



# FAMILY FIRST



Steve Fielding Family First Senator for Victoria

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **GOVERNMENT SHOULD HELP WIMMERA-MALLEE KIDS GET TO UNIVERSITY**

Family First wants the Federal Government to help more Wimmera-Mallee kids get to university.

Family First has backed calls from Mallee Family Care for the State Government to focus on western Victoria in its investigation into why fewer people in country areas go on to tertiary education. But Family First also wants the Federal Government to help.

Family First Leader and Victorian Senator Steve Fielding said country students studying in major cities should be given extra money on top of their Centrelink payments to help them cope with the cost of living far away from home.

“Family First is concerned that students in the Wimmera-Mallee are missing out on tertiary education purely because the cost of attending university in a major city is such a huge obstacle,” Senator Fielding said.

“Census figures show only a third of 18 to 20-year-olds in the Wimmera-Mallee participate in post-secondary study, compared with about 87 per cent in the city. Youth Allowance is not enough to live on for students living far away from home.”

Senator Fielding said local students faced extra costs of moving to the city, including more expensive accommodation as well as phone bills and visits home.

The proposed Rural Studies Supplement would allow students from regional and rural areas attending city universities to apply for up to \$1000 every year on top of their Centrelink payments.

“So many local families are struggling to make ends meet and finding extra money to support students in the city is difficult,” Senator Fielding said.

“For many kids in the Wimmera-Mallee going to university means they will not only be living away from home for the first time, but living up to 300 kilometres away from their families and friends. Family First is worried that financial concerns will make it too daunting for most students to even consider going to university.”

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