

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

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing in regards to the Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

As an external post graduate student of the University of Queensland undertaking a Graduate Diploma in Agribusiness, I am very disappointed in the Federal Government's lack of investment in regional universities.

At a grass roots level this results in the focus of the university being a profit driven centre which is able to offer fewer subjects and specialist staff to deliver post graduate coursework in agribusiness subjects. This seems a very poor strategy given this industry is responsible for feeding and clothing the nation, significant value adding to raw commodities and a major contributor to Australia's export earnings.

It also seems to be a misalignment in strategies to commit funding for Gateway Schools for Agribusiness and then not offer appropriate funding for skills and knowledge enhancement at a university level. It also makes it difficult for students like myself wishing to re-align their careers into a different industry, agribusiness is known for a chronic shortage of skilled workers at present and yet it costs over \$9000 per year as a domestic student to undertake this course, this is hardly an incentive to other prospective students.

There are other students who like me are frustrated with the lack of investment as this often means that subjects can't be offered either due to there not being enough enrolments or staff not being available to teach the subject.

Universities must be rewarded for forming alliances to deliver quality external/ remote education at an undergraduate and postgraduate level rather than being forced to compete head to head for "bums on seats" at their university in order to secure federal funding (through a better funding structure).

I look forward to the Senate Enquiry Committee's findings and recommendations and implore you to address the issues I have mentioned in order to avoid a brain drain from Australia in an industry that is known to be highly innovative and an income generator for the nation.

Yours Sincerely,