

As a parent of a student at Busselton Senior High School studying for TEE (just finished Year 11) I am very concerned about the changes announced by the Labour Government in May 2009. These changes make it increasingly difficult for rural students to access tertiary education. We live in Dunsborough which is classified as an Inner Regional Area which would mean that to qualify for the Independent Youth Allowance our children would have to work 30 hours per week for 18mths out of two years. This would effectively mean our children would have to remain living at home for 2 years and seek employment locally. The type of employment they could hope to obtain would be seasonal or part time – many of the locally available seasonal and part time jobs disappear as soon as you are 17 (fast food outlets, supermarkets etc.) as they prefer to employ 14 year olds.

My eldest daughter's birthday is on 21 December and she will turn 18 at the end of Year 12. This would mean she would spend the next 2 years at home before entering tertiary education at age 20. Compare this to families living in Perth close to tertiary institutions whose children can continue to live at home while studying – they will be in their third year of studies by the time our children can afford to move out of home and attend university. I feel this is grossly unfair, discriminatory and a huge disincentive for regional students to obtain tertiary qualifications.

I fully support Nola Marino's Motion to reinstate the former workplace participation criteria for independent youth allowance and for it to apply to inner regional areas.