

dear Sir/Madam,

perhaps the best way to ask for help for country/regional students to access funds to attend University when living away from home is to tell my story.

We do not get Family payments, we have private medical insurance and my husband has a chronic illness requiring large expenses in treatment/drugs/ drs visits and is just managing to hold onto his full time job.

My husband and I earn approx \$72,000 each and as such are not eligible for any support for our sons.

2005

Number 1 son managed to get into University via the Armidale University program offered to students who are likely to succeed but who do not need a high UAI to gain access to some courses.

He took off a yr before attending Uni working as a fencing contractor and also working for Greencorps and only earned \$12,000 in that year, a long way short of the \$18,000 needed to obtain independent status and hence an income to help support himself the following year at Uni.

It is a big call to expect kids from the country to earn that sort of money when jobs are few and far between in small country towns and then to ask them to move away to university and be able to support themselves.

This meant my 17 yr old son who had lots of problems organising himself had to leave home to attend University in 2006, 4 hrs away.

Unfortunately it did not work out and we gave him another chance for another semester the following year but to no avail.

The point of this letter is: it cost us approximately \$30,000 to send our son to uni for the 18 months.

2009

No 2 son finished the HSC in 2008, got into Bachelor of Agricultural Economics at Sydney University and deferred so he could earn the \$18,000 required to earn Youth Allowance. He took off for the UK to work in the pubs. During his absence the rules changed and the goalposts were moved and he is no longer eligible as he has not worked 30 hrs per week during his absence.

Perhaps you could address this issue for country kids. They are at a distinct disadvantage from city kids who can still live at home to attend University.

Suggestions :

1: A subsidy which pays the accomodation costs only (subject to passing all subjects) for kids who have to move away from home to attend University.

2: Perhaps allowing a percentage of the \$18,000 earned in the 18 month period eg 2/3 payment of independent status income could be paid to these kids to help the financial burden incurred by sending them to Uni away from home.

3: Drop the 30hr rule, it is impossible for country kids to get this no of hrs work each week.

Yours in the interests of future affordable education for all
Colleen Allen BSc