

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

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

Submission From:

Clare Bowditch

My submission to this Inquiry will be brief. The issue to me is black and white.

Governments cannot be expected to build Universities in every town so if our community is serious about equity and access for rural and regional youth we must recognise that there is a cost involved.

All young people who must live away from home in order to attend university or TAFE should be paid a 'Tertiary Relocation Allowance' in addition to any entitlement to Youth Allowance. This allowance should be paid at the same rate as the cost of on-campus residential accommodation.

I have two sons. The youngest hopes to start university in Sydney in 2011. We live in Griffith NSW, about 200km from our closest university and 600km from Sydney. He will not be able to live at home so it will cost our family at least \$200 per week more than a comparable family living in Sydney whose child can still live at home.

Without government support I will be forced to take on a second job to pay my son's living costs. Many of my friends and acquaintances are already doing this. I do not know if he will qualify for Youth Allowance or not, we are farmers and our income fluctuates from year to year. Our income should be irrelevant – our family will have an extra expenses of at least \$10,000 per year simply because of our geographical location, this is hardly equitable!

To me the only grey area is what support, if any, should be available for students who choose to live away from home ? Perhaps, for example, if an interstate university offers the course they want. Should someone whose family home is in Sydney be paid to study Agriculture at the University of Melbourne? While the answer to that question may not be obvious please don't let it complicate what I believe should be a simple principle of equity and access for all Australians to tertiary study, regardless of where they live.

Clare Bowditch
6 August 2009

I can only assume that you have had access to the 2007 project :

Regional Young People and Youth Allowance:

Access to Tertiary Education

A project jointly funded by Monash University, The Centre for Rural Social Research, The Foundation for Young Australians and The University of Western Australia.

By Naomi Godden

with

The Centre for Rural Social Research

and

Monash University Department of Social Work

<http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws/research/docs/youth-allowance.pdf>

Please take the time to read the stories and you will appreciate what a huge and emotional issue this is for rural communities, families and individuals.