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

Online Submission

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It is around 20 years ago that my daughters attended university in Melbourne. For two years we had three daughters there studying at the same time—one at Phillip Institute as it was then known, one at Monash University and the youngest at Latrobe University.

For reasons of their getting to know other students and for them to become accustomed to living away from home and having to cope with managing their own affairs, my husband and I decided that they should each spend at least the first year in Uni. residences. This meant that meals were available to them, their bed linen was fresh and they were generally looked after to a certain extent, and there were avenues where they could discuss any problems when and if they arose. Of course this decision was a very costly one but one which we did not regret for a minute.

As you can imagine, with three children being involved at the same time, finances were very tight and we were fortunate that each of the girls was able to find a part time job at some stage, but this then threw up other problems as to how they were to get to these jobs! Needless to say, we had to find cars where necessary which then became another financial burden. One of the girls used to ride her pushbike to her night job which caused us many worrying times. If we had lived in the city jobs could possibly have been found in the local area or may not have even been necessary due to overall costs being less.

After the first year they in due course and at different times, decided that they would live off campus with various of their uni. friends which certainly brought the costs down, but necessitated the supply of furniture and the like—another cost burden even if it was through the local op shop etc. We had many trips to Melbourne with the trailer over the years transporting furniture, bicycles, friends and their gear, and our daughters to their different places of residence. Unfortunately, the courses that they wished to pursue were only available at Melbourne based universities so they HAD to leave home to be able to follow their career choices.

Cost is the biggest factor in whether students go to the big city to attend university or not. I know that there were various HSC (as it was called then), students in the classes at high school with my daughters, who earned good marks in their final exams but who did not proceed to their selected course to which they had gained entry, because of the costs involved, and
others who did not even attempt to apply for what they would have liked, and instead applied and did a course at the local campus of Monash so there would be less expenses on their families. Being from the country area certainly has disadvantages financially for students and their families and so prevents many very capable students from attending university. It would not be a lack of education standards but the costs involved in accommodation and living expenses that prevents so many country students from achieving their dreams.