

Senate Committee
Rural & Regional Education
C/o rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

30th July 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

The cost of sending a child to University when relocation is required is a significant amount. The average country family will incur costs of between \$13,000 and \$15,000 per child per year. This equates to around \$10,000 more than if the child was able to attend University while still living at home. An average degree of 3 years will mean an investment of \$30,000. Longer degrees for courses such as engineering or medicine are even more. This is of course excluding any HECS/Help fees.

That is a large burden on any family. Many families often have both parents working to pay for their children's education. By making this sacrifice they are then likely to miss out on many of the proposed support payments and other government funding. I am aware of some families with children close in age, who are trying desperately to support two or more children through University studies at the same time.

The proposed changes to government support for tertiary studies disadvantage more rural families and don't do enough to support rural students who need to relocate to study. One of the primary tests for support should be based on the necessity to relocate. More needs to be done to provide government assistance to cover the significantly higher costs for rural students.

We are trying to encourage people to live in regional areas but this cost is a definite disadvantage. It is hard enough to have to see your children leave home, often many miles away, at an early age (some as young as 17) but the added financial burden is adding salt to the wound. An absolute minimum change should be that the relocation funding is not tied to income levels but rather distance to university and the need to leave home.

The government needs to support these students who are academically capable, to obtain the best education possible. This will ultimately provide better resources for Australia and is likely to also help address the skills shortages in regional areas.

Yours truly,

Catherine Nickholds