

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to register my support for changes in the Youth Allowance Scheme to a more equitable scenario where all rural students are classified as eligible.

Our daughter has just started Year 12 and has aspirations to attend University. None of the courses she is interested in are offered in our home town so she will have no option other than moving to the town or city that has a university that offers such a course. Under the new rules this will require us to support her in accommodation and living costs.....quite a considerable sum of money each year (up to \$20,000 per year). Her original idea was to take a year off and work to earn enough money to be eligible for the Youth Allowance Scheme. Since we live in Orange and are now classified as Inner Regional she is now ineligible for this along with the fact that she would have to defer for 18mths makes her access to equitable education impossible. We have many friends in Sydney and their children of the same age have 5 full universities to choose from...all whilst living at home with no additional accommodation costs, yet we have to support our daughter to access the same level of education.

There seems to be a large social injustice in the recent changes, especially in a time where the State and Federal Governments are running campaigns to convince families to move to rural centres (Evocities). The division into Outer and Inner (have and have nots) has no basis as there is no difference in the cost to those of us now classified as Inner Regional and those lucky enough to be classified as Outer Regional to support our children in gaining a university education. They all have the same costs if they have to move to gain that education. It seems once again that decisions have been made by city paper shufflers without any understanding of the implications they have on rural communities. Equal access to education for ALL Australians seems to have been forgotten.