

Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities

Following is my submission:

1. Students from Bega Valley Shire have only the University of Wollongong Access Centre available to them locally and not all subjects are covered. If young people want to study any other subject area, then they have no option but to leave the family home and live in a major city.
2. The Bega Valley shire is a depressed employment area with very few opportunities for full time work. Students are in an impossible situation in being able to obtain work for 30 hours per week on average, but they can usually pick up the odd job in a variety of places. Increased working opportunities are more available during the peak tourist periods over Christmas and Easter only and this is what students rely on for employment. Qualifying for youth allowance under the new proposed scheme would be extremely difficult for young people in this area.
3. Some courses require a full commitment from students. My son is currently studying a Bachelor of Dance full time. Without receiving full youth allowance, it would be difficult to maintain what the course demands. Living away from home in a city is expensive. The existing rural scholarship of \$4000 per year greatly assists my son. If this is reduced to \$1000 for 2nd and 3rd year, it would put a strain on a students ability to meet financial demands while studying.
4. The proposed changes to youth allowance require a young person to undertake work over an 18 month period. This would realistically mean that they would have to give up a position offered at university and re-apply after two years of working. Under the current scheme, I believe that deferring for a year gives a young person a goal to work towards and a definite future planned - a far more stable arrangement, which leads young people into further education.
5. The proposed changes are not going to assist young people from rural areas. In fact, I believe they will prohibit many young people from attaining a tertiary education because they will not be able to comply with the requirements. Rural students are going to be at a definite disadvantage and as a result, I believe we will see a drop in university enrolments from young people from rural areas.

Jan Lynch