

2nd December 2010

Social Security Amendment (Income Support for Regional Students) Bill 2010

Attention to the Committee

I wish to inform you of my concerns and the long term implications for regional youth accessing Independent Youth Allowance in order to complete tertiary education under the current legislation.

My daughter has been offered a placement at the UNSW to study biological, earth and environment science, she has also gained access to on campus accommodation in a self contained shared unit.

Vanessa took a gap year to save for her expenses of living away from home and also to prepare her for the huge change. Singleton has a population of just over 20,000 people and moving to Sydney (with no family living close by) is just one obstacle. Her 12 month traineeship will finish in February and with her relocation she will need to find another job to support herself financially, her 2nd obstacle. Attempting full time work, full time tertiary study, adjusting to the change and being away from family and lifelong friends, 3rd obstacle. Surviving and succeeding, 4th obstacle.

The lack of understanding from our government and the division that has been created in regional Australia is of great concern for all small communities in raising our children. This is particularly important for our youth where there is not a strong culture of students seeking further studies, the peer pressure of remaining in the communities and the financial obstacles. This division, the culture, cost and peer support impacts on all rural and regional youth including inner regional. What I am trying to say, is that you have two students one inner regional and one outer regional that are friends and have the capacity to complete tertiary studies. The inner regional student will see all the obstacles and the financial burden as too great what will the friend do???? In two, three, five years where will regional Australia and our youth be???? The division with city and region/rural youth is there, now due to the current legislation, there's a new division and that is with inner and outer regional/rural youth. I hope you understand what I am trying to say about the long term impact of the current legislation

We do not have the financial means of offering any financial support for Vanessa to complete her studies as we are also raising a 10 year old child (Georgia) with a significant disability in regional Australia. Whilst there is some financial support via carer allowance and FaHSIA, we missed out on early intervention support because of Georgia's age and the other allowances does not even cover the phone bills etc. As I have said people living in regional/rural Australia are disadvantaged. This is sad but true; I first raised our situation with Mr Joel Fitzgibbon in November 2009 and have only just received a reply, which wasn't of any help. Even without this extra burden we still would have great difficulty with the expense of tertiary studies without the Independent Youth Allowance.

Vanessa was born in a small country hospital in regional Australia with the help of our GP and a midwife and did not arrive by a boat. She doesn't need a tax funded needle

exchange or methadone program nor does she need accommodation in one of our funded detention centres. Whilst I am not critical of those and other programs funded and supported like them, as a mother I questioned the government's priorities.

Regional Australia needs financial advisors, teachers, doctors, nurses, vets, speech therapist, environmental scientist and the list goes on. We need these people to live in our communities and be involved in a regional Australia that is viable, sustainable, well educated and offer equality for all our youth.

Please reinstate the Independence Youth Allowance in 2011 to include inner regional Australia, so that Vanessa and students like her have some financial respite from the huge expense. These young adults are the future for regional Australia.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns.

Ros Talbot