



Colac Otway  
SHIRE

*Naturally Progressive*

20 April 2006

Ben Hardman MP  
Chairman  
Rural & Regional Services and Development Committee  
Level 8, 35 Spring Street  
MELBOURNE 3000

Dear Chairman,

**Parliamentary Inquiry - Retaining Young People in Rural Towns & Communities**

A discussion was had at a recent meeting of the Colac Otway Shire FReeZA Committee regarding the Parliamentary Inquiry into retaining young people in rural towns and communities.

Factors that would influence young people to remain in our town are a broader range of shopping outlets. We currently have fairly mainstream shopping outlets i.e. Target, Surf shop, music shop, etc and would like a more diverse range to cater for all fashions/tastes. These could be in the form of 'op shops' with old & unusual wares and non-mainstream music stores.

Further education and employment opportunities are also limited. The local area has no university for further education therefore relocation must occur for the minimum period of tertiary study. Apprenticeships are also limited to mainly farming and mechanical areas, these being the main industries that drive the local economy.

Lack of entertainment is a large factor as to why young leave rural areas. There is very limited live entertainment or movies focused on their age bracket, these leisure activities using a large proportion of their disposable income.

Factors that influence young people to consider whether or not to return to the local community are that their family and friends are still there. Obtaining a degree would also encourage return in the long run as an ability to provide a skill or knowledge would now be a benefit. Also, most felt they would return when they were older.

All involved in the discussion felt most young people need to initially "spread their wings" and experience something different and learn life skills away from their home town. This enables personal growth and development as well as employment opportunities not available within their local community.

If you have any enquiries concerning this matter please contact me on 5232 9516.

Yours faithfully



Jodie Fincham  
Events Officer/FReeZA Co-ordinator