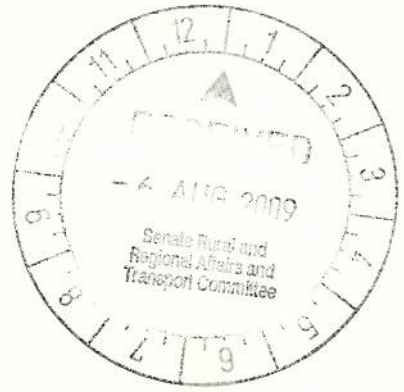


August 3, 2009



To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing in relation to the Senate Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

It is my understanding that this inquiry will act as 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.

We wish to focus on the current and proposed barriers to regional students that can prevent them from undertaking tertiary studies.

It is with this in mind that we refer to the terms of reference sections a) the financial impact on rural and regional students who are attending metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE
proposed government c) the implications of current and proposed government measures on prospective students living

in rural and regional areas:

e) the adequacy of government ~~is~~ measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post-secondary study;

and g) the impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities.

It is our firm belief that the financial burden placed on regional students attending university cannot be narrowed down to a certain figure as many student circumstances differ. For example we are older parents within five years of retirement. Neither parents work full time (both casual). We are still paying off our mortgage, have a younger son still at school and unable to offer our son any financial assistance. He deserves a decent education. In order to follow his dreams, the course he wants to do is only available in Melbourne. He is working hard in his 'Gap' year to save money and establish his 'independence'. Next year he hopes to attend university and should be able to do so, without added stress on top of his course requirements. The cost of on-campus accomodation and the metropolitan rental markets are only ever going to increase, probably at a superior rate to levels of government support.

To many regional students, the proposed changes to the eligibility for the Independent rate of Youth Allowance it seems that the government does not understand the increased costs faced by students who are forced to live away from home to pursue their chosen course.

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Many of these students, like our son are currently completing a 'gap' year to assist in shouldering the financial burden involved in relocating to complete tertiary studies. The Education Minister has not guaranteed that these students will not be affected, which has effectively meant that the rules they were told to follow by their teachers and careers officers have become virtually useless.

We find it hard to believe that the Federal Government has made these decisions in the best interest of regional students. The only serve to reduce the percentage of regional students that currently attend university.

By providing the appropriate levels of support and reducing the financial burdens, more regional students will be encouraged to undertake tertiary studies which will provide benefits back to their local communities.

In closing, we believe the government must be doing more to protect and nurture the regional young people who will provide the platform that will launch the future Australia.

Yours sincerely

B. Flower B. Flower

T. FLOWER

The Flower Family G. FLOWER 