

**AgForce Queensland Industrial Union of Employers**

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6 August 2009

Mr D Arnold  
General Manager  
RAPAD Board  
PO Box 592  
LONGREACH QLD 4730

Dear David

**SENATE INQUIRY INTO RURAL AND REGIONAL ACCESS TO SECONDARY AND POST SECONDARY EDUCATION**

I am writing in support of RAPAD's response to the Senate Inquiry into rural and regional access to secondary and post secondary education.

AgForce Queensland is the peak industry organization representing approximately 7000 cattle, sheep and wool, and grain producers across Queensland. AgForce strives to ensure the long term growth, viability, competitiveness and profitability of Queensland's broadacre producers, as well as the communities within which they live and work.

Secondary and tertiary students in remote, rural and regional Queensland continue to be disadvantaged by lack of equitable access to secondary and tertiary education. Key issues include:

- disadvantages associated with lack of choice in secondary education – exacerbated by the low level of financial assistance provided by Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) and Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA)
- lack of choice in tertiary education options – particularly in western and northern Queensland. This lack of choice is exacerbated by access to the dependent and independent Youth Allowance, as well as the low level of travel and accommodation allowances available to rural apprentices attending TAFE.
- the additional costs and social issues associated with students (often as young as sixteen years of age) living away from home in order to pursue post secondary studies
- the impact of seasonal conditions, eg. long-term drought, on rural incomes – preventing farm families which are 'asset rich but income poor' from accessing income support

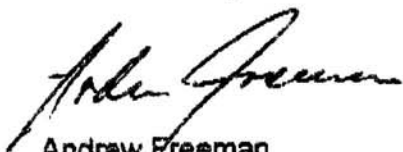
**ADVANCING RURAL QUEENSLAND**

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Mr D Arnold

- the availability of telecommunications infrastructure to enable fast internet access to distance education facilities
- the need to maintain and increase resourcing of educational facilities in rural and regional Australia in order to attract and retain a qualified and skilled workforce.

AgForce Queensland fully endorses the recommendations outlined in your submission to the Senate Inquiry, and I would be pleased if you would include this letter as an attachment to your submission.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Freeman  
Acting Chief Executive Officer