

I write in support of the Private Members Bill to provide people living in 'inner regional areas' with the same level of entitlement as 'outer regional areas' as regards qualifying for a student allowance. For those young people living in inner regional areas and seeking to pursue metropolitan based tertiary education the new rules are discriminatory. The rules as proposed will prevent many young country people from receiving a competitive tertiary education purely through the added costs they will impose relative to the previously existing arrangements.

The new rules will work against a vibrant and sustained rural economy at a time where the ability to entice professionals from their metropolitan support base is already very difficult. The young people targeted adversely by the new rules are the very best hope to have high quality professional skills available in regional areas. They deserve to be supported strongly by Government not the reverse!

My wife and I have two sons, Kalon; 22 years old and Arran who is 18. Kalon will commence his last year receiving youth allowance in 2011 as he completes his Arts degree with honors at Notre Dame in Fremantle. Kalon qualified under the old rules having earned \$19,000 in a variety of jobs during his gap year spent in Busselton. The allowance he receives enables him to largely support himself in Perth while he studies. Kalon gained valuable experience during his gap year employment which has helped with the dislocation that country kids often feel when they first leave home to study in the city.

Arran has likewise worked solidly through his gap year and will have earned considerably more than Kalon having had a more regular job at Subway. Arran had planned to follow the same path as his brother and acquire a student allowance to enable him to study computer science at Murdoch University in Perth. The new rules however as best we can ascertain will make Arran ineligible for an allowance which will mean he has to self-fund his education. We will help as much as we can but it's unlikely we will have the finances to fully underwrite his accommodation and study expenses. Arran will have to find regular and well paying work in Perth in addition to his studies, whilst making the adjustment from the rural to a metropolitan setting.

The contrast between Kalon's experience and that of his younger brother will be profound and it is with some consternation that Leanne and I consider that in 2011 the approach to education in rural WA is set to go backwards. We can see no logic to this. We relocated from Perth in 1988 when our first son was born and have enjoyed raising a family in a regional setting. Our sons are born and bred in Busselton and will likely return to the area at some future time with the skills and experience that a quality university education can bring. It is young people like Kalon and Arran that will enable regional WA to grow, to be enriched and self sustaining; to be more than a dependent satellite of metropolitan Perth or a labour pool for fly-in, fly-out jobs in the mining industry.

Please support tertiary education for our young men and women in rural WA. Help them to realize their potential as they in turn help rural WA to transform itself in these exciting and changing times.

Regards,

Richard and Leanne Ford