

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I live in Bunbury Western Australia. My region is classified as Inner Regional for Youth Allowance purposes. I have 3 children. My oldest son has completed a double degree at UWA in Perth. He received Independent Student Allowance for the majority of his time in Perth. My daughter is currently studying at Murdoch University in Perth. She currently receives Independent Student Allowance which helps but does not fully cover the cost of living away from home for the purpose of studying. We currently give her \$50 per week to help with costs plus pay for the running of her car, cost of text books etc. She also works 2 days a week just to make ends meet. We would not have been able to afford to send these 2 children to Perth to study at University if they were not receiving Youth Allowance as we were living in a remote region of the NT with my husband's employment and had to send our children to Boarding School.

Our youngest son completed Year 12 last year and has taken a gap year this year to try and earn the qualifying amount in the hope that Bunbury will become classified as eligible for Independent Youth Allowance under the old criteria. He will be studying a science degree at UWA with the possible intention of either converting to Physiotherapy or ultimately a post graduate degree in Medicine. He will be living at St. George's College. The estimated cost of fees (including board and food) at St George's College for the first year is \$15625. This is only for the academic year. With other expenses such as cost of text books plus running a car we anticipate it will cost in excess of \$20000.00 to study in Perth. This is before tax money. He has not had consistent work as it is difficult to find full time employment for only a gap year. He has predominantly been doing labouring work and as contracts are completed staff are laid off until another project commences. I don't believe my son would continue on to University at all if he was forced to take another gap year.

To be able to afford for our son to go to University in Perth we have had to make an extremely hard decision to split the family up and my husband is now working remotely in the Northern Territory to enable him to earn the income required to cover the costs of sending our son to Perth to study. My husband only gets back to Bunbury around 6 times a year for a short break. This is putting extreme pressure on our family and I don't know if our marriage can survive. This is a huge burden to put onto a child's shoulders, knowing it was the cost of his university degree that caused the break up of his parents marriage. If our son was eligible for Independent Student Allowance my husband would be able to return to Bunbury to work as our expenses would be less.

Bunbury does not offer the courses that my son wants to study and therefore he is forced to move to Perth to complete his degree. I urge you to reconsider your position on the Independent Student Allowance criteria for Inner Regional areas. I believe that if a student must leave his home town and live elsewhere to complete his studies, and qualifies under the Independent status, he should be eligible to receive the Student Allowance, regardless of where he lives.

Thankyou.

Linley Thompson