

7 August 2009

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

Dear Sir/Madam

re: Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs & Transport

Rural and regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities

I respectfully request that the criteria for students to work part time for at least eighteen (18) months in order to gain Youth Allowance at the independent rate be removed for the following reasons:

- This will have a significant financial impact on young regional people wanting to attend city based tertiary institutions. Regional centres are facing with reduced employment opportunities. Postponing studies for 2 years to work part time at 30 hours per week represents a significant impediment
- Universities will not allow a two year deferral, after winning a placement, an applicant will need to compete again for an opportunity already received – a major disadvantage to go on with tertiary study.
- We estimate that sending one of our children to Adelaide for study will cost and extra \$15,000 or more each year. This is prohibitive. It is a major cost city - based students can avoid and represents a significant social injustice.
- There are no education alternatives available for our children in our region in terms of worthwhile tertiary learning.
- Fewer local regional students attending university will mean fewer returning graduates to our region, the intellectual capital of our region needs improvement.
- It is a significant challenge for any adult to attend university and be successful in the first year. To do so at a distance from the support of the family home makes it even more difficult. The extra financial burden complicates achievement.

It is recognised that changes may be required but I can not understand why a *'one size fits all'* change is sensible. It should be possible for the young talent in rural and regional Australia to be given consideration separate to city - based people who may have greater access to job markets and income.

I would hope that this matter can be reviewed and the needs of talented rural and regional students be recognised. These students should be automatically recognised as an independent and qualify for the youth allowance where they have no other choice but to leave their family home and town.

Yours Sincerely,

Bruce Guthrie