

Committee Secretary Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations PO Box 6100 Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of South Australia fully supports the Social Security Amendment (Income Support for Regional Students) Bill 2010 to improve income support for regional students by extending the Youth Allowance to eligible students whose family home is in a location categorised under the Remoteness Structure as "Inner Regional Australia".

Earlier this year the Labor Government brought in changes to the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance in a measure which has resulted in the completely inequitable treatment of regional students.

There are two forms of Youth Allowance – Dependent and Independent. Students are eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance if the student's parents' income is below the allowable income threshold – the student is eligible for full or part-payment.

The other option is Independent Youth Allowance. Prior to the Government changes there were three criteria that students could use to access Independent Youth Allowance. Students worked part-time for at least 15 hours a week for at least two years since leaving school, or

Students have been out of school for at least 18 months and have earned at least 75% of the maximum rate of pay under Wage Level A of the Australian Pay and Classification Scale in an 18 month period – the 'gap year', or

Students have worked an average of 30 hours per week for 18 months out of two years.

Changes to the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance used the Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Area (ASGC – RA) map to determine the 'regionality' of students. The map is in five zones - Metropolitan, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote.

Students from the Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote areas may still qualify for Independent Youth Allowance under the original criteria listed above, but for Inner Regional Students, this has been reduced to one criteria: A student must work a minimum of an average of 30 hours per week for 18 months out of 2 year.

Why should one regional student be treated differently to another? Most students in regional areas simply have no choice but to relocate to attend tertiary education institution. This is an issue of fair and equitable access for all regional students. We urge this Government to ensure that fairness and equity is restored by amending the legislation and implementing the same eligibility criteria across all regional areas.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Nutt

President
Isolated Children's Parents' Association SA Inc.
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