

PR/278/07

Thursday 15 November, 2007.

## University unaffordable for country students

The NSW Farmers' Association says a new report showing eligibility for Youth Allowance income support is a major barrier to rural students accessing tertiary education shows the need to make the allowance available to all rural students studying away from home.

The report, entitled *Youth Allowance and Regional Young People: Access to Tertiary Education* was released by the Charles Sturt University's Centre for Rural Social Research and Monash University Department of Social Work.

NSW Farmers' Association Rural Affairs Committee Chair Alan Brown says while the Association acknowledges the Coalition's recent pledge to provide 1,000 students a year in remote and very remote Australia with a \$4,000 bursary to assist them with relocation costs for tertiary or vocational study, more needs to be done.

"Not being able to afford a university education is a reality for many rural children, and it's something that needs to be urgently addressed," Mr Brown said.

"This is reflected in the fact that rural students only make up 17% of university students, which is really not good enough," Mr Brown said.

"We need to encourage our young rural people into higher education to ensure the future of rural and remote towns, but currently Youth Allowance criteria doesn't show consideration for the higher costs faced by rural students," he said.

"The annual living away from home costs for a rural student is approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000, plus relocation and start-up costs of \$3,000 to \$6,000. The sad reality is that most regional families cannot afford this.

"The Association is seeking a commitment from Government to ensure every rural student that must move away from home to undertake university studies be eligible for the Federal Government's Youth Allowance.

"The benefits of this are obvious. To address the regional skills shortage and support a sustainable future for regional Australia, young rural people need help getting to university," Mr Brown concluded.

**Contact: Ellen McNamara (Media Officer) 0429 990 218**  
**Amanda Barwick (nee Frame) (Media Manager) 0428 400 736**

***Fast fact: In most cases less than a third, of what a consumer pays for fruit and vegetables at the supermarket goes back to the farmers that grew that produce, the rest goes to the 'middle men'***