

PETER AND SHARON WILSON

**SUBMISSION TO SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

INQUIRY ON INDEPENDENT YOUTH ALLOWANCE

On behalf of our family (Sunshine Coast residents) and all those similarly affected in regional Australia, we wish to register our extreme concern about the Gillard Government's apparent exclusion of Inner Regional 2009 Year 12 (now gap year) students from access to Independent Status provisions of Youth Allowance. Our daughter will be commencing university in Brisbane in February 2011 and will in effect be financially discriminated against – vis a vis her city, outer regional and remote area counterparts - by the Government's position.

Is the Government so hopelessly out of touch with the situation in regional Australia? Then let us assure the Government that, in contrast to the Disneyland economic assessments of the Treasury and Reserve Bank, regional Australia is now doing it tough, with employment and investment opportunities progressively diminishing. Markets, from real estate to motor vehicle, are stagnating. Both small and large businesses are operating in an adverse business climate, experiencing sharply reduced turnover in comparison with previous years. In Queensland, cost of living overheads have escalated sharply with the Bligh Government's economic mismanagement. In this worrying situation, we do not need to be presented with another hurdle: a financial deterrent/barrier to our children's tertiary education.

We are aware of the Gillard and Rudd Government's inability to employ caution or commonsense in its program execution/ administration.. Those of us with longer memories can recall the more measured and sensible approach of earlier Federal governments to programs such as home insulation and home saving. Their prudence and wisdom served Australia well.

We cannot puzzle this one: it beggars belief. In the context of a new Government with its grandiose, big-spending 'reform agenda', the YA exclusion of Inner Regional students surely cannot be attributed to financial constraints. So we are left wondering where it came from: ignorance/oversight, departmental blunder or simply bloody-minded political intention?

We can only suggest that this is an opportunity for the Gillard Government to demonstrate that it will not discriminate against youth in regional Australia ... to show that it wants to be around in the longer term. If that is the case, it will need to treat young people across Australia equally! We call on the Government to redress this inequity and make the necessary amendments forthwith to allow Inner Regional students full and unprejudiced access to Independent Status provisions of Youth Allowance.