Dear Karen

I am responding to your invitation through Professor Angus and Professor Robinson at University of Ballarat to make a submission to the State Parliamentary Inquiry into 'Geographical differences in the rate in which Victorian students participate in higher education'.

I am very interested in the Inquiry, given my involvement as lead researcher in a research project, funded by OTPE and completed in March 2007 through University of Ballarat, called 'Everything is harder'. Our research investigated a number of research questions close to each of your terms of reference (with the exception of Term of Reference F).

Our report included a number of pertinent findings and recommendations. I have attached a copy of both the full report (55 pages) and a 7 page summary report derived from the full report.

As lead researcher in this project with University of Ballarat colleagues Professor Lawrie Angus, Dr Mike Brown and Clem Barnett, I am more than happy to share this research report with you and for it to be circulated to or available to other interested parties.

My University has been fully informed that I am making this submission as an experienced education researcher. I am willing to appear before your Committee at a Public Hearing, if that is considered useful.

Relevant to your brief, I am aware that there is a significant disparity in participation by in higher education participation of Year 12 leavers by gender, particularly in rural areas, where male rural Year 12 leavers are very much less likely (around one half as likely) to participate than rural females. I am concerned that too little is being done to address this most obvious and concerning, related disparity.

Some of my other, published research into adult and community education in Australia identifies socioeconomic disadvantage as a likely causal factor in these patterns of differential participation, rather than rurality per se.

Yours sincerely

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