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

Online Submission

11/05/08

Ms Janine McGinness-Whyte, Parent, Portarlington

From my recent experience, students from regional areas need additional help with financing their studies. Rental prices for accommodation in Melbourne have risen to the point of being close to unaffordable - ALL of the payment my daughter receives from Centrelink goes towards rent (SOLELY). In order to eat, and pay the bills, she must work extremely hard - on top of university studies, so a 16 hour working day is not unusual. As a result, a student's health will suffer - and as a parent I am not there to make the 'chicken soup'. I would love to be in a financial position where I could pay for her rent and my daughter could focus on her studies, but as a sole parent this is not possible. I greatly admire my daughter, her independence and all that she has achieved, but hate to see her working so hard.

Students with parents living nearer to uni have more options - to drop home for dinner, to live at home, to have support when they are unwell or stressed. Students from regional areas, who want to be independent, are struggling to balance studies, work and finances - many are working 2 or more jobs. Many are living on noodles! Obviously, more student housing is needed, that is affordable and clean. Or rental assistance for students (especially those living in Melbourne) needs to be increased - a student living at home does not need to pay for electricity, water, phone, rent, food, etc.... but the allowance received from Centrelink would not greatly differ. This makes no sense!

The landlord has just increased my daughter's rent, again, and her housemate has decided it has become unaffordable, but my daughter also worries about the cost of moving (for the third time!). I can only advise her to stay put until exams are over (early November), then head home for a rest. Other students don't even have this option!