

Submission to the inquiry into Social Security Amendment (Income Support for Regional Students) Bill 2010

This is a submission to support changes to Youth Allowance relating to extend the bill (Income Support for regional Students) to cover eligible student that families live in the Inner Regional area.

We run a family owned farm, due to the drought we have had to let our full time employee go some 5 years ago, since then my husband (an incomplete quadriplegic who has been self employed since his accident 25 years ago (the only government assistance he receives is a mobility allowance) with the assistance of our three children now aged 19yrs 17 yrs and 16yrs old and myself have run the farm through very difficult time both due to weather and financial hardship. I have also worked off farm to help support the family.

Our two older children have always planned to attend university, the 19 year old took 2010 off to work and earn enough to be eligible for the independent youth allowance only to find that we fall within the inner regional and she would have to work for an average of 30 hours over 2 years to be able to access independent youth allowance. This would mean she needed to take two years off before she starts university, the risk with this is that the young person will get used to not studying, has an income greater than they will have to live on at university and all the benefits that comes from that shopping, holiday, entertainment, car and so become comfortable with life as it is and decides not to both uprooting their lives to attend university, made more likely if the course they wanted to study is at a University that they would have to relocate to attend. Due to this the Inner Regional classification significantly disadvantages student that live within this region.

At this stage my daughter still hopes to attend Wollongong University where she has been accepted onto the course she wishes to study next year but with the delay in the vote on this bill she is still unclear, if she will be able to access youth allowance and if not if she/we will be able to afford the cost of university.

Her sister who has just completed her HSC and awaiting her result hopes to study at either Sydney University or Australian National University as these universities have the course she hopes to study.

This means that we have two children that will have to relocate to be able to study the course that fit their needs. If you look at the inner regional map it would appear that the area included is considered as inner regional because there are universities located within its boundaries and so the students should just attend their closest uni even if it doesn't have the course they want to study because then they wouldn't have to live away from home. If that is the logic behind the mapping, it doesn't work just look at a town like Cowra, a student couldn't commute daily to attend university from there.

Most student that live in the Inner Regional Area suffer the same difficulties in accessing university as student from the outer regional and remote but the distances are just a bit shorter. They shouldn't be disadvantaged in accessing independent youth allowance by having to work 30 hours a week for two years when where they live makes getting that level of regular employment difficult.

We are frustrated because by the delay in the bill being voted on until 2011, it leaves us unclear about where our daughter stands on access youth allowance and this makes financial planning difficult, it would be nice to think that the parliament would have considered the timing of dealing with this bill so that people weren't left in no

mans land unable to make clear plans for the further education of their children because of the delay in voting on a bill. Remember you are dealing with real people here, young people just wanting to get on with their lives

We hope that the bill will be passed so that all regional students can qualify under the same rules for assessing youth allowance if eligible.