

To whom it may concern,

I am both a mother of three children and teach at a local High School in Dubbo in NSW. I would not consider my husband or myself to be wealthy – a teacher and an abattoir supervisor and yet my children will not qualify for assistance when they attend university.

We have a mortgage, utility bills and other costs that will not disappear when our son goes off to university in twelve months time. We will still be supporting two children in Dubbo and on top of that will need to find the twelve thousand in College fees for our son. As well because he is at college he has to return home for the holidays so part time work will be difficult. We will then be further out of pocket in supporting his other costs while living in Sydney. Currently he has a part time job while at school which he uses to pay for much of his daily costs.

People who live in major cities have many university choices and their children can remain living at home. Nothing changes regarding living costs and part time jobs. My son has been the dux of his year since Year 7 and gained results like a 99 in Maths for the School Certificate exams and over 90 for every other School Certificate Examination he sat. Yet the government is making it near impossible for such a bright and talented boy to follow his dreams. In Dubbo he can only study to be a teacher or a nurse. As he is aiming for an ATAR in the high 90s his dreams are greater than those careers.

I don't understand why if he lived 15 minutes down the road in Guerie he would qualify for Youth Allowance – but for some reason living in Dubbo is different. I feel that politicians are really out of touch with families who earn just over 100, 000 a year. Surprisingly we are not wealthy. With other children to feed, clothe and educate, bills to pay and cars to register – families like ours feel sick with worry and lose sleep at night concerned with how we can afford the additional expense. Once we have several children at university will we have to sell our home to afford it?

In my experience students from Dubbo often return to the town to work after going off to University – I fear that the high costs will deter many potential teachers, nurses, doctors and other university educated professionals. Where will our town be in a decade after this decision? Will the government realise when it is far too late the horrible impact of punishing middle class country kids who are most likely to return in these jobs and kill off towns like ours at the same time just to save government money in the short term.

Regards

Kathleen Collin