

Membership

City of Port Augusta
City of Mount Gambier
City of Port Lincoln
City of Whyalla
City of Victor Harbor
Port Pirie Regional Council
Rural City of Murray Bridge

Executive Officer

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



Dear Sir

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

The Provincial Cities Association of South Australia is a Regional Subsidiary established under the provisions of Section 43 of the South Australian Local Government Act 1999. Membership of the Association comprises of the City of Mount Gambier, Rural City of Murray Bridge, City of Port Augusta, City of Port Lincoln, Regional City of Port Pirie, City of Victor Harbor and City of Whyalla.

The Cities and adjoining regions account for just over a quarter of South Australia's population and full time equivalent jobs, approximately 40 per cent of total exports and almost 25 per cent of total output (GSP) (Source SA Centre for Economic Studies).

In the above context, the Association believes that it is well qualified to endeavour to represent the various communities and regions in South Australia and to express to your Committee, its concerns over the issues of equitable access to education and particularly your review of the Independent Youth Allowance.

The Association made representations on this issue to the "Howard Government". Those representations were unsuccessful and in the Association's view raised more questions on the issues of "what is a regional or provincial area in Australia", particularly when areas only one hundred kilometres (100 kms) from Capital Cities were apparently treated in the same manner as areas which were in excess of three hundred kilometres (300 kms) from the same central location. The Association still has serious concerns in relation to this situation.

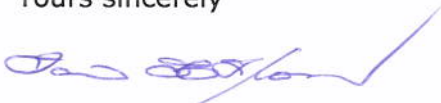
Members of the Provincial Cities Association are aware that a fellow organisation in South Australia, (South East Local Government Association Inc), has made a detailed submission to your Committee. The Provincial Cities Association strongly supports and endorses the submission of SELGA.

The Provincial Cities Association also submits that in relation to your Committee's Terms of Reference:

- Experience over the past few years has shown that more and more students from regional and rural areas are having to move away from the family home to access higher educational opportunities. This situation is expected to become even worse as continuing difficulties in obtaining qualified teaching staff in secondary schools in the regions, makes it even more imperative for the students and their parents to consider their future educational needs earlier in the student's academic life.
- More often than not, the cost of funding two (2) homes to enable the students to endeavour to achieve their career ambitions and their full academic potential, falls fully on the parents, as the previous youth allowance arrangements and the new criteria made, (and will continue to make), it extremely difficult for regional and rural students to receive adequate financial support. (The Bradley Review clearly showed this fact where 64% of students were found to come from families with an income in excess of \$100k).
- The loss of young people from the regions to the metropolitan area is generally final, as very few of those who graduate from tertiary institutions return to live in the regions. As a parent I am very well aware, that in the case of my son, (and those who left Port Augusta to continue their education at the same time as him), not one of the young persons returned to work in the community of Port Augusta. This situation is known to occur across the whole broad spectrum of regional and rural communities, with continuing shortages occurring in almost all professional employment areas thus placing added pressures on remaining families.
- The current limited or zero broadband coverage in South Australian regions, poor and slow internet speeds, remain a problem and are no way on par with metropolitan services. The roll out of the National Broadband Network across rural and regional Australia with a proposed emphasis on education, health and emergency services will go some way to address the imbalance, provided the Network is delivered and sustained. However, in a best case scenario, the positive outcome in this area will still result in a significant drain and loss of young people in regions to tertiary study opportunities, prior to the Network becoming functional.

The Provincial Cities Association is pleased that this issue is the subject of a Senate Inquiry and trusts that the outcomes are seen as bipartisan and for the benefit of all young Australians as well as their parents.

Yours sincerely



IAN McSPORRAN
EXECUTIVE OFFICER