

In relation to the Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities

We address the terms of reference as follows:

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

The costs incurred to attend University... living on the Mid North Coast students must leave home to attend University. The following is an example of some of the costs incurred.

If renting privately Bond (4 weeks rent) plus an additional 2 weeks rent in advance.

Bond or deposit maybe required for telephone line, water and electricity.

Rent is payable for the full year even during the University holidays whether they are there or have come home for the holidays.

Set up costs of the rented premises, such as furniture, household items and food from scratch, purchasing a whole 'pantry' of basics to start off with.

The actual cost of travelling home to visit family.

The cost of phone calls, emails or text messages actually keeping in touch.

Our city cousins are able to continue living at home at no extra cost and rather than make their way to high school when University starts they can just change their route and attend University return to the family home that evening continuing to study in the same family environment that they have been in for all their school life with very little upheaval in their daily routine and without the costs as per the above mentioned.

b. the education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas;

Living in Taree the closest Campus is Port Macquarie (1 hour drive by private transport, public transport not available). Dietetics is not a course provided by Port Macquarie Campus.

THEREFORE there are no education alternatives for rural and regional (Taree) students to study from home.

Major city students have the choice of many universities and are able to use public transport to attend the University.

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

The student may have existing part time work in the town that they have resided while attending high school. They will need to resign from this position and find new work in a new town/city hopefully in some sort of close proximity of the University and their residential address which brings up another issue, if public transport is not adequate or the hours of work make it not safe to travel home at night the student may then require private transport (the cost of a motor vehicle).

Our city cousins can continue at the same part time job without any change.

d. the short- and long-term impact of current and proposed government policies on regional University and TAFE college enrolments;

It will be virtually impossible (especially given the present economic climate) for a rural and regional student to find work to fit the criteria of taking a gap year and work a minimum of 30 hours a week.

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

Don't you mean inadequacy!

My partner and I have both worked since we were 16 and are happy to do so.

We are both permanently employed and work overtime as much as possible to make ends meet.

My daughter has worked part time since she was 16, if she continues to work part time she will not fit the criteria of working a minimum of 30 hours a week and therefore will not qualify for any benefits such as youth allowance.

We are not in the habit of taking handouts nor am I 'educating' my children to have that mind set but when the cost of living is so high, the government has set the bar so high with the gap year criteria and now we are to try find hundreds of dollars each week to 'relocate' one of our children to give them an opportunity to attend University to follow their chosen career.

The inequality is – if a single income family then the higher eligibility bracket is more than combined income of both parents working in this town, but the fact that both parents/partners work means they have been considered ineligible.

Children need to be given the best possible opportunities for their future, to work and earn income /pay taxes not to be a burden on the government long term by living here with little job prospects.

Current measures are really for the lower socio-economic spectrum – people like ourselves both employed are at a disadvantage.

f. the educational needs of rural and regional students;

When rural and regional students have to leave their home town and family home to attend a University they are required to have educational items such as;

Computer, printer/scanner, backup drive, internet connection, internet monthly ongoing costs, and virus protection for the computer to name a few.

In most cases these items are already part of the students existing 'home' but they cannot take these with them if they have siblings at home that will continue to need these items. Therefore these items become another expense to enable your child to attend University.

g. the impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities;

Students have part time jobs currently, they have planned to have a gap year, to work whilst still within the family home and earn \$17,000 in 18 months since completing their HSC – this is no longer an option under the proposed changes.

In short the extra financial and emotional cost dissuades rural and regional children and their parents from embracing the right of every school student the opportunity of attending University.

This issue needs to be addressed with an equal & even-handed process that will allow rural and regional students to attend University without disadvantages due to their distance from the said Universities.

Rural and Regional students and their families are disadvantaged financially and emotionally due to the fact that the student must re-locate to attend University. The government's across the board approach does not take this into account. Rural and Regional families would benefit from a type of living away from home allowance while ever the student is attending University this would help the burden of Rural and Regional families as opposed to our city cousins.

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