



**Office of the President**

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20 August 2009

The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: [rrat.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:rrat.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

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

I am writing in response to the invitation for public submissions to the Inquiry and in particular the adequacy of Government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post-secondary study.

In particular I would like to bring to your attention the concerns Councils in rural South Australia have in regard to proposed changes to student income support as set out in the Australian Government's May 2009 Budget.

While changes such as relocation scholarships, increased parental income thresholds and discounted asset tests for farmers and small business are positive outcomes, changes to the criteria for qualifying for the Independent Youth Allowance (IYA) will have a real negative impact on country students and their families. The change which comes into effect in January 2010 will act as an impediment to rural and remote students accessing tertiary education.

The move to a single criterion for qualifying for IYA of having worked full-time (at least 30 hours a week) for at least 18 months in a 2 year period will be a disincentive for regional students to undertake tertiary studies.

Finding work to that extent in regional areas is difficult at the best of times and in these current economic times it will not be practicable. There are significant numbers of students in country and regional areas who have already been forced to leave their family homes to find employment in their "gap year" due to lack of opportunity in their own community. Changes to the rules do not take into account that some courses do not offer a 2 year deferral or appreciate the need to balance the demands of full time study and working 30 hours a week without the close support of family.

Rural and remote students who have already made the decision to defer their studies until 2010 and find employment in their gap year to qualify for the IYA did so in good faith. These students have also unwittingly been victims of Government policy which will do little to encourage participation in higher education and widen the gap between metropolitan and rural Australians.



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It is recommended that a review of the IYA criteria and in particular the recent Australian Government 2009 Budget announcements, be undertaken to ensure that country students who have to relocate to undertake tertiary studies are not unfairly disadvantaged.

Yours sincerely



Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis  
**President**

Copy to: The Hon Chris Bowen MP Minister for Human Services  
Hon Michael O'Brien MP, Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education  
Senator Cory Bernardi, Liberal Party of Australia  
Senator Simon Birmingham, Liberal Party of Australia  
Senator Don Farrell, Australian Labor Party  
Senator The Hon Alan Ferguson, Liberal Party of Australia  
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