

To the Senate Inquiry Committee,

I write to inform your committee of how changes to the Independent Youth Allowance are adversely impacting on regional and country students wishing to attend tertiary education institutions.

I am a secondary school teacher and a mother of a student currently doing his gap year in the hope of qualifying for independent youth allowance which is vital if he is to achieve his goal of attending university next year. I have spoken to many students from Busselton and surrounding districts that also have taken a gap year and are now being disadvantaged by the current eligibility conditions of youth allowance.

All of these students rely solely on qualifying for independent youth allowance to allow them to move to Perth and attend university. They have all worked either full time or part time to meet the requirements over the past year since leaving school. The 18 month- two year time frame is both un- workable and detrimental to these country students.

Firstly many courses do not allow for mid year intakes and secondly country students only want to take a one year break from studies due to the nature of obtaining employment in the country. A two year gap means many students will not then leave secure jobs and uproot to relocate and attend university in the city.

Country students rely heavily on relocating to the city with their friends, both financially and for the support network and security that this provides. Country students are already at a disadvantage compared to their city counterparts as they do not have the significant financial benefits that living at home afford nor do they have the emotional and social benefits.

Our regional students have no other choice but moving to the city to further their education and if they do not qualify for youth allowance a huge majority without the financial support of their parents will not be able to achieve this.

We must rectify this injustice to enable any country student who achieves a position at a university the right to take up that offer and attain a tertiary education. Surely if a student works for 12 months and saves a certain amount of money they should qualify for government assistance to further their education.

Regards,
Christine Williamson.