

The Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

August 3, 2009

**SUBMISSION:  
PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE INDEPENDENT YOUTH ALLOWANCE**

**1. Opening Comments**

Twenty five years ago, we relocated our young family from a capital city to a rural area in Gippsland, Victoria. We have raised our three children in this rural area, and sought to ensure that they obtained quality educations and a broad range of experience to equip them for the future. In supporting them to obtaining tertiary education, the inequalities between rural students and their city counterparts have become starkly apparent.

There are considerable financial and emotional disadvantages faced by rural students in moving away from home and family to seek tertiary education in far away cities.

We make this submission in relation to the increased level of disadvantage that will be faced by rural students, from the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance.

In our opinion, any student who must leave home for study, should automatically become eligible for Independent Youth Allowance. We seek nothing more than equality of opportunity for all students.

**2. Responses to Terms of Reference**

*The financial impact on rural and regional students who are attending metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE:*

- Rural and regional students and their families are required to meet the costs of supporting students away from home. This represents a major inequity compared to metropolitan students;
- In our experience, costs of accommodating a student in Melbourne for the academic year are more than \$18,000 per annum. In addition, there are significant other additional costs ‘over and above’ living costs at home. These include computer and internet access, communications costs, and travel expenses etc.;
- There is a low likelihood of students being able to meet the 18 month, 30 hours/week work requirements in their rural areas before they leave home:
  - Few jobs are available in rural and regional areas because of drought, commodity prices, and the global financial situation;
  - What jobs are available are generally casual, short term (seasonal);

- Rural employers have no incentive to offer continuous jobs for 18 months, 30 hours/week to students who intend resigning at the end of 18 months to pursue their studies.

*The education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas:*

- Although some university courses are offered in the Gippsland region:
  - Travel distances within the region necessitate that most students must leave home to even access these regional campuses;
  - Course choices are limited, and students pursuing studies in all other courses must leave home to attend other institutions in other locations; and,
- It is highly beneficial (for the regions) for rural and regional tertiary students to be exposed to broader experiences, only available by moving beyond the region, in order that the experience and skills gained may eventually return to rural and regional areas.

*The implications of existing and proposed Government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas.*

- Cost barriers discourage pursuit of tertiary study for rural and regional students;
- Knowledge and skills drain away from rural and regional areas;
- The Government's so called 'Education Revolution' looks like a purely metropolitan phenomenon;
- How are inequitable educational opportunities measured in terms of the Government's own anti-discrimination policies and legislation?

*The short and long term impact of current and proposed Government policies on regional university and TAFE college enrolments.*

- As smaller institutions, regional universities and TAFE colleges would appear to have less ability to defer enrolments for 2 years without impacting on their financial viability:  
(i.e. less 'bums on seats' = less government funding available = loss of skilled staff = reduced ability to compete with metropolitan institutions)

*The adequacy of Government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post secondary study*

- Proposed measures are inadequate and discriminatory against rural and regional students;
- In our particular case, one of our children is currently completing 1<sup>st</sup> year studies, and will now face the prospect of leaving university for 2 years to meet the work requirements for Independent Youth Allowance. At this stage we are advised that universities are not prepared to hold a student place for 2 years while the work requirement is (hopefully) completed. At the end of 2 years, if the Independent Youth Allowance has been granted, it would seem that our son would then need

to re-apply for a university place, and take his chances in this competitive process.  
SURELY A REALITY CHECK IS NEEDED HERE.

*The impact of Government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities*

- Effect on current secondary students (as reported by teachers), is a decreased motivation to study in senior secondary levels: (e.g. “What is the point – I won’t be able to pursue tertiary studies anyway”);
- Cost barriers discourage pursuit of tertiary study – ambition and motivation is destroyed;
- Over time, knowledge and skills drain away from rural and regional communities.

We trust our submission will be considered by the inquiry.  
We await the inquiry findings with interest.

**Signed:**

**Rex B Candy**

**Jennifer J Candy**