



**Flinders**  
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The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Reference Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities**

Flinders University welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry.

It is widely recognised that people living outside of urban areas experience relative disadvantage in terms of their access to and participation in higher education. Flinders University has sought to address this educational disadvantage through a number of measures.

1. The University operates a Rural and Isolated Student Access Scheme. Under this scheme, eligible Year 12 students seeking entry into the University's courses are allocated bonus points for attending a rural or isolated school in South Australia or interstate. The bonus points are added to the applicant's 'university aggregate' (i.e. the aggregation of admissible Year 12 scaled subject scores) and this has the effect of ranking the applicant higher in terms of admission to a University course than would otherwise be the case.
2. The University's extensive geographic footprint supports educational access for people from rural and regional Australia, particularly in the area of medical and health education.
  - The Flinders University Rural Clinical School specifically aims to encourage students from rural and regional areas to enrol in courses for health professionals and ensure that substantial training of health professionals occurs in rural and regional areas. This is a vital component of the University's commitment to supporting Federal Government initiatives to enhance health outcomes, including the supply of health professionals, for rural and regional Australia. Medical students can undertake the Parallel Rural Community Curriculum in the Riverland, Barossa Valley, Greater Green Triangle (centred on Mt Gambier) or Hills, Mallee and Fleurieu regions. The Bachelor of Nursing degree is also taught in the Riverland.
  - The Northern Territory Clinical School currently provides medical training in the Northern Territory for the final two years of the University's medical program. A collaboration with Charles Darwin University, this initiative has been further enhanced, with effect from 2011, to enable students from the Northern Territory to complete their entire medical degree through the Northern Territory Medical Program. The NT Clinical School has rural campuses in Katherine, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy to allow students the opportunity to spend six months or more in a rural location.

inspiring  
achievement

3. Through the support of a range of benefactors and organisations, the University provides institutional scholarships and bursaries designed to assist student from rural and regional backgrounds.

A particular concern to students from rural and regional areas leaving home to attend universities is the cost associated with this relocation. Flinders University therefore welcomes the announcement in the Federal Budget 2009-2010 of the introduction of a Relocation Allowance of \$4000 in the first year and \$1000 for successive years for eligible Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY recipients who relocate to attend university.

In general, Flinders University is supportive of the package of changes to student income support announced in the Federal Budget. In particular, it is pleasing that the Government has responded to calls from the Higher Education sector over a number of years to increase the Youth Allowance Parental Income Test threshold, exempt equity and merit-based scholarship income from means testing for the purpose of student income support, extend income support to cover all course work Masters degree courses and reduce the Youth Allowance age of independence.

We note that, as part of these measures, the Government has tightened the workforce participation criteria for establishing independence under Youth Allowance. It has been reported to the University that the workforce participation criteria of 30 hours of work per week for 18 months over a two year period may have a disproportionate impact on young people from rural and regional areas due to difficulties in finding employment of 30 hours a week in rural and regional areas. We ask that the Federal Government consider the application of this measure to ensure that it does not create an unintended impediment to access to tertiary education for students from rural and regional Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Andrew Parkin  
Acting Vice-Chancellor