

5<sup>th</sup> August 2009

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

Dear Senators

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

I wish to address this Senate Inquiry, not only on the basis of the impact of government measures on rural and regional students to receive equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education opportunities, but for **ALL** students who need to travel to continue their education.

My city-based son has been accepted into Charles Sturt University, Bathurst to study a course that is offered at no other university in Australia. Therefore, for him to undertake this degree, he is not able to live at home and will need to bear not only the costs of attending university, but the basic cost of putting a roof over his head. We are a middle income family and we just do not have the means to provide him the necessary funds to do this.

Given the policies in place by the Government, my son made the considered decision to defer studying this year, join the workforce, pay his taxes, save money to fund his education and commence his degree in 2010. With the announcement in the 2009 Budget regarding the Youth Allowance, my son is now facing the distressing dilemma of not being able to study his chosen field, let alone continue his studies at all.

Unfortunately, his deferment is applicable for one year only, so for him to continue to work another 12 months so he can meet the proposed criteria for Youth Allowance is futile.

In addition, if students from the city are unable to support themselves and have to boycott rural and regional universities in favour of attending educational institutions so they can live at home, this could have dire consequences not only the educational institutions themselves, but the wider rural and regional communities as a whole.

We therefore implore the Committee to recommend the government retain two of the workforce participation criteria for independence to enable more equitable access for students who have to move home to further their education.

Yours sincerely,  
Catherine Priestley