

## Getting There

We believe that tertiary education should be a viable option for everyone regardless of socioeconomic or geographical situation. Personal factors such as cultural background or family demands should not limit people's educational preferences.

### Key Issues

Some key issues surrounding the question of access to education include the role socio-economic circumstance plays in prospective students' aspirations and destinations, the inflexibility of institutions to cater for marginalised people, and the ability for rural people to access tertiary education.

### Recommendations

Less reliance on TER scores as a means of accessing certain university courses.

Increase funding to make rural educational facilities more viable.

Provide greater number of government subsidised (fee-capped) TAFE places to match unmet demand.

• TER scores are reflective of students' school sector, with those from independent schools scoring an average of 12 percentage points higher than those from government schools (78.2 to 66.7) and 6 points higher than those from Catholic schools (78.2 to 72.8).<sup>1</sup>

• Parents' occupational status and educational history are prime determinants of TER score; those with parents in professional occupations score an average of 12 points higher than those with parents in unskilled positions (76.9 to 64.9).<sup>2</sup>

• Secondary students from rural areas are more likely not to complete high school, where the schools are generally smaller and have less flexible curriculum options. Therefore, the secondary school system in rural communities itself can act as a barrier to university access.<sup>3</sup>

• While rural students make up a third of the secondary student population, they only contribute 17% to those in tertiary education.<sup>4</sup>

• Commonwealth figures demonstrate the significant reduction over the past decade in unmet demand for TAFE places. However, the decrease, from 69,400, still leaves 34,200 places in demand.<sup>5</sup>

The *What's Fair in Education?* forum will address these issues and recommendations, with an interactive workshop facilitated by Judy Kirkham, who has worked in youth access at the community level in the Casey/Dandenong area and is currently undertaking her Masters in Careers Education at RMIT.

The forum will be held on October 17, 2007 at 4:30 PM in building 20 (level 1, courtroom 2), RMIT University (Corner La Trobe and Russell streets).

<sup>1</sup> Marks, G., McMillan, J., & Hillman, K. (2001). Tertiary entrance performance: the role of student background and school factors. (LSAY Research Report No. 22). [http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/LSAY\\_lsay22.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/LSAY_lsay22.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Lamb, S., Dwyer, P., & Wyn, J. (2000). Non-completion of school in Australia: The changing patterns of participation and outcomes (Report No. 16). [http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/LSAY\\_lsay15.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/LSAY_lsay15.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Bardon, J. (2007). Bardon, J. (2007). Cash strapped students dropping out of education. 17 April. <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/vic/content/2006/s1899261.htm>

<sup>5</sup>DEST (2006). Union funded TAFE inquiry perpetuates Labor's false unmet demand claims. <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/hardgrave/july06/h130706.htm>