

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

**Dear Sir or Madam,**

**I would like to add our family's disgust at the continued discrimination against the inner regional rural school-leaver as their right to pursue tertiary studies fairly, diminish. This disgraceful decision is now based on illogical lines on a map as to where they live.**

**The major impacts of the Labor Governments unfair Independent Youth Allowance criteria are many and far reaching predominantly being: -**

- ◆ The changes in Independent Youth Allowance in the last year have created more stress and uncertainty for inner regional student gap year.**
- ◆ Factors such as the down turn in the economy, and the drought, have created further barriers for regional students such as my daughter to find full-time employment in Dubbo. As school-leavers have few employment skills to offer. Their work situation does not differ from our outer regional or remote cousins yet are treated differently. Why should they be punished for this?**
- ◆ To qualify for Independent Youth Allowance, students living in Inner Regional areas are now FORCED to work 30 hours per week for a MINIMUM of 18 months out of two years, which is extremely difficult in rural communities.**
- ◆ As a result, students are being FORCED to take two gap years to qualify for Independent Youth Allowance. Meaning a student has to defer their course for two years, which is a completely unrealistic expectation for a student keen to go continue their tertiary studies.**
- ◆ Studies show students are less likely to return to study after a two year break from study with less students going on to university, resulting in less graduates returning as professionals for rural communities.**
- ◆ For students such as my daughter for us to find the \$20,000 plus, needed to send her away from home to study in the city, 400km away creates enormous financial stress on her and our family.**
- ◆ We want to reward her hard work and ambition for tertiary education, not punish her. Australia's geography and demography pose heavy challenges for rural students who already battle for education equality due to isolation issues compared to their city cousins.**
- ◆ The research from the University of Queensland found 83.9 per cent of students were mentally stressed and that much of it is caused from financial pressure. The researcher, Dr Helen Stallman, is quoted by the Emaxhealth website: "Studying full time and having to work to support yourself puts unrealistic pressures on students and more needs to be**

done to ensure their mental health and that they stay in our universities." The union president, Carla Drakeford, said to The Age: "NUS is concerned about the number of students who are mentally stressed, which is why we have always advocated for more students to receive youth allowance."

- ◆ Inner Regional Rural communities deserve better than being disadvantaged in this way. . Support is what they need not further punishment. The Labor Government's Education revolution seems to blatantly discriminate against inner-regional students. Why is this?
- ◆ A senate inquiry into regional education found 55% of city students went on to tertiary education, compared with 33% of regional students. Where is the level playing field for regional education here?

**URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED: -**

*(a) Urgently introduce legislation to reinstate the former workplace participation criteria for independent youth allowance to apply to students whose family home is located in inner regional areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics instrument Australian Standard Geographical Classification;*

*(b) Appropriate funds necessary to meet the additional cost of expanding the criteria for participation, with the funds to come from the Education Investment Fund; and*

My Motion, if it were implemented, would allow up to an additional 20,000 students throughout Australia from Inner Regional areas, to be eligible for the Independent Rate of Youth Allowance under the original criteria, providing the Parental Combined Income is less than \$150,000 (and the young person is living away from home to study).

### **What this means for regional students?**

If the Labor Government implements my Motion, Inner Regional students are able to access the monetary based Workforce Participation Criteria and will only have to take 12 months gap, rather than 18 months to two years. This shorter timeframe encourages more students to return to study. Also it to allow Inner Regional students access to the original three Independent Youth Allowance criteria, the same way Outer Regional students can.

Yours sincerely

Lesley & Lindsay Young