crucial role in regional economic growth and development and the social and cultural life of their communities. As such, their impacts often extend far beyond traditional educational and research activities. They are often central to regional economic and labour force benefits, including retaining graduates and professionals in the regions, generating diverse employment opportunities, and promoting regional research and investment.¹

Introduction

4.1 This chapter of the report explores two challenges faced by regional institutions: the funding of regional institutions and attracting students to study at these institutions.

4.2 The Review of Australian Higher Education (the Bradley Review) highlighted the importance of regional universities to regional communities, and put forward a plan for how universities could better provide for the communities they service:

Australia needs a sustainable system of higher education provision in regional and remote areas. Provision needs to be flexible and innovative. It must anticipate and respond rapidly to local needs. Providers in regional and remote areas need to be encouraged and supported to build upon partnerships with local communities, providers in other sectors of education, businesses and industry. Such arrangements will involve institutional cross-collaboration and partnerships, including sharing the use of facilities and resources.²

4.3 Submissions and evidence to the inquiry also highlighted the fundamental role that universities play in the sustainability of regional communities, as the University of New England explained in its submission:

In addition to the academic importance of regional universities, their contribution to regional communities in respect to economic and socio-cultural inputs cannot be underestimated. Aside from the obvious, immediate effects of economic contribution by a major employer, a strong regional university is also fundamental to encouraging young people to remain in their local community and infusing their professional skills into

1 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), *Submission 523*, p. 32.

2 Professor Denise Bradley et al, *Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley Review), December 2008, p. 111.

the community. There is a real and strong connection between vibrant rural and regional communities and the presence of a local university.³

4.4 Professor Paul Thomas, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of the Sunshine Coast, explained to the committee the steps that university had taken to retain graduates in regional areas:

We as a university have got to do something about promoting job generation. We do that by having built an innovation centre and having created 50 new companies and over 500 jobs in which students can gain experience when they are undertaking a degree. They can get jobs in them and can even be given help in starting up their own companies in the region. That is a vital part of us not just educating students but keeping them in the region once they have [graduated].⁴

4.5 However, the committee heard evidence and received submissions from a number of institutions which were either based in regional areas or have regional campuses, that the biggest challenge they faced is the cost of providing courses due to economies of scale and distance.⁵

4.6 The other challenge that regional institutions face is attracting students to study at those institutions. A recurring theme through the inquiry were students and their families stating that, where there was a local regional university or TAFE, students were still required to move away from home because that local institution offered only limited courses and did not offer the course that the student wished to study.⁶

4.7 The first section of the report discusses government measures for funding of regional universities. The second section of the report looks at the issue of attracting students to study at regional institutions, and discusses ways in which regional institutions might expand course offerings and accessibility to courses for students.

Funding for regional universities

4.8 As part of the 'Transforming Australia's Higher Education System' reform package announced in May 2009 the Government announced changes to funding for higher education providers. Those changes included the introduction of funding compacts between the Australian Government and universities, a move to student-

3 *Submission 558*, p. 6.

4 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 47. See also Southern Cross University, *Submission 244*, pp 4-5.

5 See for example La Trobe University, *Submission 119*, p. 7, Edith Cowan University, *Submission 430*, p.1 and Deakin University, *Submission 691*, p. 5.

6 See for example, Ms Cathy Rasmussen, *Submission 347*, p.1, Ms Krystal Thompson, *Submission 371*, p. 1 and Ms Lynda Gerrard, *Submission 496*, p. 1.

demand driven funding, and a review of the current system of regional loading payments to universities.

Funding Compacts and student-demand driven funding

4.9 The Australian Government's announcement of the reform package for higher education describes the role of the 'mission-based funding compacts' between the Government and individual universities:

...mission-based compacts [will] outline the relationship between the Commonwealth and each university...the Australian Government will work in partnership with universities but define clear and consistent targets for improvement and reform which will trigger reward payments.

Compacts will be in two parts, one covering teaching and learning and the other covering research. The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research will be responsible for the research elements and the Minister for Education will be responsible for the teaching and learning elements.

...

Compacts will facilitate alignment of institutional activity with national priorities. They will also be used to help set performance targets for each institution in relation to quality, attainment and participation by students from under-represented groups.⁷

4.10 Professor Arshad Omari, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Edith Cowan University, told the committee that, at present, the very nature of the compacts was unclear:

The idea is that we will negotiate with the Commonwealth government... on performance targets with respect to teaching and research. What those performance targets will be is somewhat unclear at the moment and how they will actually be phrased is a little bit unclear at the moment. We know that the performance targets are aimed at the low socioeconomic, rural and isolated - those in the social inclusion agenda - but it is not clear whether these are top-up rewards for achieving targets or real targets where there are penalties for not achieving them. Parallel to that we have been told that we will get funded for every student that turns up to our university. How these negotiations will pan out is still a bit unclear. Every time I have been to a meeting on compacts they have not been that clear with respect to what the reality of one of these negotiations or documents will look like.⁸

4.11 The committee also notes the concerns of Professor Paul Thomas, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of the Sunshine Coast, that the importance

7 Australian Government, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, May 2009, p. 47. Available at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransformingAustraliasHESystem.aspx>, accessed 27 November 2009.

8 *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 90.

of regional universities to the regional community might not be taken into account in the development of compacts:

At the moment, we are beginning discussions with the Commonwealth about the nature of compacts and the [manner] in which they will circumscribe what individual universities do and how they will be funded against their missions and their key performance indicators. An interesting one has been downplayed in the Bradley report with respect to the economic impact of a university serving regional and rural students. Bradley has said that there should really be a two-pronged approach to the definition of 'compacts', one with respect to teaching and one with respect to research, which none of us would have any problems with. Those are the core areas of what universities are expected to address. Where they have underplayed universities in regions is in the fact that we have other roles to do with serving the community - contributing to regional advancement, for example, and regional economic development. If we sat at our university and simply taught students and encouraged them to conduct research, the best of them would still leave the region, because there are no jobs.⁹

4.12 The University of New England (UNE), however, described in its submission the potential of the funding compacts:

...UNE supports the introduction of mission-based compacts. The University trusts that a UNE Compact will allow us to negotiate on special regional requirements, specific targets, and community engagement and social inclusion programs that require Government support. UNE expects to introduce and expand upon existing programs and projects, within the framework of the Compact that will enable the university to work more intensively with its regional communities to raise aspirations for higher education, especially among low [socioeconomic status] and Aboriginal young people, who currently are at risk of not completing secondary school.¹⁰

4.13 Another aspect of the Government's proposed reforms to university funding is to move from a system where universities had a cap on the number of places for which they could receive funding to a system where universities are funded for places based on student demand. According to the Department's submission the move to a 'student-centred' funding system will provide an incentive for institutions to increase enrolments and provide more opportunities for students to pursue a higher education qualifications:

Given the current comparatively low rates of participation by students from regional areas, there is potential for this group to benefit from additional higher education places being offered by institutions that choose to expand their enrolment base.¹¹

9 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 47.

10 *Submission 558*, p. 3.

11 *Submission 523*, p. 16.

4.14 The committee received some limited comments on this proposed reform. The University of Newcastle expressed concern that student-based funding may have significant impacts on regional universities:

The implications of student-based rather than institutional funding...are likely to have significant impacts on regional universities in terms of their ability to continue to offer a full range of courses. Strong funding for regional universities to be able to continue to offer a broad range of educational opportunities is required.¹²

4.15 The University of Melbourne suggested extending the demand-driven funding system to TAFE providers:

One option which ought to be considered is extending the demand-driven funding system due to start in 2012 to all accredited higher education providers, as originally recommended in the Bradley report. Under such a system, the existing network of regional TAFEs would become possible sites for higher education courses. As they could provide higher education on top of their existing vocational education courses, TAFEs are more likely to achieve the economies of scale needed to be able to deliver courses at a per student cost within Commonwealth-supported place funding levels. A number of TAFEs already offer higher education courses, and it is likely that student demand would be significantly higher if TAFEs did not have to charge full fees, as they generally would have to do under the currently proposed policy.¹³

Structural Adjustment Fund

4.16 Another aspect of the reform to funding arrangements for higher education providers is the establishment of a Structural Adjustment Fund. The Department's submission provides the following information in relation to the Structural Adjustment Fund:

To support continuing transformation in the higher education sector, \$400 million will be provided over four years for structural adjustment. This includes \$200 million for a capital component of structural adjustment provided through the Government's Education Investment Fund.

The structural adjustment fund will be available to all regional and metropolitan universities and will enable institutions to develop diverse missions.

This funding will promote long term sustainability in the sector by assisting universities in making strategic decisions about their future mission and possible ways to enhance their place in the new higher education environment. It will replace the existing Diversity and Structural

12 *Submission 364*, p. 6. See also Associate Professor Richard Murray, Head of School of Dentistry and Medicine, James Cook University, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 16.

13 *Submission 449*, p. 6.

Adjustment Fund, and will support broader strategic and capital projects. In particular, the new fund will lay the ground work for the provision of more sustainable higher education in regional areas.¹⁴

4.17 The Department's submission states that the Australian Government provides funding through the Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund (Diversity Fund) for 'a number of university lead projects that aim to increase tertiary education study options for students in regional areas'.¹⁵ The committee notes that the Diversity Fund is to be replaced by the Structural Adjustment Fund.

4.18 Projects funded under the Diversity Fund, or its predecessor the Collaborative and Structural Reform Fund, are categorised into three types:

- (a) online learning and courses accessible via the world wide web;
- (b) entry level study with a regional education provider that may be used for access to a university course or raises the aspirations of students; and
- (c) greater collaboration between higher education and vocational education and training providers and other members of the community.

4.19 The Department's submission gives a number of examples of Diversity Fund projects.¹⁶ For example, the Integrated Rural Health Workforce Development project which is being lead by La Trobe University (La Trobe) received \$3,162,000 from the Diversity Fund:

This...project commenced in 2009 and helps establish the Northern Victorian School of Rural and Regional Health, centred at the regional campus in Bendigo. It enables La Trobe to specialise in the sustainable delivery of nursing and allied health programs to address the demand for health workers in the rural sector. The new School will engage with the health sector across northern Victoria to develop a new clinical placement program to enhance the learning, experience and quality of graduates. The School will further develop links with other higher education providers in the region, such as the Monash University Medical School and the regional TAFEs, through sharing of resources and articulation of educational pathways. A new hub-and-spoke delivery model will be implemented.¹⁷

4.20 The committee received some evidence in relation to the structural funding that the Government provides to universities.

4.21 Professor Paul Thomas, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of the Sunshine Coast expressed concern that the structural adjustment funding was not

14 *Submission 523*, p. 32.

15 *Submission 523*, p. 11.

16 *Submission 523*, pp 11-14. See also Professor Neil Otway, Director, Centre for Regional Engagement, University of South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 41.

17 *Submission 523*, p. 13.

being targeted to the regional institutions which will play an important role in the Government achieving the participation goals that it has set for tertiary education:

In a sense, the world-class agenda or aspirations of a Melbourne or an [Australian National University] to become even more significant on the world stage...is fine. But there is another issue [the] social inclusion agenda, which heavily rests on having more rural and regional students admitted to universities. At the moment, those [Education Investment Fund] moneys are running out at a rate of knots and if we do not benefit as growth regional universities then we are in serious trouble. If you look at some of these structural reform guidelines that have been issued to date, for example, where there are hundreds of millions of dollars again to be distributed, they are currently framed in a way that seem to favour those universities that are in deep trouble and that are contemplating amalgamation or will be in financial difficulties by 2011-12. So at the one end of the scale, moneys are being distributed to the very successful, the structural adjustment moneys are being given to the ones in difficulties, and at the other end of the scale, universities like my own, which is a real success story, are failing to get the sums of money we need to deal with the students even though we are growing by 10 per cent a year and we are bursting at the seams to admit students who are, for the most part, low [socioeconomic status] and first in family.¹⁸

4.22 TAFE Directors Australia stated that it is concerned that, despite the details of the Structural Adjustment Funds being advised to universities, there has been little observable change in the approach of many universities in terms of initiatives which would benefit students in regional and remote areas.¹⁹ Ms Elizabeth McGregor, a member of TAFE Directors Australia, gave the following example of universities being willing to work with other education providers with regards to the delivery of courses. However, as Ms McGregor points out, the courses that the universities want to deliver might not necessarily be those that are required within the community:

What we have noticed, and it has certainly happened in my region, is that the structural adjustment funds at the moment are funnelled primarily through individual universities. We have a situation in one of our towns at the moment where there are four different universities talking either to us or to local government about provision in relation to health. That is great, except that they are not necessarily talking to each other, and no-one is talking to us about information technology or business or whatever. So we would argue that if the structural adjustment funds were available either to the TAFE sector or to local government, what you would get is the perspective of the community: 'These are the qualifications we need in our town for our economy.' Then we work with the community and the business people who can help young people to aspire to those qualifications and we potentially have a range of universities with different capabilities working

18 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 43.

19 Ms Debra Daly, Chair, TAFE Directors Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 56.

together with us and local government to provide solutions, as opposed to the behaviour we are getting at the moment, which the system drives, which is a single university thinking about its mission and what it wants to do in town.

We have opened up invitations to a range of universities to have a discussion around that. They are keen, but there are going to be no resources that we can bring to the table to say, 'Let's take it beyond an idea.'²⁰

Committee view

4.23 The committee notes that it has received limited evidence on the reforms to university funding in the form of the establishment of compacts between Government and individual universities and the move towards student demand-driven funding.

4.24 However, the information that the committee has received indicates that there is some concern within some institutions as to the impact that these reforms will have on funding for regionally-based institutions in terms of what these universities can do to develop courses that serve the needs of their region and attract students to study in the region.

4.25 The new student-demand driven funding will take effect from 2012, with a transition period in place from 2010-11.²¹

4.26 The committee also notes the concerns expressed in relation to the Structural Adjustment Fund, in particular the allocation of funds under this program and how universities are making use of these funds to benefit students in regional and remote areas.

Recommendation 7

4.27 The committee recommend that a review be undertaken in 2013 to assess the impact of funding compacts, student-driven demand funding and the Structural Adjustment Fund on regional universities.

Regional Loading

4.28 The Australian Government provides higher education providers with regional campuses with a 'regional loading' in recognition of the higher costs they face as a result of location, size and history.²²

20 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 66.

21 DEEWR, *Submission 523*, p. 23.

22 DEEWR Website, *Commonwealth Grants Scheme*, available at <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/Funding/CommonwealthGrantScheme/Pages/Home.aspx>, accessed 2 December 2009.

4.29 To be eligible for the regional loading, a campus must be located outside a mainland capital city, other than Darwin, and in a population centre with fewer than 250,000 people (with the exception of Wollongong). Funding is calculated on a campus by campus basis, and the level of funding is dependent on the 'band' within which the campus falls based on the distance of the campus from the closest mainland capital, and the size of the institution according to the equivalent full time student load (EFTSL) of the campus.

Table 1: Funding bands for regional loading.²³

| Band | Location | Size of Provider | Loading Percentage |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Northern Territory | N/A | 30% |
| 2. | Campus is more than 300 kms from nearest mainland capital city | Fewer than 10,000 Commonwealth supported EFTSL | 7.5% |
| 3. | Campus is more than 300 kms from nearest mainland capital city | 10,000 or more Commonwealth supported EFTSL | 5.0% |
| | OR | | |
| | Campus is less than 300 km from nearest mainland capital city | Fewer than 10,000 Commonwealth Supported EFTSL | |
| 4. | Campus is less than 300 kms from nearest mainland capital city | 10,000 or more Commonwealth supported EFTSL | 2.5% |
| 5. | Wollongong | N/A | 1.5% |

4.30 In 2009, the total amount of funding available for the regional loading is \$31.167 million.²⁴

4.31 The Bradley Review commented that the regional loading is 'not sufficiently targeted to those campuses which have major problems achieving and maintaining viable student numbers because of their location'.²⁵

23 *Commonwealth Grants Scheme Guidelines No. 1*, paragraph 4.5.75.

24 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Administrative information for providers: Commonwealth Grant Scheme*, October 2008, p. 17. Available at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/Funding/CommonwealthGrantScheme/Documents/AIP.pdf>, accessed 16 November 2009. See also Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Higher Education Report 2007*, p. 11, which sets out the distribution of the regional loading across higher education providers in 2007. Available at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/HEReports/Documents/HEReport07.pdf>, accessed 16 November 2009.

25 Bradley Review, December 2008, p. 110.

4.32 The Bradley Review made the following assessment of the current arrangements for the regional loading:

In its review of this measure, the panel could discern little relationship in a number of cases to the existence of a loading and the location of a campus. Even more mysterious was the underlying logic of the weightings. But its greatest concern is that this loading for provision in regional and remote areas provides no clear incentive to any institution or provider to set up new programs in areas of need nor to work collaboratively with others to address the real problems of provision in localities where there are not enough people [to] support a viable campus. It also masks signals that provision in areas currently served may now need serious review.

Current arrangements through the regional loading do not appear likely to address the problems of falling participation rates in regional and remote areas or to encourage changed patterns of provision better aligned to need. Perhaps most importantly there is little incentive for providers to seek out opportunities to provide programs in regional or remote locations. For these reasons the panel has concluded that the regional loading should be abolished and new arrangements implemented.²⁶

4.33 Witnesses to the inquiry also highlighted the inappropriateness of the current funding model for the regional loading. For example, Mr Anthony Payne, Head, Equity and Diversity Unit, Deakin University detailed how cross-subsidisation by metropolitan campuses is used to make up for the shortfall in regional loading funding:

At the moment the regional loading is totally inadequate. Deakin University receives about \$600,000 per annum in relation to its regional and rural campuses. The additional cross-subsidy from the metropolitan universities is more in the order of \$10 million. So there is a significant cost disincentive to providing higher education facilities in rural areas. We do it because we have a strong commitment to it: it is part of our mandate.²⁷

4.34 Representatives from Charles Darwin University, which receives the greatest weighting for the regional loading, also indicated that the funding arrangements were deficient:

Many of my colleagues suggested that Charles Darwin had done extremely well in getting a regional loading of 30 per cent...

26 Bradley Review, p. 110.

27 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 30. See also Professor Arshad Omari, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Edith Cowan University, *Committee Hansard*, 22 September 2009, p. 88, Professor Lin Crase, Executive Director, Albury-Wodonga Campus, La Trobe University, *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 8, Professor David Battersby, Vice-Chancellor, University of Ballarat, *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 8 and Ms Barbara Lawrence, Director, Navigate, Central Queensland University, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 27.

Interestingly, when it was first launched, the new funding model delivered us \$10,000 less as an institution with a 30 per cent regional loading than we had under the old...model. To tell you, frankly, we were a little disappointed with that outcome because, having gone through a fairly extensive strategic conversation with the Commonwealth where funding was an important element, essentially the regional loading arrangements initially did not help us.

...I understand that the Commonwealth Grants Commission has a factor of 54 per cent for secondary schools in the Northern Territory, which seems somewhat meaner to have a model based around 30 per cent for tertiary education.²⁸

4.35 In its response to the Bradley Review, the Australian Government stated it will 'examine the cost of providing quality teaching and research in regional Australia and a new, more logical basis for funding will be developed'.²⁹

4.36 Professor Graham Baker, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Scholarship), University of Southern Queensland, outlined for the committee his proposal for changing the model for regional loading:

There may be alternative ways to restructure that loading so it stays with the universities, but follows a different principle. The current principle post Bradley has been to provide more support to students, to encourage more students to go to university, thereby giving university more funding. One might do the same thing with regional loading to encourage people out of cities into regional universities - not to let the bleed and the drain go the opposite way, but to encourage that migration, if I can put it that way, in a training sense.

...I think the principle of supporting students to attend university and structuring that so that, for us, it supports only those who choose to go to regional universities, because that is a bigger cost constraint or impost on them, would be a very good thing...I repeat: I would actually be in favour of an analysis that said, 'Let's openly take the regional loading and turn it into something that only would apply to students leaving metropolitan areas in order to enhance that capacity out in regional areas.'³⁰

28 Professor Charles Webb, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, Charles Darwin University, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 54.

29 Australian Government, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, p. 40. Available at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransformingAustraliasHESystem.aspx>, accessed 16 November 2009.

30 Professor Graham Baker, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Scholarship), University of Southern Queensland, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, pp 42 and 49.

4.37 The committee also notes the recommendation in the submission of Rural Health in the Northern Outback to the effect that regional universities that provide local access to comprehensive tertiary education should be better supported through Commonwealth funding:

Universities such as James Cook University provide access to tertiary education for students from remote locations in northern Australia. Universities such as these hold the key to sustaining and building rural and remote communities through the training of health, medical, teaching and other professionals. The good work of these universities should be recognised and supported through special funding grants designed specifically to support rural and remote student intake. Regional universities should also gain access to special research funding in order to retain and attract staff.³¹

Committee view

4.38 The current model of regional loading is clearly inappropriate and does not assist universities with adequate funding to subsidise the provision of courses in regional areas. There is clearly a significant level of dissatisfaction amongst providers at the operation of the current system.

4.39 The committee acknowledges the Government's intention to review the current system of regional loading. The committee would expect that the Government will take into account the concerns raised by tertiary providers in this inquiry in its review.

Attracting Students to Regional Institutions

4.40 The committee discussed with witnesses the ways in which rural and regional institutions might attract students to study there. Predominantly these discussions centred on the ways in which regional institutions might diversify and expand their course offerings and curriculum. Of particular interest to the committee was the feasibility of collaborations between universities and between universities and TAFEs. The potential role of improved communications technology and the rollout of the National Broadband Network were also discussed.

Collaboration between TAFEs and universities

4.41 The committee spent considerable time during the inquiry discussing with witnesses the potential for collaborations between TAFEs and universities as a means of expanding course offerings and improving the accessibility of education opportunities for students.

31 *Submission 559*, p. 21.

4.42 The committee notes the current policy reforms by the Australian Government aimed at restructuring and realigning the higher education and vocational education and training (VET) sectors:

...we need an education system that is less fragmented and easier for students to navigate. It should be straight forward for students to enter post-school education and move between vocational and higher education as appropriate to enhance their skills and qualifications.

Australia's VET and higher education systems have their own particular purposes.

...

Tertiary education in Australia should be a continuum of delivery, with better connections between sectors in both directions while avoiding one sector subsuming the other.

To make this happen, the Government will establish the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE), with responsibility for higher education, vocational education and training, international education, adult and community education, the Australian Qualifications Framework, employment and broader youth policy.³²

4.43 The committee also notes the initiatives the Australian Government has put in place, particularly:

- The commissioning of the Australian Qualifications Framework Council to develop strategies to improve articulation and connectivity between the higher education and VET sectors.
- Funding for structural adjustment to support projects that will deliver greater sustainability, diversity and collaboration between institutions, with the potential to facilitate stronger connections between the higher education and VET sectors (see discussion above under the heading 'Structural Adjustment Fund').³³

4.44 In its submission to the committee, TAFE Directors Australia explained why TAFEs are well placed to provide delivery of courses in collaboration with universities:

In terms of its vast network of campuses and outreach centres across Australia, TAFE has a far greater footprint in remote and regional communities than universities. TAFE has the physical presence, the

32 Australian Government, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, p. 43.

33 See Australian Government, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System: Strengthening the Relationship Between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training*, Factsheet 12, available at: http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/PDF/Pages%20from%20A09-303%20Budget%20Fact%20Sheets-12_webaw.pdf, accessed 2 December 2009.

community profile and the infrastructure, making its participation critical to the achievement of government objectives in these areas.³⁴

4.45 Mr Chris Jones of Great Southern TAFE gave evidence to the committee that collaboration with universities was one of the priorities for his organisation:

Our next priority, and we have been doing some work on this, to develop agreements with universities to have diploma or advanced diplomas meet the requirements for the first year of the degree of that university - in that discipline, of course - and then have the second and third year of the degree delivered at Great Southern TAFE either under the auspices of or by the universities themselves.³⁵

4.46 Mr Jones also told the committee of the nature of the collaborations that Great Southern TAFE had with Curtin University for some courses:

...we have an agreement with Curtin where they deliver the second and third years of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. What happens is that they accept the Advanced Diploma of Fine Arts that is offered by Great Southern TAFE as fulfilling the requirements of their first year, so students who go through the first year of the Bachelor of Fine Arts here can then go on and enrol in the second-year university program. That is a good model. It is different from our arrangement with the Curtin School of Nursing. Essentially the college delivers the Bachelor of Science (Nursing) degree under their auspices, and they give us a payment per full-time-student equivalent. If you like, we recruit the staff, provide the facilities and everything. They do the moderation in Perth and make sure that the degree program's quality is fulfilled.

Our preference by and large is for the articulation model.³⁶

4.47 These models of course delivery have a number of advantages. For universities, they enable delivery of courses to a larger number of students, without requiring the funding for additional small university campuses to be established. For students, these models offer the opportunity for them to undertake at least part of their course while remaining at home.

4.48 Despite these advantages, there were a number of concerns raised with the committee regarding delivery of courses in this manner.

4.49 Mr Alex Cann, a member of the Albany Youth Advisory Council, was concerned that only a limited number of courses were offered this way and it was 'only part of a degree'.³⁷

34 *Submission 527*, p. 2.

35 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 18.

36 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 22.

37 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 30.

4.50 Mr David Crouch, a member of Renmark High School Governing Council, commented that the population base in many centres would not support the delivery of a wide range of courses:

The Riverland has a population of about 30,000. It is never going to be able to support the delivery of the full range of courses locally. It just does not have the population base to do that. So, to the extent that we are talking about students who need to leave to access the course that they want, if it could be delivered locally that would be fantastic.³⁸

4.51 Mr Jones also explained to the committee that it can be difficult to get universities interested in collaborations:

We would dearly like to have a school of business from one of the universities offer the same model of delivery down here for students who graduate through our diploma or advanced diploma of accounting. It is very similar to the model that we have with the Curtin School of Nursing and Midwifery, except that rather than doing the whole degree they just do the final two years of the degree. There are a couple of ways that they could do that: they could auspice us to deliver it or in fact they could deliver it themselves using our facilities. So you have two models there.

But the truth of it is that if you look at the huge number of students that the schools of business at [Edith Cowan University], Curtin or Murdoch deal with in Perth and the focus that they have on overseas students, because overseas students are a significant cohort for them, it is very hard to get a focus when you are trying to say, 'Look, we want you to do all this work to set up a program that perhaps will service the needs of 12 to 15 students a year.' How many hours in the day they have to put towards this is the problem. I think it is a practical reason. It is not a question of not wanting to work with us or a dog-eat-dog situation. It is just a question of having all these priorities and 'Twelve students where?'³⁹

4.52 The committee also notes the submission of the TAFE Directors of Australia that it is more 'realistic' for TAFEs to collaborate with schools:

While there are some opportunities for collaboration with universities, across much of Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, it is more realistic to consider the possibilities for combined programs and shared facilities with secondary schools.⁴⁰

Committee view

4.53 The committee sees great potential in collaborations between universities and TAFEs as a means for both institutions to expand the range of courses on offer and improve accessibility to these courses for students in rural and regional areas.

38 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 79.

39 *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 24.

40 *Submission 527*, p. 6.

4.54 The committee accepts that collaborations between universities and TAFEs are not a means by which to provide regional areas with a full suite of university courses. Nevertheless, the committee's view is that models of course delivery founded on these collaborations have much to offer regional areas.

Collaborations between universities

4.55 The committee spent some time during the inquiry looking at the possibilities for universities to collaborate with each other to deliver courses as a means of expanding the range of courses offered at regional universities.

4.56 To this end, the committee notes the recommendation of the Bradley Review that the Australian Government commission a study to examine the feasibility of a new national university for regional areas and, if the study indicates that a new national regional university is feasible, the Australian Government provide appropriate funding for its establishment and operation.⁴¹

4.57 The Government has commissioned this feasibility study and stated that work on the feasibility study was to be completed by 2009.⁴² The committee notes that one of the universities involved in the feasibility study states in its submission that the study has concluded early.⁴³

4.58 The committee was told of a number of instances in which universities collaborate with each other in order to deliver courses. For example, the collaboration between the University of New England (UNE) and James Cook University (JCU) for the delivery of language courses:

We have a blended learning model where we are actually providing distance education language instruction from UNE in Armidale, New South Wales, at James Cook University in Cairns because they cannot afford to keep it. Together we could not afford to keep each of them but if we rationalised across the two then we could. Those courses are delivered from UNE to Cairns, but they are done on an economic basis. In other words, JCU pays us to do that and we share it economically.⁴⁴

4.59 Similarly, the University of Ballarat and Deakin University have established a collaboration for students to be able to enter into courses for medicine. Professor

41 Bradley Review, December 2008, Recommendation 17, p. 113.

42 See Australian Government, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System: Strengthening Regional Higher Education Provision*, Factsheet 11, available at: http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/PDF/Pages%20from%20A09-303%20Budget%20Fact%20Sheets-11_webaw.pdf, accessed 2 December 2009.

43 Charles Sturt University, *Submission 537*, p. 28.

44 Professor Alan Pettigrew, Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer, University of New England, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 54.

David Battersby, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ballarat, explained to the committee how the collaboration worked:

...we collaborate with Deakin University to take students into a biomedical science program as a mechanism to track them through into medicine either at Deakin or at any of the other universities in Victoria. Likewise, they can track into the other high-profile courses that are not available. I think that is quite a good mechanism for keeping students in regional communities as long as possible before they then move across.⁴⁵

4.60 The committee also briefly discussed with some witnesses the possibilities for 'rationalising' regional universities. The committee notes the views of one witness that this would limit the scope of individual universities:

A particular school or department will embrace a particular theoretical line. A school of business and law will develop a particular theoretical approach, which is adhered to. If universities are combined then it will limit the potential for those other two schools of business and law to develop a different theory and a different approach to innovation and the expansion of ideas.⁴⁶

4.61 The committee was also told that there was also an argument for the rationalisation of universities in metropolitan areas.⁴⁷

Committee view

4.62 The committee's view is that collaborative projects between universities can be beneficial to the institutions and for students. Despite only receiving evidence about a limited number of collaborations, the committee believes that this model of course delivery has great potential. However, the committee's understanding from the evidence it received is that there is more enthusiasm for university-TAFE collaborations as opposed to collaborations between universities.

4.63 By way of explanation for this, the committee notes the observation of Professor Alan Pettigrew, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of UNE, that current funding arrangements for universities promote competition rather than collaboration.⁴⁸

4.64 The committee encourages the Australian Government to consider whether, as part of compact negotiations with universities, there is a place for including funding for targets met in relation to collaboration with other universities. In the committee's

45 *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 6.

46 Ms Geraldine O'Flynn, President, TweedgoldcoastRs Association, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 20.

47 Professor Paul Thomas, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of the Sunshine Coast, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 53.

48 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 54.

view, such provisions may go some way to further developing collaborative ventures between universities for the delivery of courses.

Blended delivery models

4.65 The committee sought feedback as to other initiatives which may assist regional institutions to expand their course offerings and attract more students. Initiatives that were suggested included a greater role for 'blended' delivery model for courses, given the proposed rollout of the National Broadband Network, lowering the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS)- Higher Education Loans Program (HELP) debt for students who study at regional universities, and increasing the number of places for rural and regional students at regional institutions.

4.66 A number of witnesses spoke to the committee about the potential for 'blended' delivery model. Ms Barbara Lawrence of Central Queensland University explained to the committee what was meant by 'blended' delivery model:

It may be that, instead of enrolling a student as an internal student or an external student - or a flex student, or whatever they are called - we would try and enrol them as a blended student. That [means] that they have some face-to-face teaching. They might come in for a week, as in the old residential school type approach. They might be supplemented by the technology that is available, whether it is through podcasting or other things. So they are not an internal student. They do not get marked for being in class, they do not get marked for that level of participation. But they are not an external student, in that they have the access. So we have to look at different ways of doing that.⁴⁹

4.67 In this context, the committee also notes the comments by witnesses as to the importance of the rollout of the National Broadband Network to the delivery of courses which depend on information technology, such as interactive web conferencing.⁵⁰

4.68 A blended delivery model obviously overcomes some of the disadvantages that students have in relation to undertaking courses by distance, or external, delivery

49 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 27. See also Professor Jennifer Nicol, Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Humanities, Curtin University of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 21 September 2009, p. 52 and Professor Joyce Kirk, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students, RMIT University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 10.

50 See for example Mrs Robyn Dyer, Institute Director, Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE, *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 35 and Professor Alan Pettigrew, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer, University of New England, *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 45.

methods and enabling students to participate to some extent in what some witnesses described as the 'university experience'.⁵¹

4.69 The committee also heard some suggestions for attracting students to regional institutions, beyond simply expanding the course offerings of those institutions. For example Professor David Battersby, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ballarat, explained to the committee that reducing the HECS-HELP liability for students studying at regional institutions might make regional institutions more attractive to students:

We asked in our submission: why doesn't the government build upon what it already does in relation to things like medicine? It is doing it already in relation to the training of early childhood teachers. If you go and teach in rural locations, part or all of your HECS liability will be met. Why wouldn't we want to think about...having a different set of HECS arrangements for those students who come to regional institutions? That could be an attraction to get more students out of the city and into regional locations.⁵²

4.70 As Professor Battersby explained to the committee, attracting students to study in regional areas increases the likelihood that they will remain in regional areas once they graduate:

As we know, if they come to regional communities to do their higher education, just slightly fewer than 50 per cent will stay on. There could be a different HECS arrangement, building upon what the Commonwealth has already done in relation to these matters.⁵³

4.71 The Committee for Ballarat suggested in its submission that more could be done to proactively encourage students to return to regional areas following graduation:

Examples of programs that may meet these conditions include:

...graduates who [return] to a regional location within a small number of years of graduation would be exempt from further HECS debt repayments; and/or

A graduate who returns to a regional location and establishes an independent business is offered targeted additional business development support to achieve early financial viability.⁵⁴

51 See for example Professor Phillip Steele, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Campus Coordination, Campus Director Berwick and Peninsula, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2009, p. 10.

52 *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 9

53 *Committee Hansard*, 24 September 2009, p. 9.

54 *Submission 630*, p. 4.

Committee view

4.72 The committee recognises the significant role that tertiary education institutions play in regional areas. This role goes beyond merely providing education outcomes for the region, and extends to economic and social benefits for the area.

4.73 Therefore, the committee is encouraged by the positive and innovative proposals being examined and implemented in relation to expanding course offerings at regional institutions and attracting students to regional areas.

4.74 As the committee noted before, expanding course delivery is not going to provide a solution for every student. However, it may provide the solution for many students.

4.75 The committee also believes that expanding the range of courses is not the only means by which regional institutions can attract students. The committee's view is that there is value in implementing measures which provide incentives for students to choose to study at regional institutions.

Recommendation 8

4.76 The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate options for attracting students to regional institutions, and encouraging graduates to work in rural and regional locations, through programs which provide for reduced HELP-HECS liability.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

...the key factor contributing to making rural education different from urban education is geographic, and more specifically the need to deal with a range of challenges, some real others perceived, created by distance. While the impact of the *tyranny of distance* on Australian society has been well explained...its significance is not yet fully understood by policy makers. Distance has created a significant divide in Australia between metropolitan Australia and rural Australia – a divide that is ever increasing and resulting in inequalities that should not exist in a first world economy.¹

5.1 Education plays a key role in developing sustainable and vibrant rural and regional communities in Australia. Access to educational opportunities in these centres is critical for attracting families to, and retaining families in, these communities. Educational institutions provide employment and contribute to the local economy. The presence of educational opportunities raises the aspirations of the community as a whole.

5.2 The committee recognises there is work being done to minimise the divide between rural and regional students in relation to access to both secondary and tertiary educational opportunities. However, this divide between rural and regional, and metropolitan students still exists and the result is that rural and regional communities are suffering the consequences both economically and socially.

Secondary school

5.3 In relation to secondary school education, the committee heard of the significant difficulties that students had in obtaining access to educational opportunities. Predominantly the committee's deliberations centred on the difficulties in attracting and retaining suitably qualified teachers to rural and remote areas, but the committee also considered the considerable costs imposed on students and their families as they attempt to ensure that their children are able to have the same educational opportunities as students in metropolitan areas.

5.4 The committee heard stories of excellent initiatives making great inroads into the literacy and numeracy divide between rural and metropolitan students. The committee refers to the Quicksmart program described by Professor John Pegg, which in a 30 week program raised children's literacy levels two to four years. The disheartening aspect of the initiative was that it was subsequently discontinued in the school due to a complete turnover of staff.² Such examples highlight to the committee

1 Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia, *Submission 679*, p. 1.

2 *Committee Hansard*, 2 September 2009, p. 38.

that while there are many initiatives in existence which could assist rural and regional students, however, because there is no long term view, such measures fail.

5.5 The committee also heard of programs aimed at helping the most disadvantaged students. The committee commends Edmund Rice Education Australia for the outreach work and flexible learning centres which are providing educational opportunities to students who have otherwise disengaged from school altogether. The inspiring aspect of the program is its goals of social inclusion and using an educational framework to bring students into the community.

5.6 However, as the committee was told, such programs are localised, and resources are limited. As Mr Dale Murray of the Edmund Rice Education Australia explained to the committee, while his organisation had received invitations to establish outreach programs in other centres, as Mr Murray explained, 'there is a limit to how much four of us can do at a national level with this'.³

5.7 Obviously there is no quick and simple solution to these issues of inequitable access to educational opportunities. Governments at all levels have grappled with the issues of educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia. The committee's concern however is what the committee perceives to be a growing discontent with the level of secondary educational services in rural and regional areas. In particular, the committee believes the churn of professionals and their families through regional areas and the feelings that students will be getting a second class education in rural and regional areas are impacting significantly on those that remain in the community.

5.8 The committee therefore recommends that the Australian Government commission an investigation of the barriers to rural and regional secondary educational opportunities with a view to developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia.

Recommendation 1

5.9 The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission an investigation into the barriers to rural and regional secondary educational opportunities with a view to developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia.

Recommendation 2

5.10 In developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary education opportunities in rural and regional Australia, the committee recommends that consideration should be given to strategies for ensuring that literacy and numeracy programs, once introduced into schools, are able to be maintained within those schools.

Recommendation 3

3 *Committee Hansard*, 10 November 2009, p. 80.

5.11 The committee recommends that as part of the investigation into the barriers to rural and regional secondary educational opportunities with a view to developing a long-term strategy to address the inequity in secondary educational opportunities in rural and regional Australia, consideration should be given to whether the current level of funding under the AIC Scheme is appropriate.

Tertiary education

5.12 The majority of the evidence and submissions in this inquiry related to the barriers that rural and regional students face in accessing tertiary education opportunities. This focus was prompted by the Government's proposed changes to Youth Allowance, and in particular, the tightening of the workforce participation criteria for eligibility to independent Youth Allowance.

5.13 The committee repeats its view from its report on the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2009 that it considers the proposal to remove the fixed amount in 18 months as a means of establishing independence for Youth Allowance has been poorly targeted and badly implemented.⁴

5.14 Access to independent Youth Allowance can be the determining factor in whether a student from rural and regional Australia attends tertiary education. There is no income support measure which specifically addresses the inequity that rural and regional students face in accessing tertiary education opportunities. The removal of the criteria for students to earn a fixed amount in 18 months to establish independence will therefore disadvantage many rural and regional students who aspire to tertiary education.

5.15 The committee believes it is important to recognise that this is not just a matter of financial cost. These are often students who have worked incredibly hard through their secondary school years to overcome the disadvantages in relation to access to secondary school educational opportunities described in this report. They are students who are prepared to defer their tertiary studies for 12 months and work hard in their gap year, often in three or four jobs, to earn the requisite amount to establish independence for the purposes of Youth Allowance. These are students who often

4 The committee also notes the recent Australian National Audit Office report into the Administration of Youth Allowance which recommended that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations develop and use effectiveness indicators to identify and measure the achievement of Youth Allowance-related programs in providing appropriate income support and promoting education and training. The committee notes that the Department has agreed with this recommendation. See Australian National Audit Office, *Administration of Youth Allowance: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Centrelink*, Audit Report No. 12 2009-10, November 2009.

come from farming families, families who are 'asset rich but cash poor'⁵ and who would not otherwise qualify for dependent Youth Allowance, families who have been suffering the effects of prolonged drought and are often not in a position to go further into debt to assist their children to access further education. These are students who are prepared to move away from home and their communities and their support networks, to study and live independently, in order to achieve tertiary education. These students deserve assistance.

5.16 In order to address this inequity, the committee recommends the introduction of a Tertiary Access Allowance for students who are required to move away from home. The Tertiary Access Allowance should be structured in the following way:

- be an annual payment of \$10,000, indexed to the Consumer Price Index.
- not be linked to a student's eligibility for any other income support payment.
- be available to any student required to move away from home to access the tertiary course of their choice.
- not be subject to a parental means or assets test.

Recommendation 4

5.17 The committee strongly recommends that the Australian Government introduce a Tertiary Access Allowance for students who are required to move away from home to access tertiary education.

5.18 The committee also heard that students who move away from home to attend university also face significant difficulties in accessing affordable housing close to campus. The committee understands that tertiary institutions would like to address this issue, however, are often unable to access the necessary capital.

5.19 The committee therefore recommends that the Australian Government investigate the establishment of a capital works program to assist tertiary institutions to increase the stock of affordable housing for students.

Recommendation 5

5.20 The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate the establishment of a capital works program to assist tertiary institutions to increase the stock of affordable housing for students.

5.21 The committee also considered the significant financial difficulties that students can face in meeting expenses while on clinical placement or block release. This is an issue requiring further investigation with a view to implementing a form of temporary income support for students while they undertake these important

5 See Ms Jan Andrews, Deputy Chief Executive, Schools and Children's Services, South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2009, p. 10.

components of their course. The committee therefore recommends that the Australian Government investigate the implementation of a form of temporary income support for students while they are on clinical placements or block release.

Recommendation 6

5.22 The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate the implementation of a form of temporary income support for students while they are on clinical placements or block release.

5.23 The committee also considered the barriers to students accessing tertiary education options in regional Australia. Many of the issues that the committee considered in this part of the inquiry related to the costs and ability of institutions to provide a wide range of courses at regional locations.

5.24 The committee accepts that a full range of courses can not be delivered to students in rural and regional areas. However, the committee feels that there are many positive and innovative solutions to this issue currently being implemented or considered.

5.25 The committee understands that university funding and the structure of the tertiary education sector is currently in a transition phase. While the committee appreciates that some institutions may see benefits in these reforms, other institutions did express concern about the potential impact that these reforms would and this impacts on the ability of tertiary institutions to continue and expand on the courses they deliver to regional areas.

Recommendation 7

5.26 The committee recommend that a review be undertaken in 2013 to assess the impact of funding compacts, student-driven demand funding and the Structural Adjustment Fund on regional universities.

5.27 The committee also believes that expanding the range of courses is not the only means by which regional institutions can attract students. The committee's view is that there is value in implementing measures which provide incentives for students to choose to study at regional institutions.

Recommendation 8

5.28 The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate options for attracting students to regional institutions, and encouraging graduates to work in rural and regional locations, through programs which provide for reduced HELP-HECS liability.

Senator Fiona Nash
Chair

Government Senators Dissenting Report

The Government Senators of the Committee note that the Government is committed to improving the participation of underrepresented groups in education, including rural and regional students.

Government Senators note that the Government has undertaken a wide range of reforms which will begin to address these issues including the reforms adopted as part of COAG to provide support and reform for 1500 low socio-economic status (SES) school communities across the country (\$1.5 billion from the Commonwealth which will be matched by the states), improve the quality of teaching (\$550 million from the Commonwealth), increase school leaving age, improve transparency and renew school infrastructure through the Building the Education Revolution.

The Government has also undertaken major reforms to tertiary education after adopting a range of findings in response to the Bradley Review and allocating an additional \$5.4 billion in the last budget for higher education and research. The Government's comprehensive reform program includes the adoption of demand driven funding, substantial new infrastructure funding, improved indexation of funds, better targeting of student income support to better direct support to those who need it most, a substantial low SES loading, equity partnership programs and performance funding, a new national regulator and the movement towards the full cost of research.

Government Senators note that the Government's reform agenda is about increasing participation and expanding access to tertiary education and improving quality. The range and scope of the Government's reforms has been lauded by educationalists with the response to the Bradley Review heralded as 'visionary' by the Go8 in response to the last budget.

The combined impact of these reforms will be an increase in access to education and quality of education – this will mean better educational outcomes for low SES students and regional students.

In total, this Government has increased education spending by around 50 per cent in real terms over the current five year period compared to the previous one.

The Government is working hard to turn around the shameful legacy of neglect that occurred under the previous Government.

Under the previous Government low SES participation rates in higher education languished at around 15 per cent.

Regional participation rates fell from 18.715 per cent to 18.08 per cent from 2002 – 2007 (25.4 per cent of the population come from regional areas).

Remote participation rates fell from 1.27 per cent to 1.12 per cent over the same period (2.5 per cent of the population come from remote areas).

While Government Senators commend the interest that Opposition Senators now show in education, they believe the majority report does not fully explain the legacy of policy failure of the previous Government and the way that this has curtailed the opportunity for all students. Furthermore Chapter 3 does not present an accurate and fair assessment of the Government's proposed changes to Youth Allowance and the widespread support these reforms have received from universities, students and educationalists.

Government Senators wish to highlight the fact that the Government's broad reform agenda – including the proposed reforms to Youth Allowance – will assist students from low income backgrounds to achieve the educational qualifications they need for sustainable employment. These changes will better support students that need it most, including regional and rural students.

Response to Recommendation 1

Government Senators welcome the intention of Recommendation 1 which is to increase participation in secondary education and ensure all students, regardless of location or background, have opportunities to access education. However, Government Senators note that the Government is already pushing forward with a massive reform agenda through its COAG reform process which will increase high school attainment nationally.

The Government is best placed to determine processes it uses to expand participation in, and quality of, education after the shameful neglect of the previous Government.

Response to Recommendation 2

Government Senators welcome the intention of this recommendation. The Government Senators note that the Government has already announced their National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy worth \$540 million entitled 'Foundation skills in literacy and numeracy' as part of its broader education strategy in addition to the other measures outlined above.

Details of the Government's reforms in this area can be assessed at the DEEWR website

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/default.aspx>

Response to Recommendation 3

Government Senators note that the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme supports eligible primary, secondary and tertiary students who are unable to attend an

appropriate government school on a daily basis because of their geographic isolation. The scheme provides financial assistance to families for the costs of boarding and other expenses for their children. In 2008, AIC assisted 11,212 rural and isolated school students at a cost of \$60.7 million.

From 1 January 2008, the AIC scheme was enhanced in the following ways:

- a \$1,000 Distance Education supplement (rising to \$1,045 in 2009) became payable to all recipients of the AIC Distance Education Allowance.
- The AIC Additional Boarding Allowance increased by \$1,000 to \$2,164 in 2008 (rising to \$2,261 in 2009).

The Government will promote its participation agenda through the COAG reform process.

Response to Recommendation 4

Government Senators note that if the Government's student income support legislation had been passed by the Senate all eligible students who need to move from home to study would have received a Relocation Scholarship worth \$4,000 in the first year on top of a Student Start up scholarship for every year they are at university worth \$2,253 (\$1,434 in the transition year of 2010 only).

Opposition Senators can still deliver this support to regional students by passing the Government's legislation when it is debated next year.

Response to Recommendation 5

Government Senators note that almost \$5 billion in capital funding to the tertiary sector has been committed since the Rudd Government took office. The guidelines of the Better Universities Renewal Funding (BURF) and Teaching and Learning Capital Fund (TLC) for Higher Education (HE) funds worth \$1 billion in total were broad enough to allow universities to spend this on student housing.

Response to Recommendation 6

Government Senators note that the Henry Review is currently considering other issues in terms of adequacy and the Government has committed to a review of the new system which will look at issues like this.

Response to Recommendation 7

Government Senators note that the Government will carefully monitor the results of its new system which is aimed at supporting students and ensuring that institutions are more responsive to student needs. A demand driven system and reformed student income support will provide students with more choices as to where to study.

Response to Recommendation 8

Government Senators note that there are already a range of HECS remission policies in place which have already been adopted by this Government to encourage graduates to work in priority fields or areas.

Conclusion

Government Senators agree that increasing access to education should be a top priority of Government. We note that the Rudd Government is marshalling a huge reform program which will make a difference to thousands of students who will be able to access education for the first time and thousands more who will have better school facilities and a higher quality learning experience.

There are a number of recommendations which, while well meaning, duplicate work processes already underway. Unlike the previous one the Rudd Government will not stand idly by and watch participation of under represented groups go backwards.

Government Senators note that to help improve regional access to education Non Government Senators first need to vote to pass the Government's reforms to student income support. We would also encourage Committee members to make a submission to the Government's review of the regional loading.

Senator Glenn Sterle
Deputy Chair

Senator Kerry O'Brien

References

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090512_183017.aspx

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/default.aspx>

http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/PDF/Pages%20from%20A09-303%20Budget%20Fact%20Sheets-1_webaw.pdf

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/Lifting_lit_num_outcomes.aspx

http://www.ato.gov.au/budget/2009-10/content/ministerial_statements/rural_and_regional/html/ms_rural_and_regional-08.htm#07_01

APPENDIX 1

Submissions Received

| Submission Number | Submitter |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1 | Mr Les Evans |
| 2 | Ms Katie Lillyman |
| 3 | Ms Jessica Dalton |
| 4 | Mr Hayden Shaw |
| 5 | Ms Kahlia Vandyk |
| 6 | Mr Cameron Reid |
| 7 | Name Withheld |
| 8 | Name Withheld |
| 9 | Name Withheld |
| 10 | Ms Kim Pett |
| 11 | Name Withheld |
| 12 | Mr Michael Poulton |
| 13 | Mr David Merriken |
| 14 | CONFIDENTIAL |
| 15 | Name Withheld |
| 16 | Name Withheld |
| 17 | Name Withheld |
| 18 | Ms Wendy & Mr Trevor Renshaw |
| 19 | Name Withheld |
| 20 | Mr Russell Anderson |
| 21 | Mrs Lyn Jacka |
| 22 | Ms Sally Westbury |
| 23 | Name Withheld |
| 24 | Ms Kathy Parker |
| 25 | Mr Brett Patience |
| 26 | Ms Janine Greenwood |
| 27 | Mr Russell Broomhall |
| 28 | Ms Roslyn Whiteman |
| 29 | Ms Linda Phillips |
| 30 | Ms Julie-Anne Hywood |
| 31 | Ms Anne Hill |
| 32 | Ms Liz Penfold MP, Member for Flinders |
| 33 | Ms Saada Malouf |

- 34 Mr Murray Williams
- 35 Ms Krystina Durdun
- 36 Ms Julie Fibbins
- 37 Ms Delia Jenkins
- 38 Ms Sue Dolling
- 39 Ms Sarah
- 40 Ms Sharron Walsh
- 41 Ms Leanne Bourne
- 42 CONFIDENTIAL
- 43 Ms Karen Napper
- 44 Ms Wendy Powell
- 45 Ms Elizabeth Timmins
- 46 Ms Kerrie Edmunds
- 47 Ms Sue Nicholls
- 48 Ms Mel Bauer
- 49 Ms Terri Jorgensen
- 50 Mr Hugh Bunchue
- 51 Ms Jessica Hardy
- 52 Ms Shelley Greenhalgh
- 53 Ms Judith Ross
- 54 CONFIDENTIAL
- 55 Ms Renee Thomson
- 56 Mr Duane Moffat
- 57 CONFIDENTIAL
- 58 Mr Hugh Warren
- 59 Ms Viki Dalla
- 60 Name Withheld
- 61 Mr Denis & Margaret Riddle
- 62 Ms Julie Maiolo
- 63 Mr Craig Ferber
- 64 CONFIDENTIAL
- 65 Mr Brian & Ms Leanne Mahney
- 66 Ms Penny & Mr Peter Bolst
- 67 CONFIDENTIAL
- 68 Mr Bruce Simons
- 69 Ms Sharyn Hatswell
- 70 Mr David & Ms Vivien Freestone
- 71 Ms Leone Stevenson
- 72 Name Withheld
- 73 Cr Paul Campbell

- 74 Name Withheld
- 75 Ms Wendy Swan
- 76 Ms Robyn Lowrie
- 77 Name Withheld
- 78 CONFIDENTIAL
- 79 CONFIDENTIAL
- 80 CONFIDENTIAL
- 81 Southern Cross University
- 82 Clare High School, SA
- 83 CONFIDENTIAL
- 84 Name Withheld
- 85 Mr Richard Marlin
- 86 CONFIDENTIAL
- 87 CONFIDENTIAL
- 88 Name Withheld
- 89 CONFIDENTIAL
- 90 Name Withheld
- 91 CONFIDENTIAL
- 92 Mr Lee Rogers
- 93 CONFIDENTIAL
- 94 Name Withheld
- 95 Ms Gloria Baldwin
- 96 Ms Joanne Hetherington
- 97 Ms Alyssa Coote
- 98 Kimba Area School, SA
- 99 Ms Rosamund Heit
- 100 Mr Terry Redman MLA, Member for Blackwood-Stirling
- 101 Ms Debbie Terrett
- 102 Ms Clare Wagner
- 103 Ms Glenys Butcher
- 104 Mr Martin Terrett
- 105 CONFIDENTIAL
- 106 Name Withheld
- 107 Mr Peter & Ms Sheryl McHugh
- 108 Mr Geoff Ellis
- 109 Mr Michael Mack
- 110 Mr Eric & Ms Vicky Higgins
- 111 Ms Sarah Moore
- 112 Mrs Gaye Kuerschner
- 113 Ms Lesley Young

- 114** Ms Anne Williams
- 115** Ms Michele Schmidt
- 116** Mr Peter & Ms Anne Hallett
- 117** Ms Debra Cook
- 118** Riverland Futures Taskforce
- 119** La Trobe University
- 120** Ms Hellen McWhirter
- 121** Ms Heather Fergie
- 122** Mr Andrew Hoffman
- 123** Ms Prue Smith
- 124** Ms R Godden
- 125** Mr Alan & Ms Barbara Dunston
- 126** Mr Lee Darrod
- 127** Mr John & Ms Nellie Warde
- 128** Mr Jeff Hywood
- 129** Mr Andrew & Ms Clare Marriot-Smith
- 130** Mr David Bennett
- 131** Ms Lorna Elliot
- 132** Ms Annabel Forrest
- 133** Mr Scott Earle
- 134** Ms Fiona Flanagan
- 135** CONFIDENTIAL
- 136** Ms Lynne Patten-Malouf
- 137** Ms Carol & Claire Henry
- 138** Ms Jacinta Duncan
- 139** Ms Julie Jumeaux
- 140** Ms Stephanie Barton
- 141** Mr Peter Wallis
- 142** Mount Barker Community College School Council
- 143** Mrs Dawn Adams
- 144** Mr John & Ms Amanda Fowler
- 145** Ms Vicki & Mr David Schmitt
- 146** Mr David & Ms Cherie Cmrlec
- 147** Ms Michelle.
- 148** The Hon. David Hawker MP, Federal Member for Wannon
- 149** Mr Andrew Barr
- 150** Mrs Kaylene Schultz
- 151** Ms McNamara
- 152** Ms Janet Westland
- 153** Ms Sally Short

- 154** B Halloran
- 155** Ms Simone Conn
- 156** Mr Danton & Ms Odette Pearson
- 157** Ms Julie Conn
- 158** Ms Therese Francis
- 159** Ms Kate Roth
- 160** Ms Jade Killoran
- 161** Ms Tracy & Ms Grace Anton
- 162** Ms Faye Glover
- 163** Mr David & Ms Judy Pink
- 164** Ms Linda Mealing
- 165** Mr Peter Jennings
- 166** Ms Sheryn Ray
- 167** Ms Susan Lonham
- 168** Ms Kathy Zouch
- 169** Ms Michelle Forman
- 170** Mr Craig & Ms Leanne Armistead
- 171** Ms Ashlinn Mason
- 172** Ms Narelle Smith
- 173** S. A. Smith
- 174** Ms Anita Hallett
- 175** Ms Jennifer & Mr Lawrence Kerr
- 176** CONFIDENTIAL
- 177** Name Withheld
- 178** Name Withheld
- 179** Ms Diana Hill
- 180** Ms Belinda Lingham
- 181** Mr Ron Ng
- 182** Ms Roslyn Bulloch
- 183** Ms Cath Freeman
- 184** CONFIDENTIAL
- 185** M. Strecker
- 186** Ms Kay Stephenson
- 187** Mrs Jane Waterhouse
- 188** Ms Jean Martin
- 189** Mr Brian Machin
- 190** Ms Nora Machin
- 191** Mr Lachlan Plunkett
- 192** Ms Anna Harders
- 193** Ms Charmaine Wittwer

- 194** Ms Sarah McGrath
- 195** Ms Nicki Jennings
- 196** Ms Mandy Dusina
- 197** Ms Teegan Killoran
- 198** The Flower Family
- 199** Ms Alexis Killoran
- 200** Ms Sasha Miles
- 201** Ms Emma Armistead
- 202** Mr John & Ms Liana Cartledge
- 203** CONFIDENTIAL
- 204** Ms Paula Crawley-Smith
- 205** The Peut Family
- 206** Ms Jacinta Ray
- 207** Mr Ian Dusina
- 208** Ms Ann Boyle
- 209** Mr Paul Boyle
- 210** Ms Bernice Mannix
- 211** Ms Andrea Cooper
- 212** Ms Alison Poort
- 213** Ms Maria Hutchings
- 214** Ms Ellen Hutchings
- 215** Ms Beth & Mr Peter Simpson
- 216** Mr Ian Ryan
- 217** CONFIDENTIAL
- 218** Ms Yve & Mr Rod McLean
- 219** Mr & Ms Court
- 220** Ms Minka Appleby
- 221** Ms Leanne Appleby
- 222** Ms Laura Appleby
- 223** Ms Karen King-Jones
- 224** Mr Robert & Ms Jolyn Graham
- 225** Charles Darwin University
- 226** Flinders University
- 227** Ms Pam McLachlan
- 228** Mr Aidan Kirkbright
- 229** Mr Gary & Ms Megan Frost
- 230** Ms Kim McAlister
- 231** Ms Beverley Jaeschke
- 232** Ms Kate Kerr
- 233** Ms Marion Darke

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- 234 Ms Bernice Emms
235 Bush Children's Education Foundation
236 Mr Peter & Ms Kay Buckland
237 Mr Warren James
238 Ms Jenny Mason
239 Mr Ben Keightley
240 Mr Andy Russell
241 Mr Phillip Ferguson
242 Ms Janet Backhous
243 Ms Shelagh Donegan
244 Southern Cross University
245 District Council of Grant
246 Hume Riverina Community Legal Service
247 Local Government Association of SA
248 J Reynolds
249 Mr Callum Reynolds
250 Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association Inc.
251 Mr Peter Ray
252 Moyne Shire Council
253 CONFIDENTIAL
254 Ms Wendy & Mr Robert Hope
255 Ms Jessica Eddy
256 Ms Linda Elbourne
257 Ms Lois Doeven
258 Ms Annalise Bagust
259 Mr Peter Morriss
260 Ms Meg & Mr Neil Foster
261 Name withheld
262 Mr Michael & Ms Kerry Hetherington
263 CONFIDENTIAL
264 Isolated Children's Parents Association of Australia Inc. – Federal Council
265 CONFIDENTIAL
266 Ms Leanne Bowen
267 Ms Wendy Sawyer
268 CONFIDENTIAL
269 Mr Henry & Ms Jenny Drew
270 C Boldery
271 Cowan Grant Trust
272 Name Withheld
273 Mr Andrew & Ms Sally McDonald

- 274** CONFIDENTIAL
- 275** Name Withheld
- 276** Ms Kathy Maslin
- 277** Mr Stanley Maslin
- 278** Name Withheld
- 279** Ms Julianne Hand
- 280** Mr Ron & Ms Robyn Pescud
- 281** Name Withheld
- 282** Ms Maree Thornton
- 283** Ms Linda Griffin
- 284** Ms Margaret Kernahan
- 285** Mr Stewart & Ms Gayle Day
- 286** Mr Stuart & Ms Jennie Walsh
- 287** Ms Kylie Pulling
- 288** Mr Ken & Ms Cath Birkett
- 289** Mr Peter & Ms Linda Meates
- 290** Ms Jan Tod
- 291** Ms Colleen Langan
- 292** Catholic Education Office of WA
- 293** Ms Mardi Winen
- 294** Ms Debra Bradtke
- 295** Ms Anne Maree & Mr Nick Nagy
- 296** Ms Merran Courtney
- 297** Ms Kaye Kirkwood
- 298** Ms Wendy & Ms Hamish Williamson
- 299** Ms Chella Armstrong
- 300** Mr Brett Winfield
- 301** Northern Territory Government
- 302** Mr Patrick Secker MP, Federal Member for Barker
- 303** Ms Stephanie Domanski
- 304** A Kneller
- 305** Mr Daniel May
- 306** CONFIDENTIAL
- 307** Mr Tim Mengler
- 308** Mr Greg McCann
- 309** Mr Robert & Ms Tricia Stephenson
- 310** Mr Murray Mitchell
- 311** Ms Annette Mateljan
- 312** Ms Vicki Tait
- 313** CONFIDENTIAL

-
- 314** Name Withheld
 - 315** Ms Jenny Hanrahan
 - 316** Ms Miriam Griffen
 - 317** Ms Catherine Nickholds
 - 318** CONFIDENTIAL
 - 319** University of Ballarat
 - 320** Mr Paul Nichols
 - 321** Mr Kieran Steadman
 - 322** Ms Jackie Horkings
 - 323** Ms Dianne Doyle
 - 324** CONFIDENTIAL
 - 325** Ms Gail Little
 - 326** Ms Barbara & Mr David Smith
 - 327** Ms Helen Owen
 - 328** Name Withheld
 - 329** Mr Jack Bennett
 - 330** Mr Stuart Lingham
 - 331** Ms Susan Edwards
 - 332** CONFIDENTIAL
 - 333** Mr Ken & Ms Sally Davidson
 - 334** Ms Elizabeth Jenkins
 - 335** Ms Nikki Asara
 - 336** Mr Mike & Ms Barbara Ryan
 - 337** Mr Mike O'Hare
 - 338** Name Withheld
 - 339** CONFIDENTIAL
 - 340** Name Withheld
 - 341** Mr Justin & Ms Linda O'Brien
 - 342** Ms Debbie Perkins
 - 343** Ms Carol McHugh
 - 344** Local Learning & Employment Networks & Regional Youth Advisory Networks
 - 345** Flinders University
 - 346** Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH)
 - 347** Ms Cathy Rasmussen
 - 348** Mr Tony Powell
 - 349** Ms Kim Nardi
 - 350** Association of Independent Schools of SA
 - 351** CONFIDENTIAL
 - 352** Ms Karen Burns

- 353** Ms Leona Evans
- 354** Leigh Carroll
- 355** Australian Technology Network of Universities
- 356** Ms Maureen Miliken
- 357** Mid Murray Higher Education Working Party
- 358** Isolated Children's Parents Association of NSW Inc.
- 359** Mr Peter & Ms Trudie Biddle
- 360** Ms Ann Boyle
- 361** Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)
- 362** CONFIDENTIAL
- 363** Mr David Atkinson
- 364** University of Newcastle (UNE)
- 365** Mr Henry De Reiu
- 366** Tocal College Advisory Council
- 367** Mr Bill & Ms Gemma Rice
- 368** St Mary's College, University of Melbourne
- 369** Ms Susan Matthew
- 370** Ms Danika Grey
- 371** Ms Krystal Thompson
- 372** Ms Judy Sutton
- 373** Mr Nathan Wotton
- 374** Ms Fiona & Mr Geoffrey Harrison
- 375** Ms Cas & Mr Richard Ingham
- 376** Mr Greg & Ms Vicki Baldwin
- 377** Ms Anne & Mr Steve Longworth
- 378** Mr Matthew Schofield
- 379** Mr Rex & Ms Jennifer Candy
- 380** Ms Judy Dimitriou
- 381** Mr Philip & Ms Geraldine Hoban
- 382** Mr Stephen & Ms Mary Rice
- 383** Name Withheld
- 384** Universities Australia
- 385** Ms Lynne & Mr Barry Cox
- 386** Captain Quentin Smith
- 387** Ms Mary McGrath
- 388** Ms Pauline Cooper
- 389** Name Withheld
- 390** Name Withheld
- 391** Ms Valerie Cookson
- 392** Mr Paul Haarbarger

-
- 393** Ms Cathy & Mr Craig Rutjens
394 Mr Grant & Ms Carol Ballam
395 CONFIDENTIAL
396 Mildura Development Corporation
397 Ms Rowena Carnaby
398 University of Ballarat
399 Name Withheld
400 Bendigo Student Association
401 CONFIDENTIAL
402 Isolated Children's Parents Association of QLD
403 Mr Rob Parsons
404 Mr Dean Carnaby
405 Ms Jessica Muir
406 Me Belinda McKellar
407 Ms Narelle Whittaker
408 Ms Rose Muir
409 Ms Heather Cormie
410 Narrogin Rural Student University Access Group
411 Mr Paul Duggan & Ms Erika Matthews
412 Ms Narelle & Ms Paige Riley
413 South East Local Learning & Employment Network (SE LLEN)
414 Yaraka / Isisford Branch, Isolated Children's Parents' Association of
Australia Inc
415 Mr Peter Rix
416 Mr Mark & Ms Pam Stanley
417 Ms Erin Watt
418 Mr Michael & Ms Sandy Schmid
419 Ms Vicki Johnson
420 CONFIDENTIAL
421 Ms Melanie Williams
422 Ms Jan McKenzie
423 Ms Karina Hanrahan
424 Ms Elizabeth Hair
425 Ms Leanne Barnes
426 Mr Peter & Ms Mary-Anne Driver
427 Ms Lyn & Mr Patrick Kelly
428 Ms Julie Thomas
429 Ms Elizabeth Asher
430 Edith Cowan University
431 Ms Merry Dickins

- 432** Ms Alissa Robins
- 433** Ms Gabrielle Collins
- 434** Name Withheld
- 435** James Cook University
- 436** Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), SA
- 437** Ms Leslie Casey
- 438** Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.
- 439** Mr Morris Dickins
- 440** Ms Sue Gordon
- 441** Mr Chris Hall
- 442** Mr Michelle Stehbins
- 443** Isolated Children's Parents' Association Of WA
- 444** Ms Kaye Jaensch
- 445** Ms Liz Ferguson
- 446** Loxton High School Governing Council
- 447** Name Withheld
- 448** Pastoralists' Association of West Darling
- 449** University of Melbourne
- 450** Mr Tom McConnell
- 451** Mallee Family Care
- 452** Manjimup Visions Committee
- 453** Mr Grant, Ms Roslyn and Ms Amy Ruland
- 454** NE TRACKS Local Learning & Employment Network
- 455** Tasmania State Council of ICAP
- 456** Isolated Children's Parents Association, East Coast Branch, Tasmania
- 457** Ms Betty Bellamy
- 458** Australian Parents Council Inc.
- 459** Mr Peter Craig
- 460** Ms Beth Bowman
- 461** Australian National University
- 462** Mr James & Ms Annette Frew
- 463** University of the Sunshine Coast, QLD
- 464** Ms Alexandra Ward
- 465** Ms Suzanne Bailey
- 466** University of Southern Queensland
- 467** University of New South Wales
- 468** Manjimup Chamber Of Commerce
- 469** Hon. Bruce Scott MP, Federal Member for Maranoa
- 470** Ms Dawn Fardell MP, Member for Dubbo
- 471** CONFIDENTIAL

-
- 472 Mrs CH Lucas
- 473 Southern Grampians Youth Network
- 474 Glenelg & Southern Grampians Local Learning Employment Network Inc. (GSG LLEN)
- 475 Joint Submission by: Baimbridge Secondary College, Bayview College, Heywood Secondary College, Portland Secondary College, Good Shepherd College, South West TAFE, Hamilton Regional Business Association, Southern Grampians Adult Education, Glenelg & Southern Grampians Local Learning Employment Network, Rural Industries Skills Training, Balmoral Community College, Casterton Secondary College, Monivae College, Hamilton & Alexandra College
- 476 Ms Velia O'Hare
- 477 Mr Bernard Abbott
- 478 National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)
- 479 Central Queensland University
- 480 Federation of Parents and Citizens' Association of New South Wales (P&C Federation)
- 481 Monash University Gippsland Student Union
- 482 Ms Mary Nixon
- 483 Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP, Federal Member for Cowper
- 484 Ms Clea Haarbarger
- 485 University of Notre Dame Australia
- 486 Port Macquarie Hastings
- 487 Ms Juliet Cullen
- 488 Ms Margaret van Aanholt
- 489 Ms Ella Harrington
- 490 North Burnett Regional Council
- 491 Ms Margaret Francis
- 492 MS Karen McMillan
- 493 Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network (HLLLEN)
- 494 Ms Sue Tarrant
- 495 Mr Bruce Guthrie
- 496 Ms Lynda Gerrard
- 497 CONFIDENTIAL
- 498 Ms Julianne Arnold
- 499 Ms Leanne McRae
- 500 Mr Anderson & Ms Rosemary Dufty
- 501 Ms Colleen Allen
- 502 Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc) (WA Farmers)
- 503 Ms Carina Dufty
- 504 Mr Jamie Giacomini
- 505 Ms Julie Marwood
- 506 Ms Belinda Haigh
- 507 South West Local Learning and Employment Network (SWLLEN)
- 508 Ms Sarah Liddiard

- 509 Ms Tess Beyer
- 510 Mr Michael Atkinson
- 511 Ms Karen & Mr Alec McCarthy
- 512 Bright P12 College
- 513 Mr Dean Whitehead
- 514 CONFIDENTIAL
- 515 Mr Pat O'Leary
- 516 Mr Peter & Ms Joanna Basha
- 517 R.B.& M.Alden
- 518 Ms Kelly Gannon
- 519 University of Tasmania
- 520 Mr Nick Flood
- 521 Narromine High School
- 522 Gippsland East LLEN
- 523 Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR)
- 524 University of Sydney
- 525 Mr Brett Sullivan
- 526 City of Mandurah
- 527 TAFE Directors Australia (TDA)
- 528 Western Australia Government
- 529 Ms Vicki Shakes
- 530 Mr Michael and Ms Hannelore Hepburn
- 531 Ms Jacqueline Van Velsen
- 532 Ouyen P-12 College Parents' Association
- 533 Parents Victoria
- 534 Tasmanian Government
- 535 Northern Territory Isolated Children's Parents Association (NTICPA)
- 536 Mr Peter Bereicua
- 537 Charles Sturt University
- 538 Mr Rob Oliver
- 539 Mr Tiffany Ray
- 540 Tasmania Principals Association
- 541 Ms Linda Wright
- 542 Ms Anne Orr
- 543 Mrs D Trezise
- 544 Ms Alana Eslick and others
- 545 Ms Sarah Henderson
- 546 RMIT University
- 547 Ms Pam Stevens
- 548 Provincial Cities Association of SA
- 549 Ms Joan & Mr Michael Hall
- 550 Mr Michael & Ms Jo-Anne Saunders
- 551 Ms Catherine & Mr Robert Beech
- 552 National Union of Students Inc.
- 553 Mr Richard & Ms Jenny Boonstra
- 554 AgriFood Skills Australia

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- 555 NSW Farmers' Association
556 Gannawarra Shire Council
557 Mr Michael Backhouse
558 University of New England (UNE)
559 Rural Health In the Northern Outback (RHINO), James Cook University
560 National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)
561 Mrs Monica Jessop
562 National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology,
and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional (SiMERR) Australia
563 Mr Jack Bennett
564 Country Women's Association of New South Wales
565 Ms Jeanette De Landgraft
566 Mr Desmond Campbell
567 CONFIDENTIAL
568 Ms Harriet Kempton
569 Ms Jessica Verbeek
570 Mr Paul Price
571 Equal Opportunity Practitioners In Higher Education Australasia
572 Ms Jenni Vanyai
573 Mr Tony McGrath
574 Mrs Ellen M Walker
575 Ms Judy Lawless
576 Ms Fiona & Mr Daryl Kowald
577 Ms J Greacen
578 Ms Robyn Bell
579 Ms Julie and Mr Michael Riley
580 Ms Rikki Morgan
581 Ms Jess O'Callaghan
582 Students' Representative Council (SRC), The University of Sydney
583 Ms Liana Van de Veerdonk
584 Ms Kirsti Purss
585 Name Withheld
586 Ms Susan Slattery
587 The Pople family
588 Ms Taylor Miles
589 Mr David Crouch
590 Mr Andrew Sanger
591 Mr John Coulter
592 Name Withheld
593 CONFIDENTIAL
594 Ms Kay Hull MP, Member for Riverina
595 Ms Judy Smyth
596 Mr Ashlan Harris
597 Ms Susan Barrett
598 Name Withheld
599 Ms Anita J McDonald

- 600 Ms Jan Lynch
- 601 Name Withheld
- 602 Name Withheld
- 603 Mr Ben Newell
- 604 Ms Meran & Mr Peter Hyden
- 605 Ms Catherine Priestley
- 606 Mr Hernán Cuervo, Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne
- 607 Name Withheld
- 608 P& C Association, Findlay NSW
- 609 Name Withheld
- 610 Mr Mark Whisson
- 611 The Hall Family
- 612 Ms Naomi Campbell
- 613 Ms Caroline Geoghegan
- 614 Ms Sarah Ryan
- 615 Ms Leslie Tilbrook
- 616 Mr Chris Riley
- 617 Mr Peter Bothe
- 618 Ms Kerry Cooper
- 619 Ms Lily Chester
- 620 Mr Gary Oliver
- 621 Ms Jacky Patience
- 622 Ms Marita Coote
- 623 Ms Steffie Robinson
- 624 Mr Peter Conroy
- 625 Ms Melissa Walsh
- 626 Mr Julian Rice
- 627 Open High School
- 628 University of South Australia
- 629 Mr Andrew Hawkins
- 630 Committee for Ballarat
- 631 Ms Tracee Spiby
- 632 Name Withheld
- 633 Mr Luke Scully
- 634 Mr Brenton & Ms Julie Peltz
- 635 Ms Robyn, Mr John, Miss Jess & Mr Josh Copeland
- 636 Mr Daryl Headlam
- 637 Name Withheld
- 638 Ms Lyn Hosking
- 639 Mrs Jennifer Ferguson
- 640 Ms Clare Bowditch
- 641 Mr Joseph Baker
- 642 Ms Veronica Burns
- 643 Ms Kerri Dunn
- 644 Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (WACSSO)

-
- 645 Ms Monica Radomiljac
646 Ms Genevieve and Mr Michael Wells
647 Ms Christine Beyer
648 Ms Cathy & Mr Craig Rutjens
649 Name Withheld
650 Girton Grammar School Bendigo
651 Ms Catherine Caddy
652 Name Withheld
653 Mr Matthew & Ms Amanda Cook
654 Ms Fiona Sibson
655 Mr Alexander Eastwood
656 Mr Thomas Draper
657 Bendigo Youth Allowance Action Group (BYAAG)
658 CONFIDENTIAL
659 Ms Fiona Ezzy
660 Mr Nigel Bowen
661 Name Withheld
662 R M Spiby-Jones
663 MS Ann See
664 Name Withheld
665 Name Withheld
666 Name Withheld
667 CONFIDENTIAL
668 Mr Peter Draper
669 Mr Tom Tavener
670 Name Withheld
671 Ms Sarah Dickins
672 Mr Daniel McKay
673 Name Withheld
674 Mr Robert Sligar
675 Mr Colin Sandford
676 Name Withheld
677 Mr Anthony Green
678 Mr Alan Bowmaker
679 Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia incorporated
(SPERA)
680 Manjimup Senior High School – School Council
681 Gippsland Lakes Community Health (GLCH)
682 Mr Morris Dickins
683 Mr Merry Dickins
684 Mr David Forshaw
685 Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT)
686 Ms Robyn & Mr Tim Harrington
687 Mr David Ryan
688 Ms Carolyn & Mr Peter Jennings
689 Name Withheld

- 690 Mr Andrew & Ms Sandra Watson
- 691 Deakin University
- 692 Mr Ian Blayney MLA, Member for Geraldton
- 693 Name Withheld
- 694 Deakin University Students Association (DUSA)
- 695 Remote Area Planning and Development Board
- 696 Ms Jane Cowie, BSW (Hons)
- 697 Ms Debbie Irwin
- 698 Ms Katie Morrison
- 699 La Trobe University's School of Law
- 700 NSW Disability Discrimination Legal Centre Inc.
- 701 Mrs Janine Dowdell
- 702 Parliamentary National Party (WA) Inc.
- 703 Ms Helen Eastwood
- 704 National Union of Students Inc. (NUS)
- 705 Ms Jennifer Hyams
- 706 Mr Robert Oakeshott MP, Federal Member for Lyne
- 707 Newcastle University Students' Association (NUSA)
- 708 Great Southern TAFE
- 709 Mount Gambier High School Governing Council
- 710 Curtin University Student Guild
- 711 Mr Gary Walker
- 712 CONFIDENTIAL
- 713 Ms Robin Muller
- 714 Ms Emma Greeney
- 715 Group of Eight (Go8)
- 716 Ms Clara Geoghegan
- 717 Mr ROWAN RAMSEY MP, Federal Member for Grey
- 718 Mr Stephen Sheriff
- 719 Mr Mark & Ms Cate Braithwaite
- 720 North Coast TAFE Institute Council
- 721 Mr Helen & Mr Andrew Spencer-Wright
- 722 Student Guild, University of Western Australia
- 723 Mr Anthony May
- 724 Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA)
- 725 Mr Reece Vanyai
- 726 South East Local Government Association (SELGA)
- 727 Ms Clare & Mr David Mathison
- 728 KIRBY FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS
- 729 Ms Caitlin McMillian
- 730 Ms Andrea & Mr Terry Macfarlane
- 731 Ms Sandra Kerr
- 732 Mr Neill & Ms Christine Rowlandson
- 733 Mr Garry Stephens A.F.A.I.M., Grad Dip of Bus Mgt (Monash),
A.R.M.I.T., J.P.
- 734 Mrs Margaret Doyle

- 735 Ms Prudence Campbell
736 Mr Michael Geoghegan
737 East Manjimup Primary School
738 Renmark High School Governing Council
739 Name Withheld
740 Mr Luke Smyth
741 Albany Youth Advisory Council
742 Mr Julian Calver
743 Mr Ben Rossiter
744 The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA)
745 St Joseph's College, Mildura
746 Mrs Charlotte Della Vedova
747 Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF)
748 Ms Grace & Mr Milton Thompson
749 Mr Lindsay Bauer
750 MR Wayne & Ms Mary Lou Gardam
751 Ms Mary Johnson
752 CONFIDENTIAL
753 CONFIDENTIAL
754 Mr John Ryan
755 Ms Kimberley Hare
756 Name Withheld
757 Name Withheld
758 Ms Debra Leishman
759 Mr Kevin Jones

Additional Information Received

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

- **TWEED HEADS, NSW – 2 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Received on 17 September 2009, from Office of the Vice Chancellor, Southern Cross University;
 - Received on 29 September 2009 from Mr David Cox, Deputy Principal, Southern Cross School for Distance Education;
 - Received on 19 October 2009, from Ms Denise Janek, TAFE Directors Australia;
 - Received on 20 October 2009, from Ms Elizabeth McGregor, TAFE Directors Australia;
 - Received on 21 October 2009, from Ms Sue Campbell, principal Policy and Project Officer, Office of Vice Chancellor, University of New England (UNE);

- Received on 21 October 2009, from Professor John Pegg, SiMERR National Centre, University of New England (UNE).

- **PERTH, WA – 21 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Received on 22 September 2009, from Mr Jonathan Hoskin, Principal, Mount Barker Community College;
 - Received on 13 October 2009, from Dr Peter Harvey, Principal, Albany High School;
 - Received on 14 October 2009, from Mr Frank Italiano, Catholic Education Office of WA;
 - Received on 19 October 2009, from Mr John Scott, Ms Wendy Burns and Ms Karen Dickenson, TAFE WA;
 - Received on 19 October 2009, from Professor Taggart, Murdoch University;
 - Received on 19 October 2009, from Ms Jennifer Nicol, Curtin University of Technology;
 - Received on 19 October 2009, from Ms Karen Dickenson, Kimberley TAFE;
 - Received on 20 October 2009, from Ms Barbara Black, University of WA;
 - Received on 20 October 2009, from Ms Wendy Burns, Network of TAFE Colleges in WA;
 - Received on 10 December 2009, from Mr Don Boyd, Society for the Provision of Education for Rural Australia (SPERA).

- **PERTH, WA – 22 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Received on 24 September 2009, from Basha Stasak, President, Murdoch Guild of Students, Murdoch University;
 - Received on 21 October 2009, from Mr Mike Norton, WA Farmers Federation.

- **NETHERBY, SA – 23 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Received on 14 October 2009, from Professor Peter Hoj, Vice Chancellor, University of South Australia
 - Received on 21 October 2009, from Professor Charles Webb, Charles Darwin University;
 - Received on 22 October 2009, from Professor Andrew Parkin, Flinders University.

- **TOWNSVILLE, QLD – 10 NOVEMBER 2009**
 - Received on 18 November 2009, from Ms Terri Bryne, Principal, Charters Towers State High School;
 - Received on 18 November 2009, from Mr Ernie Christie, Townsville Catholic Education Office;
 - Received on 20 November 2009, from Ms Heather Hanks, RHINO, James Cook University.

- **MELBOURNE, VIC – 11 NOVEMBER 2009**
 - Received on 23 November 2009, from Ms Bronwyn Stubbs, Principal, Distance Education Centre Victoria;
 - Received from Mr Paul Barnett, University of Tasmania;
 - Received on 14 December 2009, from Mr Phil Brown, Country Education Project.

- **CANBERRA, ACT – 12 NOVEMBER 2009**
 - Received on 12 November 2009, from Mr Paul Rajan, General Manager Strategic Initiatives, Strategic Policy & Futures, Department of Education and Training;
 - Received on 24 November 2009, from Mr Cliff Cowdroy, Chairman, Bush Children's Education Foundation of NSW Inc;
 - Received on 24 November 2009, from Ms Kim Ryan, Senior Project Manager, Education Partnerships Division, Office of Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victorian Government;
 - Received on 30 November 2009, from the Department on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR);
 - Received on 14 December 2009, from the Department on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).
 - Received on 15 December 2009, from the Department on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

TABLED DOCUMENTS

- **TWEED HEADS, NSW – 2 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Tabled by TweedgoldcoastRs Association Inc. Opening comments/submission to committee;

- Tabled by Professor John Pegg, Director, SiMERR National Centre. Opening Comments/submission to committee.

- **PERTH, WA – 22 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Tabled by WA Farmers Federation:
 - Opening statement from Ms Trish Leake
 - Background Information – literacy workshops, proposal to assist in improving literacy levels, WA Farmers sponsored literacy days,
 - Publication '*Engaging College Communities: The impact of residential colleges in Australia higher education*' AUSSE Research briefing, ACER Volume 4, April 2009

- **NETHERBY, SA – 23 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Tabled by TAFE SA:
 - Submission/Notes by Dr Ruth Schubert
 - '*Overview statement, Dr Ruth Schubert, General Manager, Training Division, TAFE SA Regional*' from Mr David Mezinec

- **ALBURY, NSW – 24 SEPTEMBER 2009**
 - Tabled by Ms Marg Crisp, CEO, North East Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.:
 - Opening statement
 - Publication '*NELLEN Environmental Scan*' March 2009
 - Publication '*Hume Region Youth Issues Report*', Youth Affairs Interdepartmental Committee Report, August 2009

- **TOWNSVILLE, QLD – 10 NOVEMBER 2009**
 - Tabled by Ms Heather Hanks & ms Anna-Jane Gordon, RHINO, James Cook University. JCU Halls of residence Western Courts – 2009 Fee Schedule.

- **MELBOURNE, VIC – 11 NOVEMBER 2009**
 - Tabled by Mr John Ireland, Gippsland Lakes Community Health. '*Deferring a university Offer in Regional Victoria*' booklet, May 2009, by John Polese.

APPENDIX 2

Public Hearings and Witnesses

WEDNESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2009, TWEED HEADS, NSW

- BAKER, Professor Graham, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Scholarship),
University of Southern Queensland
- COX, Mr David Kenneth, Deputy Principal,
K-12 and Distance Education, Southern Cross School, New South Wales
Department of Education and Training
- DALY, Ms Debra, Chair,
TAFE Directors Australia
- JANEK, Ms Denise, Member,
TAFE Directors Australia
- MCGREGOR, Mrs Elizabeth, Member,
TAFE Directors Australia
- MITCHELL, Mr Adrian Trevor, Member,
TAFE Directors Australia
- O'FLYNN, Ms Geraldine, President,
tweedgoldcoastRs Association Inc
- PEGG, Professor John Edward, Director,
National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology, and
Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia
- PETTIGREW, Professor Alan, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer,
University of New England
- PIPER, Mr Joseph, Member,
TAFE Directors Australia
- ROTHWELL, Professor Bryan, Head of Campus,
Tweed Heads and Gold Coast, Southern Cross University
- SLAVIN, Mrs Susan Anne, Member,
TAFE Directors Australia
- THOMAS, Professor Paul, AM, Vice-Chancellor and President,
University of the Sunshine Coast
- WRIGHT, Mr Ronald, Member,
TAFE Directors Australia

MONDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2009, PERTH, WA

- BLACK, Ms Barbara, Director,
Albany Centre, University of Western Australia
- BOYD, Mr Don, Treasurer,
Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia
- BURNS, Ms Wendy, Managing Director,
South West Regional College of TAFE
- BYRNES, Miss Willa Jill, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- CANN, Mr Alex Declan, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- CARAMIA, Ms Tessa May, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- DICKINSON, Ms Karen, Managing Director,
Kimberley TAFE
- DOUGLAS, Miss Felicity-Jayne, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- FLETT, Ms Tammy Maree, Facilitator,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- GILET, Mr Benedict Leif, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- HAVEL, Dr Peter, Principal,
Albany Senior High School
- HOSKIN, Mr Jonathan Eric, Principal,
Mount Barker Community College
- INGLIS, Mr Mark, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- ITALIANO, Mr Frank, Consultant,
Catholic Education Office, Western Australia
- JONES, Mr Chris, Research and Planning Director,
Great Southern TAFE
- MCLEAY, Mr Jack James, Secretary,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- NICOL, Professor Jennifer, Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
Faculty of Humanities, Curtin University of Technology
- RICHARDS, Mr Dwayne, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council

- SCOTT, Mr John, Managing Director,
CY O'Connor College of TAFE
- SLEBOS, Mr Bronson Micheal, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- STARLING, Miss Ashleigh, Member,
Albany Youth Advisory Council
- TAGGART, Professor Andrew, Dean,
Faculty of Arts and Education, Murdoch University

TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2009, PERTH, WA

- CUCOW, Mr Shane, Guild President,
Student Guild, Edith Cowan University
- DOWNSBOROUGH, Mr Gary, Principal,
Broome Senior High School; and Representative, Australian Secondary
Principals Association
- FRY, Mr Robert, President,
Western Australian Council of State School Organisations
- FUCHSBICHLER, Mrs Jane, Executive Portfolio Holder,
Western Australian Farmers Federation
- HILL, Mr Alan, Policy Director,
Western Australian Farmers Federation
- LEAKE, Mrs Trish,
Western Australian Farmers Federation
- MORRISSEY, Mrs Roxanne, Federal President,
Isolated Children's Parents Association
- OMARI, Professor Arshad, Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Edith Cowan University
- PETTIT, Mr Colin, Executive Director,
Regional and Remote Schools, Department of Education and Training
- ROSE, Mr Dominic Joseph, Guild President,
Student Guild, University of Western Australia
- SHORT, Ms Jessica, Vice-President,
Education, Student Guild, Curtin University
- STASAK, Miss Basha, President,
Guild of Students, Murdoch University

WEDNESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2009, NETHERBY, SA

- ANDREWS, Ms Jan, Deputy Chief Executive, Schools and Children's Services, Department of Education and Children's Services South Australia
- COSTELLO, Mr Garry, Regional Director, Limestone Coast District, Department of Education and Children's Services
- CROUCH, Mr David John, Member, Renmark High School Governing Council
- DENING, Mrs Anne Margaret, Educational Manager, Innovations, Teaching and Learning, TAFE SA Regional Institute
- DICKINS, Ms Merry, Parent Representative, Mount Gambier High School Governing Council
- DIMOU, Mr Louis, Chairperson, Renmark High School Governing Council
- FETHERSTONHAUGH, Mrs Jane, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, District Council of Grant
- FORGAN, Mr Robert, Executive Officer, South East Local Government Association
- GRAY, Mr Ron, Parent, Loxton High School
- JOHNCOCK, Ms Jennifer, Senior Training Manager, Aboriginal Access Centre, TAFE SA Regional
- MAHER, Mr Jim, South East Education and Training Authority Delegate, South East Local Government Association
- MEZINEC, Mr David, Business Development Manager, TAFE SA Regional
- MIBUS, Ms Margaret Veronica, General Manager, Aboriginal Access Centre, TAFE SA
- MILES, Miss Sasha, Youth Representative, South East Local Government Association
- NITSCHKE, Mr Wilf, Secretary, Mount Gambier High School Governing Council
- OTWAY, Professor Neil James, Director, Centre for Regional Engagement, University of South Australia
- PARKIN, Professor Andrew, Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic, Flinders University
- PAYNE, Mr Anthony David, Head, Equity and Diversity Unit, Deakin University

- SCHUBERT, Dr Ruth, General Manager,
TAFE SA Regional
- SIZER, Ms Terry, Regional Director,
Yorke and Mid North, Department of Education and Children's Services South
Australia
- SPANGENBERG, Mr Kent, Principal,
Loxton High School
- SPARKS, Mr Rod, Assistant Secretary,
Mount Gambier High School Governing Council
- VICKERY, Mr Richard, Mayor,
Tatiara District Council; and President, South East Local Government
Association
- WEBB, Professor Charles, Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Teaching and Learning, Charles Darwin University
- ZOELLNER, Pro Vice Chancellor Don,
Vocational Education and Training, Charles Darwin University

THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2009, ALBURY, NSW

- BARROW, Mr David, President,
National Union of Students
- BATTERSBY, Professor David Arthur, Vice-Chancellor,
University of Ballarat
- CRASE, Professor Lin Ronald, Executive Director,
Albury-Wodonga Campus, La Trobe University
- CRISP, Ms Margaret, Chief Executive Officer,
North East Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.
- HASTINGS, Mr Graham Nicholas, Research Coordinator,
National Union of Students
- SHARP, Mr Colin James, Director,
Planning and Audit, Charles Sturt University

TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2009, TOWNSVILLE, QLD

- BYRNE, Mrs Therese Jane, Principal,
Charters Towers State High School, Education Queensland
- CAPELL, Mr Jeffrey Thomas, Acting Principal,
Ayr State High School, Education Queensland
- CHRISTIE, Mr Ernest Lee, Assistant Director,
Townsville Catholic Education Office
- CLARK, Mr John, Principal, School of Distance Education,
Charters Towers
- DYER, Mrs Robyn, Institute Director,
Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE
- FRANCIS, Mr Gary Edward, Acting Director,
Workforce Planning and Resourcing, Human Resources Branch, Queensland
Department of Education and Training
- GORDON, Miss Anna-Jane Augustus, Publications Officer 2009,
Rural Health in the Northern Outback (RHINO)
- HANKS, Ms Heather Ann, Year 4 Medical Student,
James Cook University; Rural Health in the Northern Outback (RHINO)
- LAWRENCE, Ms Barbara Jane, Director,
Navigate, Central Queensland University
- MORRIS, Mr David Michael, Principal,
Northern Beaches State High School, Education Queensland
- MURRAY, Associate Professor Richard, Head of School,
School of Medicine and Dentistry, James Cook University
- MURRAY, Mr Dale Bruce, National Administrator,
Youth+, Edmund Rice Education Australia
- VANN, Professor Andrew Michael, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
James Cook University
- WAGER, Mr Kevin Henry, Principal,
Ingham State High School, Education Queensland

WEDNESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2009, MELBOURNE, VIC

- AUCIELLO, Ms Julia, Immediate Past President, Monash University Gippsland Student Union
- BAIKIE, Ms Jessica, Student, Launceston College
- BARNETT, Mr Paul, Executive Director, Planning and Development, University of Tasmania
- BOYER, Ms Kim, Board Chair, Tasmanian Academy
- BROWN, Mr Phil, Council Member, Rural Education Forum Australia, Executive Officer Country Education Project, Victoria
- EDWARDS, Ms Michaela (Cayla), President, Deakin University Student Association
- IRELAND, Mr John Charles, School Focused Youth Service Coordinator, Gippsland Lakes Community Health
- KIRK, Professor Joyce, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students, RMIT University
- McHARDY, Mrs Gail Elizabeth, Executive Officer, Parents Victoria Inc
- NIX, Miss Katherine Therese, President, Bendigo Student Association Inc.
- PETERSON, Mr Hunter, Student, Launceston College
- STEELE, Professor Phillip, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Campus Coordination, Campus Director Berwick and Peninsula, Monash University
- STUBBS, Ms Bronwyn, President, Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools
- WELLER, Dr Stephen Adrian, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students, Victoria University
- WILKINSON, Ms Rachael, Student, Launceston College

THURSDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2009, CANBERRA, ACT

- AUNGLES, Mr Phil, Acting Branch Manager, Equity, Performance and Indigenous Branch, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- COWDROY, Mr Clifford Reeve, Chairman,
Bush Children's Education Foundation of New South Wales Inc
- MASTERS, Ms Wendi, Director,
Strategic Policy, Training and Higher Education, Department of Education and
Training, Northern Territory
- MOREHEAD, Dr Alison, Group Manager,
Social Inclusion and Participation, Department of Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations
- PHILLIPS, Ms Gabrielle Anne, Branch Manager,
Inclusive Education, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace
Relations
- RAJAN, Mr Paul, General Manager,
Strategic Initiatives, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory
- REEVES, Mrs Sharon, Acting Director,
Planning, Research and Review, Department of Education and Training,
Northern Territory
- RYAN, Ms Kimberlee Louise, Acting General Manager,
Education Partnerships Division, Office for Government School Education,
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- SHANNON, Ms Robyn, Branch Manager,
Income Support Policy Branch, Department of Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations
- WALTON, Mrs Helen, Publicity Officer,
Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales