

# Country students miss out on degrees

Deborah Fewster

Fewer students from country Victoria are enrolling in university, according to the latest Census data, and the Victorian Parliament wants to know why.

The Parliament's Education and Training Committee has been directed to inquire into "geographical differences" in university enrolments, although with two other inquiries currently underway and a reporting deadline of 30 June 2009, it seems the issue is not exactly top of mind.

The 2006 Census found 33.9 per cent of country students now go to university. This compares to 52.1 per cent of students in Melbourne.

Nationals MP Peter Hall, who pushed for the inquiry, also expressed concern that students in outer suburbs were missing out too.

"The evidence suggests very strongly that where a young person lives ... influences educational outcomes," Hall told State Parliament. Other factors he cited included socioeconomic levels experienced by students and their families and the levels of measured disadvantage in those communities."

Using the Victorian Government's 'On Track' data and material supplied by a local learning and employment network, Hall said that in 2005, about 65 per cent of students in the inner east who completed year 12 went on to university.

"If you compare that to the outer east, you find the corresponding figure is just over 40 per cent – a huge difference. If you compare it to the Mornington region, which is also classified as part of the

metropolitan area, you find the figure for year 12 graduates in the Mornington area who went on to university was only 30 per cent.

"If you compare those figures to some of the country regions, you see that Goulburn is one of the poorest of the country regions. Only 30 per cent of Goulburn students went on to university. In Gippsland it was just over 30 per cent – not much different to Goulburn – and in Barwon it was about 35 per cent.

"The best of the country regions was the Loddon region, which was about 40 per cent."

While Mr Hall said he didn't want to pre-empt the inquiry of the Education and Training Committee, he speculated that the cost of tertiary education is one significant barrier.



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## NTEU - Supporting a student voice

The **National Tertiary Education Union** is the trade union representing staff working in universities across Australia.

Public university funding has declined over the last decade under the current government. University fees have gone through the roof. Eligibility for Austudy is denied to most, and the Federal Government's industrial relations changes have left young workers vulnerable.

In 2005 NTEU worked with student representatives to fight the Federal Government's attacks on student organisations. The Government's Voluntary Student Unionism legislation has radically reduced the services available to students across the board.

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**Clubs and societies – GONE!**

**Student control of student affairs – GONE!**

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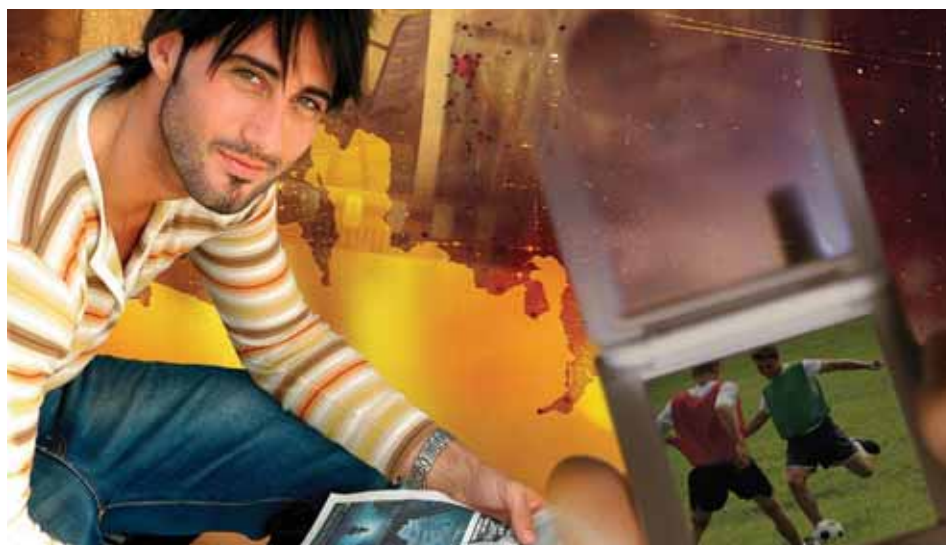
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