Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education

Online Submission

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Mrs Jennie de Freitas, Parent and Teacher, Alexandra

As a parent of three sons growing up in a rural area remote from universities and Tafe Colleges their future, further education beyond Secondary College, has always been of concern. This concern is extended for all of the thousands of young country kids who expect to gain qualifications to pursue a career.

Personally, my husband and I have saved for this occasion for many years. This has been a huge burden over many years to prepare and assist our sons to pursue their chosen careers and to help them to set up in Melbourne. They are all studying at University, each in a very different part of Melbourne. This eliminated the possibility of them house sharing together to reduce costs. Despite being average income earners the Government contribution was zero. For one reason or another (drought, lack of work, illness) many families experience even greater difficulties financing their child living away from home whilst they are studying.

Many young people find the cultural difference of a large institution/ city very intimidating after growing up in a rural environment. Many young students find the separation from their family and support system emotionally overwhelming. To some-one who has grown up in a rural area, simple things such as understanding the transport system, attending to budgeting, payment of bills, daily / weekly food shopping, preparation of meals, generally looking after themselves in regards to domestic chores can be a huge hurdle for these young people who do not have the immediate family support of those living at home. Despite the fact our sons have had supportive parents who have given them the chance to stand on their own two feet, yet have been there to assist them when required over the past four years, they have experienced difficult times. For many young people this is not the case, indicating some of the influences on the choices rural students make regarding their further education. It is imperative and urgent to confront these difficulties and find strategies to assist and enable our valuable rural student resource to gain equal access to the careet paths of their city cousins.

Jennie de Freitas, Parent and Teacher. Alexandra.