

Our Ref: 120E AUGMINS 09 SUPPLEMENTARY

039417

10 August 2009

Ms Ann Palmer

Rural and Regional Affairs Committee

PO BOX 6100

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ann,

**QUEENSLAND COUNCIL OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS (QCPCA)
SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION- RURAL AND REGIONAL ACCESS TO
SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Further to our telephone conversation on 7th August 2009, please see below a supplementary to our original submission of 6th August.

- a. The financial impact on rural and regional students who are attending metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE

In most cases, accommodation and living expenses are considerable imposts with many students having to maintain a home with no income. Suitable employment opportunities to supplement or provide an income are difficult to find.

The expense of travel to and from the rural home places further burden on the family.

- b. The educational alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas

Should access be available to a secondary school or TAFE, there are often limited subjects available. In some cases, secondary school is available only to year 10 level. This is proving a major hurdle for many who find it easier to drop out than to continue their education.

Distance- and e-learning are options that can be accessed by dedicated students but there are often logistical and staffing difficulties in supporting this at the school level eg learning space, access to technology, supervision.

The availability of VET subjects has encouraged students to remain at rural schools. However, the liaison and particularly the paperwork involved between TAFE and school to enable delivery of VET subjects demands considerable determination on the part of staff and students involved.

The concept of competitive bidding for grant funding programs limits opportunities for smaller schools that do not have sufficient staff to dedicate to the task of gaining such funds and maintaining the consequent reporting and acquittal process.

Furthermore, it is difficult for rural and remote schools with small enrolments to gain funding for a program that may benefit only a few students when compared to another site that may target many students for much the same cost.

- c. The implications of current and proposed government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas

The consideration of assets to determine eligibility for any subsidy is not realistic in that many may have assets eg farm machinery that is not income and should not be sold to provide for educational expenses.

The current focus on providing facilities will lead to added maintenance expenses, to the detriment of curriculum support and other educational initiatives, programs and projects unless there is a considerable increase in budget allocation to all schools.

- d. The short- and long-term impact of current and proposed government policies on regional and remote university and TAFE college enrolment

Increasing WH&S and risk management requirements are impacting on delivery of some training eg many tasks at Ag College are now performed by paid staff with students being

involved as observers only. This limits learning opportunity and interest, leading to lower enrolment and eventually the subject being unavailable.

The everlasting review process can lead to paralysis by analysis with plenty of paperwork but no education eventuating.

Specialisation at different sites (Schools of Excellence) allows more cost-effective delivery of the subject, however this may lead to students studying the subject because that is all there is, rather than because it's a preferred subject.

- e. The adequacy of government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post-secondary study

The tyranny of distance and the expense involved in living away from home without a suitable family support mechanism being available are not addressed by government policy.

Suitable low cost accommodation and subsidized co-ordinated travel (eg provision of bus transport) are options that could be considered.

- f. The educational needs of rural and regional students

Staffing formulae and curriculum offerings for smaller schools need to be adjusted so that equitable access to education can be provided.

It is not realistic to force the majority of rural students to move to the city for education beyond year 9 in some cases and year 12 for others.

A strong focus on basic subjects (maybe a School of Excellence in basic English, Maths and Lifeskills) could allow students to support their study of VET subjects or just prepare for their future if they have not yet decided what they want to learn. This would be preferable to "dropping out" which is what currently happens to one sector of our student enrolment.

- g. The impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities

In some cases, reduced enrolment and reduced curriculum offering lead to reduced staff, sometimes school or year level closure and consequent major impact on community viability and social welfare.

Teaching prac, scholarship and intern opportunities have been useful in providing an understanding of rural and remote opportunities and communities, and encouraging beginning teachers to take this option on graduation.

h. Other related matters

The loss due to education elsewhere of a peer group of academic students has major impact on the financial, social, sporting and general morale of the community. The loss of whole families and inability to attract professionals (bank managers, doctors, nurses, dentist, lawyers etc) due to lack of equitable education provision can destroy a community.

The expense incurred by families, both financially and emotionally cannot be calculated.

Should the student not be able to meet the challenges of higher education elsewhere without family support, at times the whole family leaves town, at other times, the student fails and returned depressed or worse.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Black', written in a cursive style.

Margaret Black

State President