Education and Training Committee

Inquiry into Geographical Differences in Participation in Higher Education

SUBMISSION

Comments relate to –

- Potential geographic, economic, social, cultural and other influences on university applications, offers, acceptances and completions across Victorian communities.

As a parent of a year 12 student 2006 I would like the committee to be aware of the difficulties faced by children and families who live out of Melbourne. We live in Rye on the Mornington Peninsula. In some cases Rye is considered part of Melbourne suburbs and other times not. For anything to do with tertiary education we are considered to be a suburb but we don’t have any of the advantages of the suburbs i.e access to frequent and reliable public transport or consistent positions of employment.

For my daughter to study in Melbourne she has to move there as it would take 2 hours each way to drive and be expensive to park or travel for up to 3 hours each way by public transport.

To live in Melbourne is VERY expensive and very difficult to find accommodation. She has been trying for a couple of months with no luck and so is travelling up and down each day. She is not eligible for government assistance of more than $27 a fortnight as it is means tested – I am a single parent with a mortgage and an average wage but am trying to find money to give her for tuition, equipment, travel etc.

Although she took last year off to try and save money so that after 18 months from leaving school she will be considered independent (having earned over $18,600) it is difficult to get a job in the area we live in and so is working odd hours to try to get to the $18,600 figure which means she will be a higher amount from Youth Allowance.

THEREFORE students in outer areas of Victoria are not taking up or continuing with positions of higher education because they simply can’t afford to and their parents can’t afford to assist them. Government assistance needs to kick in to help these students. Accommodation for students needs to be within the reach of most families. The 18 months wait for students to be considered independent means that they can work for 12 months then study for 6 months with part time work to live on before Youth Allowance becomes effective.

I am happy to discuss my comments further. As a teacher I am also aware that these issues are affecting lots of my students.

Sandra O’Donnell, Rye