

Ms Margaret Sykes
Branch Manager
Income Support Policy and Information

Ms Sykes

Thank you for your reply to my email relating to Youth Allowance (YA) for rural and regional tertiary students.

Unfortunately your response provided us with no new information or even hope for a return to a fairer and non discriminatory system for rural and regional students to qualify for YA. Indeed I wonder if anyone in the Labor government is even aware of the impact this policy is having on families and students. Additionally it appears as though no one really cares.

The comparative scenario I showed for our daughters is very real and clearly shows our second daughter will be distinctly disadvantaged by having to qualify for YA under the new criteria assuming she can find 30 hours employment per week for 18 months. We are at a loss to understand how anyone within the government cannot see this as well.

The move to rely on Parental Income (PI) will not assist most families. For our second daughter to be eligible to receive the same amount of YA payment as our eldest daughter, my wife and my joint incomes would need to be as low as \$60000 pa. We are trying to give our children the best opportunity to further their educations however to expect a family to survive on \$60000 pa plus support 2 children in Perth is just not realistic. We are trying to pull our own weight but it appears as though the only option open to us is for one of us to cease work and become a burden on our fellow taxpayers.

The Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund is but a drop in the ocean. \$20M over 18 months will not solve the problems students face when they are required to relocate to further their studies. No doubt the eligibility criteria to be announced shortly will illustrate this fact as PI and other conditions will see but a select few benefit from this Fund.

I put it to Senator Evans and the Prime Minister that they are not prepared to listen to rural and regional families and students and try and understand the financial hardship they are facing as they try to further their education.

Urgent action is necessary to ensure students contemplating relocation next year are in a position to make an informed decision about whether to defer or not and what level of financial support is likely to be available to them.

John and Sue Bird