
INQUIRY INTO RURAL AND REGIONAL ACCESS TO SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Financial impact on rural and regional students who are attending metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE

Education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas

Implications of current proposed government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas

Short and long term impact of current and proposed government policies on regional university and TAFE college enrolments

Adequacy of government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post-secondary study

Educational needs of rural and regional students

The impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

As the parents of a current 'gap' year student we are concerned about the changes to the status of the Youth Allowance scheme.

Our daughter completed her TEE in 2008 unfortunately her score did not enable her to be accepted into her choice of course. She made the decision to take 2009 as her gap year. In order to fulfill the financial requirements of the current scheme she has undertaken working two jobs, one in our local town and one in Bunbury which is approximately a 30km round trip. She also made the commitment to enroll in a university preparation course offered by Edith Cowan University (ECU) Bunbury to improve her entrance score and enable her to enter into her course of choice. She has been successful in completing her preparation course and has been accepted into ECU Joondalup to commence her chosen course of Exercise and Sports Science which she is set to do in 2010.

The change of status on Youth Allowance has put a lot of stress on our daughter and many of her friends who are also current 'gap' year students. They have all worked hard to obtain jobs, usually two or more, to enable themselves to earn the required amount. They have also had to start rethinking their start date for the 2010 year. As part of the current Youth Allowance scheme, students accepted and deferred their courses to commence Semester 1 2010. With the changes many of these students will be unable to commence their course as they will not have fulfilled the requirements of the proposed changes and will therefore be unable to afford the move to Perth to commence study.

Joondalup is approximately 220kms from our home town. Our daughter has made the commitment to make the move to further her education and pursue her chosen career path. There are many expenses which will be incurred for this move to take effect.

Edith Cowan Joondalup has on-campus accommodation which is currently rented to students for \$160 per week. According to the information we have the rent is to be upfront and in full (approx \$3500 per semester). We are also of the understanding that private rental accommodation near the campus is upwards of \$180.00 per week for shared accommodation. These figures do not necessarily include utilities such as gas, water, electricity and there would be another \$20-\$30 per week to be set aside for these depending on the landlord's requirements.

Obviously students will need to eat and also purchase books and other university requirements during the course of the year. Travel is another expense that these rural students will have to incur. Many of them would rather not move to Perth. If the course of study was available to our daughter here in Bunbury she would not make the move to Perth. She would rather stay in her home town and in the country.

Looking at our personal situation, the cost per week would be approximately \$330.00

Accommodation	\$160.00
Utilities	\$ 20.00
Food/Fuel	\$120.00
University Expenses	\$ 30.00

We know that in the current economic climate that unemployment is on the rise. We also know that many employers will not employ university students because of the flexibility required for work and study hours. Those that are successful in employment are working in areas which are not paying a very high hourly rate and also do not offer them many hours per week.

The current changes proposed certainly do not encourage rural students to continue on with tertiary studies. Many of the students in our daughter's year have become very despondent about the decisions which have been made and are now not sure what their futures hold. They are unsure as to whether they are going to be able to afford the move to Perth, whether they are going to be able to firstly get a job in Perth and secondly be able to sustain working the hours required whilst committing themselves to their University hours and study.

Many of them are more than happy to stay within their home environment but the course choices are not available. In the Bunbury district we have Edith Cowan University and TAFE. The courses at these establishments need to be reviewed along side the records of the Perth establishments to see what country students are applying to study. May be then some decisions could be made as to the courses of study which are made available to country students.

Country centres are struggling to keep their population numbers growing. If the facilities were made available in large rural centres it would be of great benefit to the regional areas in that they would be able to support their local students in their tertiary studies, keep students in the jobs that they are currently employed and support the local rural economy.

It is time that the governments took a serious look into the education system that we offer here in Australia for regional and rural students and also for the system that is available to city students. It is time for us to be making the improvements to encourage the students of today to be the educated adults of tomorrow.

In closing the changes which have been made seem to be a hurried decision that was made to try and reboot the government's coffers which have been depleted by unnecessary hand outs. It is a shame to see these students who have worked so hard over the last five years at high school, and who have planned their lives and futures have it all pulled from under them and when you hear them say 'what's the point, we can't afford to go and all the hard work we have done over the past five years and in particular the last 18 months has been a total waste of time' is very disheartening.

We would urge the Senate Enquiry to consider the education future of our all young Australian's particularly those in rural and regional areas.

Yours faithfully

RA Ruland

Grant, Roslyn and Amy Ruland