

7th August 2009

Re. Allowance for Rural Students

Sandra and I live in country New South Wales. We are both public servants. Not huge wage earners but we cope with the costs of family living. I am writing this submission to bring to your attention my experience with University Students. We have 4 children. Two have completed university (1 year and 2 years ago) and two will start next year. One of these has had two years off working.

For the first two we funded it all ourselves but thankfully we did get some family benefits via the Commonwealth Government. We were considered too "rich" for any direct assistance with the students who had to leave the area, one to Bathurst (then Wagga) and one to Canberra. The costs for accommodation are high in both these areas. Then there is living expenses, travel costs etc. Public transport is difficult so often cars need to be purchased and maintained. However we could cope but there are others that concept is impossible to consider.

Some points to consider are listed below.

- Having any delay in students attending university may upset their rhythm, so for some students having a year off or longer may stop them going onto further study.
- Country children often need to live away from home.
- Often they have to work too much to maintain a living standard that may interfere with study.
- We estimated that we have spent \$60000 to fund our children to go to University which we had to get a loan for.

The question is why should tax payers' money be used for students? The main response to this is the benefit to the Australian community on well trained young people keen to work. We are supposed to be the clever country.

Could there be some consideration to assistance with accommodation costs, maybe they could be tax deductible.

As country people (my wife and I are actually from Sydney originally) we notice there are many things we miss out on here e.g. public transport, good medical services/hospitals etc. And yet we save some impact on cities by staying here. There needs to be increased input into country towns but that's another story.

Thanks for the opportunity for a say on the issue.

Yours sincerely

Andrew and Sandra Watson