

Dear Sir/Madam

We live in Bunbury, Western Australia and have 3 sons who all intend to go to University or Further Studies in Perth which is 200km North of where we currently live. Our eldest son is currently studying for an Arts Degree at the University of Western Australia and our second and third sons are currently about to go into year 11 and year 10 respectively.

Our eldest son graduated from High School in 2008 and he was one of the students that decided to have a Gap year in order to get a job and earn the \$19,500 over 18 months required to enable him to qualify for Youth Allowance by proving he was independent. During that year your government decided to change the rules governing Youth Allowance and for a while we were uncertain whether he was going to qualify and that we would somehow have to finance his relocation, thank fully you decided to let the old system continue for that current year. He has to pay nearly \$15,000 a year for his accommodation costs in halls of residence and qualifies for \$9000 a year Youth Allowance, to pay for the rest he has to work in order to meet these costs and at the same time not go over his \$200 a week youth allowance threshold, on top of this is his University course costs including books and associated costs. This puts enough pressure on his time for study as it is, if he didn't have Youth Allowance it would be very difficult for him to cover his costs with work and also manage to stay on top of his study, he would therefore come out of university with an even larger debt, not a great start to his working life!

As your current legislation stands our other two sons do not qualify for Youth Allowance under the old system because we are not deemed rural enough and therefore classified as Inner Regional. This means that in order for them to qualify for Youth Allowance they will effectively have to have a two years gap year and then find a job where they are constantly employed for 30 hours a week over an 18 month period, this is extremely difficult within our region to find employers that are willing to give school leavers who are unqualified these sorts of hours. Also to have two years out of education makes it far more difficult to get back into the disciplines of Study. To go straight to University from school will put undue pressure on both them and us financially with the uncertainty of what their futures will be, we also found with our eldest son that having a one year gap year prepared him much better for university life as he was more mature and worldly having experienced a year in the work force.

We can understand children living in such cities as Perth not being entitled to funding from the government as they still have the luxury of being able to study whilst living at home but we fail to understand what difference it makes where you live outside of these major cities, if you have to relocate because that is where your chosen course is, it doesn't matter whether that is from rural or inner regional the costs will still amount to the same. We also fail to understand why your government are so determined to put stress and barriers upon our future generation of leaders in many fields of need, like doctors, teachers and the like who need to go onto further education to succeed in these professions and take our country forward, to enforce a two year gap year in order to qualify for financial assistance will mean that students undertaking study in the medical profession for instance will be nearing 30 years old before they have qualified. This will have a knock on effect on the dynamics of the society we live in.

We hope the current government will hear the concerns of students, parents and families who live in inner regional areas and how the current legislation disadvantages these students and hinders their opportunities because of lack of financial assistance to help them with their relocation costs.

We therefore ask the Government and the House to act on Nola Marino's Motion which was passed 28 October 2010 to include Inner Regional students in Subsection 10E (a) of the *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Income Support for Students) Bill 2010*.

Yours sincerely

Robin and Alison Evernden