

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing to you to outline my concerns regarding the recent changes to the Youth Allowance Independence criteria and to urge you to make a stand for what is fair and treat inner rural students with the same respect as outer rural students.

I am a parent with three daughters, the eldest of which is currently working through her gap year. She has been working full time in a local café for the year and has currently earned around \$17 000. The plan was for her to qualify as an independent student so that she could fund university in 2011. The Youth allowance she would have been eligible for, had she been born a year earlier, would not cover all her expenses at a uni college but would have made a huge difference to the amount of paid work she would have to find to make ends meet.

Our family live in the South West of WA and the daily travel required to attend a university offering her course would be at least 3 hours each way and with public transport would cost around \$35 per day. Even if the travel costs weren't as prohibitive as they are, it is not feasible to expect someone to spend 6 hours a day in travel. My point here is that even though we have been classed as "inner rural", our daughter can not live at home to complete her degree. She has no choice but to reside at a uni college or private rental. I firmly believe she is being discriminated against and urge you to put this right. Outer rural students deserve assistance too, however my children do also.

The Independent Youth allowance recipients do not get a free ride so to speak. They have to show they are serious about their decision to obtain a university degree by finding employment and being committed to that work for 12 months. This is not a bad thing. They will in many cases be much more dedicated to their studies having matured and experienced the alternative. They do however, need some financial help and I once again plead with you to tweak this legislation so that it is fair to all students who are required to leave home to pursue their education.

As a family, I would love to be able to say to my children, do what you want and Dad and I will be able to support you financially for the next 4 or 5 years. However, with 3 children and our own retirement to consider this is not the reality.

Thankyou for taking the time to read this submission and I will look forward to following your progress to hopefully the right decision.

Regards

Julie Mitchell