

Dear Sir/Madam

In participating in this inquiry into "Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities" I would like to highlight how "Transforming Australia's Higher Education System (Income support for students)" will affect our family.

We have a daughter who is presently doing a GAP year to try and be independent, living away from home to gain the amount of money required by Centrelink to become financially independent.

- a. As a rural student our daughter has attained entry to three universities and all are at metropolitan universities. She still had to make the decision on which one she goes too, but all are for the same course. Whatever University she chooses she will have the financial burden of moving to a Metropolitan campus. This amount will depend on what type of accommodation she is able to obtain. We have estimated that it cost \$20,000 to \$30,000 for the first year's accommodation. Money she and we her parents don't have after 8 years of drought.

- c.e. The Gap year our daughter has taken was with the knowledge that she would be able to be independent after the 18 months and having earned \$19,532. Under the proposed changes, she will be able to cover this and the 30 hours per week and more. The real question is if she does this 18 months, but actually does it in 14 months will she still be eligible at the end of 18 months for independence eligibility and Youth Allowance.

Most rural and regional students may not be as lucky as our daughter to get work to cover these requirements.

Being able to obtain the full YA, will help her obtain full Rental Assistance and if she was able to obtain the present Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship, this would help go a long way to her paying for her accommodation.

Replacing the CAS with Relocation Scholarship will effectively disadvantage rural and regional students, as the monetary payments will be less than they are now, \$4,000 first year and then \$1,000 each year after. The present CAS is \$4,400 plus for 4 years. We presently have a daughter on the CAS and it serves her a lot better than what is planned.

The start up scholarship needs to cover more rural and regional students, as those who are working to achieve independence are not eligible at the beginning of the first semester of university, and when they finally are, I presume they will not be able to access it, even though they will be considered low income.

Early in this government's term the minister for Education was worried about students working long hours to remain financial. Well I think there should be an additional scaled payment for students to help them remain focused on study. Any student who has a course of 20 or more hours of face to face lectures or practicals, with similar study has covered themselves with the equivalent of a 40 hour working week. So these time heavy courses should result in these students getting more financial help, but tied to a specific grade point average, and a parental income threshold, set at a middle income family's wages.

- f. The city centric thinking of some in government have no idea of the impact this has on rural and regional students. There only a few rural universities and not all of them offer what some students want to study so there has to be good provisions for these students to leave home. The same applies to city students who want to attend regional universities. A higher income threshold would also help especially for rural and regional families. Trying to cover costs for a student at Uni which could be up to \$30,000 is a lot even for middle income families in the Bush.
- g.h. Most rural and regional students cannot afford to go to university, without taking a gap year to earn independence. How do you propose to keep these students focused for two year and the universities hold their positions open for the said two years period? I think a lot of students will give up on going to university and the students from the Rural and Regional areas will cause a drop of graduates coming back to work in rural Australia. City graduates generally stay in the city. Aka less doctors in Rural and Regional Australia. Making these proposals retrospective is very un-Australian and you forget that these 35,000 young Australians are voters. I think a fairer way of cutting down on wealthy city families abusing the system is to use postcodes. The number of wealthy rural and farming families is extremely small. There is a great need for Agricultural graduates to help feed the growing world population. Rural students will help fill this urgent need. More families may see the need to move to regional university cities or metropolitan cities so the cost of educating their children is lessened. This means fewer families in rural communities and a drop off in services so a slow dying of these communities.

In summary, I hope this senate committee, can submit to parliament significant changes to the proposed “Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System (Income support for students)” to make it fairer for rural and regional students and city students coming to rural universities and TAFE. A lot of the changes are less than what was in the Commonwealth scholarships program. And introducing it retrospectively is disgusting.

Rural and Regional communities in eastern Australia have been hurting for many years now because of the drought, we don’t need another setback for our children.

Yours sincerely

Velia O’Hare