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

Online Submission

8/05/08

Mrs Loretta Ellis, Parent, Mildura

I am a mother of 4 children, ages 11-18. We live in Mildura which is 550km from Melbourne-six and half hours drive. I would like to comment on disadvantages for rural students pursuing higher education.

Our eldest son has commenced his first year studying Science at Melbourne University. In order to study Science he has had to leave home. He is living on campus at one of the University Colleges. Living away to study poses financial pressures. Living at home is not an option for him He is not deemed to be “independent” even though he must live independent of us? The system hardly seems fair when comparing his city counterparts. The age of 26 to be eligible for youth allowance and Aus study are too high for rural students.

On receiving an offer at Melbourne University he did defer with the intention he would work for the required period and qualify for a Youth Allowance. In the end, he reversed the deferral before the deadline and took up the offered position, as he was concerned that if he did not take up study immediately he was going to find it difficult to move away and start studying after taking the time off. Consequently he is in Melbourne with no income at the moment as he is trying to find part time work to fit around his 25 hours of lecture contact time, tutorials and football training. He will need to secure work soon as money saved in holidays has all but run out! Our ability to support him is limited, as we have 3 other school age children.