

To the Senate Inquiry:

I live in Bunbury WA, and have two children aged 15 and 17. I also work as a Careers Counsellor in schools throughout the South West.

Both my children wish to follow career paths requiring University study in areas not available to them outside of State capitals, and as Perth is 2 hours away, they have no option other than to live away from home.

I would far rather that there was an option that involved them being able to live at home in Bunbury, both from a parenting and a financial point of view.

As this is not possible if they wish to follow their career choices, it leaves us with the option of funding all accommodation and related costs for at least 4 years for each child, or of moving the family to Perth.

We always planned that each of our children would have a gap year, during which time they could earn the right to be considered independent, and claim Living Away from Home allowance for their tertiary studies. We are now, suddenly, left with this additional cost of \$1000 a month, rising to \$2000 a month in 2 years time (when they are both studying), if we continue to live in the South West. This, of course, is in addition to their Course fees and study costs. How are we going to find this?

I understand why Youth Allowance was changed to prevent families accessing Living Away from Home allowance when the student had no need to live away from home, and this is fair. What is incredibly unfair however, is expecting Rural and Regional families to bear the entire cost burden of tertiary education themselves, when they have no other possible alternative, except not to provide their children with a tertiary education.

The option to have a 2 year "gap year" is there, but how practical do you think that is? I have yet to come across a young person thinking this is an answer that makes sense for them.

The classifications used to decide seemingly arbitrarily that a student from Bunbury, Collie or Dunsborough cannot access independence under the old system, yet a student from nearby areas (classified as remote regional), can continue to do so, is also causing enormous dissatisfaction.

There are many inequities for families living in Rural and Regional Australia already - Health Care, Primary and Secondary Education, and lack of proximity to many other services only available in Capital cities. Statistics document this clearly.

**PLEASE** do something to address this inequity in access to Tertiary Education. I ask on behalf of my own children, and also for all those young people I encounter on a daily basis in my job, many of whom will be unable to pursue their chosen paths of study if this appalling state of affairs is not addressed.

Regards

Juliette Wrobel