

To: Committee Secretary of the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, PO Box 6100, Parliament House, ACT 2600.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Being parents of a Tasmanian North West Coast student who is currently on a gap year, before going on to University, we were dismayed to read that our son will have to work an average of 30 hours a week for 18 months before being classified as eligible for the independent rate of youth allowance. Our understanding is that our son's classmates who also attended the Don Academy in Devonport, yet reside only a short distance away in Ulverstone or Turners Beach, can become eligible by earning \$19,532 over an 18 month period. Our understanding is that students who reside further west on the North-West Coast can also qualify by this method.

Currently our son is disappointed, frustrated and angry. He has worked almost constantly since finishing year 12 in an effort to qualify himself for the independent rate of youth allowance as well as to gather together funds to support himself at University. He has been almost continuously employed during his gap year and yet will not qualify for the independent rate of youth allowance at the start of the 2011 Academic Year. He planned to attend Utas in Hobart in 2011 but is currently unsure of his University pathway, given the Youth Allowance changes.

All students from the North-West Coast of Tasmania are at a disadvantage in relation to access to University pathways. Most need to leave home on order to attend University. It is a costly exercise, which goes a long way to explaining the low participation rates in University education by residents in the region. It is a ridiculous situation to classify Devonport as "inner regional" while the rest of the North-West Coast is "outer regional" or "remote". The situation is inequitable and unfair.