

Submission to Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

Rural and Regional Access to secondary and Post secondary Education

C. Implications of current and proposed government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas

In 2008 students sitting their Higher School Certificates (HSC) knew they could earn \$18500 and qualify for youth allowance as an independent. Whilst this is a struggle for most and impossible for some it offered students a plan of action to access university education. They organised themselves and got on with it.

TOTALLY out of the blue the rules changes are proposed. No warning. No options. No pathways. This is an amazing and cataclysmic change for our children. These students expect to work for a year, GAP year, then return to full time study. Industry is given warning so change can be accommodated. Every other aspect of our community is given leeway but for young people there is no way. No way for our young people can access the degrees they need to work in their chosen fields. In the light of the number of imminent retirements it is beyond belief that a government would be so careless of our future-our youth.

Where will our qualified rural practitioners come from? There are insufficient people now to staff hospitals, advise farmers or fill a myriad of other positions. 20% of students require speech therapy. 20% will not receive assistance. The long term results of this proposed policy change will be felt in the bush for years to come.

Youth suicide and depression are rampant. This will not promote well being and a sense of worth if this pathway to build a better future is denied our rural youth.

Personally, our farm debt has escalated as we have struggled to maintain our core stock and health of our farm. The farm cannot possibly support our son for 4 years to complete his Bachelor of Agriculture and resource Economics. His 2 brothers benefited from the present policy. They worked during holidays and rarely asked for money. Our youngest son expected the same opportunity. This is a very personal attack on our family. It is not appreciated. The policy must remain unchanged for the current students. If the problem is city students rorting the system target them. Leave those in need of support receive it.

If students see no pathway to university why will they continue to complete year12. This will be counter current government policy to increase the percentage of students completing year 12 – in NSW. What will happen as a result in the rise in numbers of poorly educated young people? Who will be our well qualified rural practioners in a variety of fields?

E. Adequacy of government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or port secondary study.

Government must maintain access for rural and remote students to tertiary institutions. My son has deferred his Agriculture and Resource Economics degree

at University of New England in the belief his position will be held for 12 months and he will be eligible for government support for 4 years. If the age is dropped to 21 no-one will be eligible for support. At best it will be 1 year. This is a poor decision and will severely disadvantage our rural students especially our low socio-economic students. Students must be supported for the entirety of their first degree.

Students must be able to access the university of their choice to complete the degree of their choice. The government must support rural students as families cannot. Drought has sucked the life out of our rural communities. It is not possible for families living in drought, and for a considerable recovery time after, to be able to provide for their children who must move away to other towns to complete their education.

Their success in their chosen course must be paramount.

F. Educational needs of rural students.

Our rural students must be supported so they can access tertiary education. 20% of rural students require speech therapy. These children are not able to access their core syllabus work with receptive and expressive disorders. Few schools have regular access to this service.

Our low socio-economic communities need the capacity to care for their children from birth. Support must be provided in the small communities to develop this capacity. Putting 3/4 year olds on buses is ludicrous. Current research indicates the die is cast by 4 years of age. Government must be more involved in supporting families in this key preschool period from birth to kinder. School age is too late for many of our young children and families

We need teachers and school executives with experience to lead our children and communities to a fairer future.

Government must support our rural students to be successful in their chosen fields. It will be a bleak future with no optimism that students can use education to break the poverty cycle many live in. Social justice and equity demands that all students be able to access tertiary education.

Please ensure a real future for our rural students.