

Senate Inquiry into the Private Member's Bill regarding Independent Youth Allowance

Regarding the changes to the youth allowance:

My son was initially carrying out a gap year in 2010 with a view to claiming independent youth allowance for University in 2011. Under the old guidelines his older brother managed to earn independent status which was the difference between him being able to attend University in Perth or not.

We reside in the rural location of the South West of WA but not classified as remote under the new YA guidelines (locality of Wellington Mills). Not unlike other students in the SW who do qualify as 'remote' we still need to travel over and above 90 minutes to Perth CBD. My son would have to physically re locate to do a degree that could not be offered in the SW. He has had significant difficulty finding steady stable employment since graduation from school (2009) eventually working in a series of part time, seasonal and casual positions include kitchen hand, vineyard pruning, picking and furniture removal. Whilst keeping busy transferring from one job to another 'on demand' in a working week he still has not earned the required amount or can satisfy the average amount of hours required over the given period to gain independent status.

Now we are in the stressful position of having to apply for dependant allowance. If his application is approved it will only be because our combined income is so low as a result of having commenced a business which will take 5 years to build up. We still need to support him and his older brother through Uni over the next 3 to 4 years that would be challenging even for a family with a combined income of \$150,000 or more.

The other matter I wish to raise is the income earning limit imposed by Centre link on independent YA recipients. My older son has just returned home for the end of year break and has lost his rent assistance but on top of that has also temporarily lost independent status (as he's returned home) therefore lost an additional \$110 per fortnight from his YA payment. (so from \$455 per fortnight it has reduced to \$278) Whilst at home he is still only allowed to earn the set amount before his YA is effected then over and above that his YA will reduce on declared income. Again since it is unlikely he will gain a lot of employment he is actually worse off financially returning home and with no incentive to 'get ahead' for the next year which these kids really need when struggling to survive in Perth.