

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

7th August, 2009

To Whom It May Concern,

I write with regard to the Senate Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

This inquiry will I believe, assess the adequacy of Government measures in providing equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education for students from rural and regional communities attending metropolitan institutions, and metropolitan students attending regional universities or TAFE colleges.

Our eldest daughter is studying 2nd year Science and plans to study post grad medicine at the completion of this course. Returning to the country to work in this area is a strong possibility.

Our daughter moved to Melbourne to attend University – she left home at the completion of Yr 12 and has worked both for our family business and independently, as well as attending University during that time. We have had to set her up in a flat as home is nearly 4 hrs away from her Uni. Even with the full time study and the bit of part-time/casual work she does – we have to find around \$20,000 each year to support her. She is in the process of applying for Youth Allowance as this would lift considerable financial strain from our family.

My husband works long hours, our middle daughter is completing Yr 12 and intends to complete a TAFE course after a break from schooling and our youngest daughter has multiple and profound disabilities – requiring full time care, a situation that will not lessen until her passing and which adversely affects my ability to work outside the home.

With one daughter already in Melbourne, another about to head there and our youngest who will never leave home and always require full time care – our family is stretched financially.

Youth Allowance until the older girls have completed their studies and attain financial independence would certainly lift some of the pressure that we and so many other families like ours have to deal with.

In closing, I appeal to government members to please do more to protect and nurture the rural/regional youth living in metropolitan areas for study and metropolitan youth who move to rural/regional areas for study. They are our country's future.

Yours sincerely,

P Stevens

Pam Stevens

