

To:

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

Senate Inquiry into the Social Security Amendment (Income support for regional students) Bill 2010.

I would strongly support the Bill put forward by Senator Nash to amend the new legislation with regards to youth allowance and the criteria for independent status for students in Inner Regional Areas of Australia. The areas of remoteness map used to define criteria for independent youth allowance is totally ridiculous. Some areas defined as Inner Regional are over 150 kilometres from the nearest City, some have no sealed roads, no mobile service, no internet and no school bus and yet they are regarded as Inner Regional. Many students in Inner Regional Australia have exactly the same expenses as those in Outer Regional areas as they have to live away from home to attend University – there is no difference between these students – in fact there is often only a road between them and in many cases Outer Regional Students live closer to a city than Inner Regional students – this is particularly the case in Cooma Monaro Shire and Snowy River Shires of NSW. For students to have to find employment for an average of 30 hours per week for an 18 month period when they live in a small country town they will have to leave home which places further financial burden on regional families. There are not enough jobs for students in local towns particularly as the 18 months will include 2 year groups of school leavers. Traineeships provided by local businesses no longer qualify students to gain independent youth allowance when they are Inner Regional Students whereas their Outer Regional neighbours are able to. This legislation is discriminatory and totally unfair. This legislation needs to be changed and Senator Nash's Bill needs to be carried if Regional Australia is to progress and students are to have equitable access to education.