To
geoff.howard@parliament.vic.gov.au
cc

Subject
Why country children are less likely to attend university

Dear Mr Howard,

I was a member of your electorate for 20 years, although I am now living in Melbourne. We struggled financially, when our son was at Uni, although we were both working.

Finances are the main reason many children do not attend university. If parents cannot help with finances, Uni is "out".

Ausstudy is the same whether you are from the country or the city. City children can live at home, country kids cannot. Accommodation costs are very high, and it is often more than most parents, on an average income, can afford to subsidise. City students can go home for a meal - many country students are on near starvation diets, even when subsidising Ausstudy with 1, 2 and sometimes 3 jobs, always scared they'll lose the government payment if caught. Simply put, country kids generally need more financial help and cheaper student accommodation, as do students from low income families.

It is sad when talking to groups of students to see the struggle they have between study, work and budgeting for necessities. It is also most annoying to hear students from wealthy families boasting about how they get the maximum benefits, live at home, or their families pay all their costs and Ausstudy is "just spending money". Perhaps the last is sour grapes, but it is most definitely not an even playing field.

I hope this is helpful in the study you are undertaking.

Marcia Gingold