

The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural & Regional Affairs & Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern

I write in relation to the Senate Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

It is my understanding that this inquiry will act as an assessment of the adequacy of Government measures to provide equitable access to secondary and post-secondary education opportunities to students from rural and regional communities attending metropolitan institutions, and metropolitan students attending regional universities or technical and further education (TAFE) colleges.

Whilst acknowledging the difficulties regional students face in completing secondary education I wish to focus on the current and proposed barriers to regional students that can prevent them from undertaking tertiary studies.

In particular, as with my daughter who in good faith and after receiving information and advice from Centrelink, deferred her course in Oral Health/Dentistry at the University of Melbourne until 2010.

What are her options? We live in Gippsland, 235 km from Melbourne. She must leave home for this course. Can we afford it without Government assistance?

It is quite ironic given the current emphasis on the lack of health services in rural areas and the recognition that rural students are the best hope of getting more health professionals back into rural areas, that the Government should now make it more difficult for the rural student to achieve these types of qualifications. It is most assuredly more expensive for a rural student to access higher education.

In closing, I believe the government must be doing more to protect and nurture the regional young people who will provide the platform that will launch the future Australia.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Mason

4/8/09

