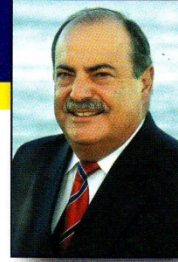




John Castrilli MLA

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Member for
Bunbury

2nd December 2010

The Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations committee
P O Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: SOCIAL SECURITY AMENDMENT (Income Support for Regional Students) BILL

I write in relation to the inquiry into the above Bill and offer my strong support to the proposed amendments.

The recent changes by the current Government to the Independent Youth Allowance have caused great anxiety and extreme hardship to many families within the Bunbury and South West region.

Unlike students living in metropolitan areas who have easy access to higher education, students from regional areas have always been at a great disadvantage, financially, emotionally and socially, by having to leave their home and family support to move to the City to undertake their university studies.

The changes that have come into effect from July 2010, have now severely reduced the higher education opportunities for regional students, effectively creating a class system which prejudices the chances of regional students having a full education equal to those in city locations.

Until the changes of 2010, regional students often took a gap year to work and earn enough to become an Independent student and support themselves. For many students, this was the only way they were financially able to move to Perth to undertake university studies.

It would be a national tragedy if regional students were denied the opportunity to be part of this country's future generations of academics and university trained professionals.

I urge the Committee's serious consideration of this Bill to ensure that all Australians have the right to undertake higher education, no matter where they reside or the wealth of their parents.

Kind regards

HON JOHN CASTRILLI MLA
Member for Bunbury