

The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

With regard to the inquiry into rural and regional access to secondary and tertiary education opportunities, Canberra should also be included because of the limited universities and opportunities available for local students to be enrolled locally. Most Canberra year 12 graduates have to leave home and study interstates because of the unavailability of the study fields of their interest. For example, Chemical Engineering and Pharmacy are not offered by any university in Canberra.

The cost of studying away from home at a university is not affordable for many families with a low or medium income, and many students have to take up part time job or a gap year in order to gain assistance (youth allowance) from the federal government through Centrelink and start or continue their tertiary education. For many students, they would not be able to pursue their interest of higher education and thus their career if they cannot gain financial support from the government. I strongly urge the committee consider students (rural and of small cities including Canberra) studying away from home be exempted from the new requirements introduced in the 2009 budget.