Dear Sir/Madam,

I have attached past research in 2006 and 2007 in relation to post year 12 movements of students from The Hamilton & Alexandra College and the submission by the Victorian Ecumenical Schools System to the previous Federal Government. In essence it requests a full review of the conditions for Youth Allowance/AUSTUDY in light of the findings and seeks to provide standard funding for regional students. The response from both Minister Bishop and then Opposition Spokesman Stephen Smith was that the cost to Government (of implementing the proposal) was prohibitive.

I am certain that the results for other schools in Hamilton and other regional areas would find similar if not more telling results. In effect, my school has the highest % of students who defer from tertiary study in Victoria. Many students defer for various reasons, but highlighted is the need for them to be able to access Youth Allowance to assist their parents with the costs of further study. In many cases in Hamilton, students never seek or are deprived of the opportunity to undertake tertiary study either altogether or not until later in life due to the added costs associated. Added to this is the difficulty many have in finding a residential place at all, with many city places taken up by city students, despite these city students studying close to home.

There is no doubt that as labour shortages grow in regional areas (most notably in teaching and medical fields), more incentives are needed for regional students to access higher education, as it is these very people who are most likely to return to regional areas to work and live. Currently, the overall cost to regional families to send their child to Melbourne for further study is close to $20,000 per child per annum.

I would be happy to provide further information and to speak to these items.

Kind regards,

Bruce Simons
Principal
The Hamilton & Alexandra College
Ph 03 5572 1355