

To whom it may concern

I am a General Practitioner working in a Regional centre, having relocated from Perth in 2000. My husband and my children have all enjoyed the lifestyle living in such a location provides. However, our children are about to commence tertiary education and will be excluded currently from receiving Youth Allowance because of our location. We are therefore considering moving back to Perth. My husband (a teacher) and I can both easily get work in Perth, with similar if not greater incomes and allow our children to live back at home with us, rather than having to pay for them to live independently.

I believe the government policies have been contradictory, on the one hand trying to keep professionals (including Medical Practitioners) in rural and remote centres but on the other hand ceasing programs that have supported regional children complete their secondary education. Most other children of medical practitioners in our area have previously qualified for Youth Allowance by taking a Gap year and working. Our son has spent 2010 in the UK working at a school, which would have previously qualified him for Youth Allowance.

For example, our son is enrolled to do Medicine in 2011 – again an area where considerable money has been used to encourage rural and regional children to take up this option as they are more likely to return to regional and rural areas to work. I also believe there are many other medical practitioners and other professionals, who are now in a similar position to our family through- out Australia who will be faced with a similar choice- either to stay in a regional area and pay significant money to support our children to live independently or to move back to a capital city to allow the children to live at home whilst completing their education- as most city families do.

One of the most common reasons for Doctors to leave regional or rural areas is for educational reasons for their children. We live too far away from Perth to commute ie 200km distance and there is no option to study Medicine but in Perth. One of my colleagues in this practice with 8 children has recently moved to Canberra to work to allow her children to live at home and have access to University. She is a single mother and cannot afford to support her children living away from home. We have a great shortage of GPs in our area – like many Regional Centres and I believe the short sightedness of stopping Youth Allowance for Regional Children is counter -productive to retention of Doctors and other professionals in Regional Centres.

Yours sincerely Dr Pamela Burgar