

I wish to register our support for changes to the Youth Allowance Scheme and to a fair and equitable resolution where all rural students are classified as entitled.

We are absolutely appalled that students (our son included) who have worked hard at school for many years and who have dreams of being educated at a higher level (university) are unable to obtain Youth Allowance due to lines of a map. We are, unfortunately, one of those ineligible families who live on the opposite side of the road to others who are deemed eligible in Mount Gambier South Australia. We are classed as "Inner Regional".

Our son worked extremely hard to complete Year 12 last year and secured himself a place at University in Adelaide (the nearest University where his chosen course is offered).

Unfortunately we live 5 hours away, so he has no choice but to move away to pursue his dream. We have three children living at home and who are financially dependent on my husband and myself. Both my husband and I work fulltime (with my husband working mostly six days per week to top up his income for us to live) and like most families we have a mortgage.

Our son, like most of his peers, took a gap year in 2010. During this time he has been working 2 jobs, with most weeks working 70 hours per week. The money that he has saved will go towards his college accommodation which is approximately \$12,500 per year. He then has petrol, insurance, registration and maintenance on his car, clothing, text books, incidentals (doctors, dentist chemist bills etc) and then of course he will have the expense of travelling home for the holidays as the accommodation is for term times only. This all easily adds up to \$20,000 per year. This is \$20,000 which we as a hard working Australian family don't unfortunately have spare!!! Of course a HECS debt has not been factored in either!!

For some time now the Australian Government has been 'talking up' skilling up the workforce ... they have been doing this by giving buckets of money into skilling up unemployed Australians and migrants. Surely the Australian Government should be assisting to educate **ALL** our youth at the level of higher education who live at least 60kms away from their nearest university. These are the Australian citizens who are more likely to return to their home towns or to relocate to other rural and regional areas.

The Australian Government should be doing everything possible to encourage students to further their education and we urge the Australian Government to reconsider the unfair Youth Allowance Eligibility and stop discriminating country students.