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

Online Submission

27/04/08

Mrs Marie Hein, Parent, Portland

Firstly I am very happy that this enquiry is taking place - it's time that students relocating (particularly country students relocating to the city) were supported. We currently have one child attending uni and next year we will have two (and the same may continue for us for the next few years as we have 4 children). As parents we will do our best to continue to support our children in their living away from home costs - however the expense is great. We are a country family and our children are having to relocate to the city to continue their education. When home for a visit our son will have to travel 7.5 hours by train to get to Melbourne and then catch a train to his accommodation. Our son is not eligible for scholarships or centre link benefits as our combined income is too high. He is unable to work part time because he has a large uni contact hour load. Last year our son attempted the move to the city to commence his uni degree, but due to the pressure of relocating and starting uni he became ill and had to return home. This was very stressful for the whole family. The move is HUGE for country kids, I believe that the financial cost and emotional cost would prevent some students from considering a university degree. Last year we were looking at residential costs in excess of $14,000 (that’s a lot of money for a family to find). This year it will be a little less due to different living arrangements – which is also another stressful issue that families and students have to face. They have to find somewhere to live! Some students are still searching for accommodation the week they start their uni course. This is also extremely stressful and not a good start to their new life. The list goes on and on. Perhaps if there was support for these students financially (living away from home allowance) and other supports in place it may be more country students would be in a position to consider attending university. I know there are scholarships available for students with low incomes and that’s great – but there are many families who do it hard even though they are not low income earners. Income is relative – we have 4 children and I work to help support their choices to study further.

Thank you for your time