

5 August 2009

Ms Jeanette Radcliffe
Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Madam,

Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities

Council wishes to make a submission to the above Inquiry and more specifically to express its opposition to the Federal Government's proposed changes to the Youth Allowance support criteria. The proposed changes to the Youth Allowance will have a negative impact on rural students.

I submit several points to substantiate Council's opposition to these proposed changes:

- Rural students need to may away from home in order to pursue tertiary education incurring costs for accommodation as well as study costs.
- Students currently working in a 'gap' year having deferred study in order to raise sufficient money and qualify for Youth Allowance will not be eligible due to the change in rules.
- Rural families, already under pressure, face expenses to support their children to undertake further study.
- The proposed changes will likely reduce the number of rural students especially, who will undertake further education. The doubling of the amount of time students must work to 30 hours per week over 18 months will effectively exclude many students from accessing tertiary study.
- Currently the Victorian Government is promoting the development of skills eg Skills Victoria document, yet Youth Allowance changes appear to be opposed to these initiatives.

The Moyne Shire Council supports a very active Youth Council and if required several members would be available to attend the Inquiry in person to articulate their concerns.

Moyne Shire Council would strongly encourage the Inquiry to recommend to the Government a revision of these proposed changes such that rural students are not disadvantaged.

Yours sincerely,

**BRETT STONESTREET
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

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