Ms Karen Ellingford  
Executive Officer  
Education and Training Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

3 APR 2008

Dear Ms Ellingford,

Thank you for your letter of 21 January 2008 requesting a submission or comment to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education.

As indicated in the enclosed response, there continue to be differences in higher education participation between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas across Australia. Factors influencing participation rates include population demographics, school completion rates, employment opportunities, relative attractiveness of higher education and vocational education and training pathways to individuals with diverse background experiences and expectations, Indigeneity, socioeconomic and distance effects, and aspirations.

The enclosed response seeks to address the implications of many such factors. I have asked my department to continue relevant analyses, including:

- quantitative and qualitative work on variations in population demographics and economic circumstances across geographical locations;
- factors influencing education participation such as mobility, school completion rates, and employment opportunities;
- associated issues such as availability, access, aspirations, expectations, Indigeneity, socioeconomic status, and opportunity;
- particular ‘feeder’ issues in regions, including education transitions, Year 12 participation and attainment and other associated factors; and
- integration between higher education and vocational education and training, including the balances and trade-offs between each.

Dr Paul Bainaves, Branch Manager, Strategic Analysis and Evaluations Group on telephone (02) 6240 8130 would be pleased to address any further questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Gillard  
Minister for Education

Encl.