

6 December 2010

To Whom it May Concern

RE: INEQUITY IN CURRENT YOUTH ALLOWANCE CRITERIA.

This letter is to advise how our daughter and other country students will be affected by the current Youth Allowance Rules.

Our daughter Tessa is 17 and has recently completed Year 12 and WACE exams. Tessa has applied to UWA to study medicine as her first choice or Biomedical Science as her second choice. Following we have listed some areas we feel are inequitable.

1. Inner Regional vs Outer Regional.

This rule is discriminatory because for Tessa to be eligible for Youth Allowance under current rules she must work for an average of 30 hours per week for an 18 month period. This is because she is considered as 'inner regional' due to her address which is 260km from the University that offers applied courses . This rule does not apply to her good friend and classmate whose address is in Yallingup some 285km from the same University as he is considered as 'outer regional' for the purposes of Youth Allowance.

There should be no distinction between the two; both students need to relocate to Perth to study at University regardless if they live in Busselton or Yallingup.

2. 30 hours work every week for 18 months.

This rule is a problem for two reasons.

Firstly, the rule does not allow for students to work more than 30 hours per week for 12 months to make up the average. In a town such as Busselton it is difficult for young people to find work for this amount of hours for an 18 month period. Many of the jobs available are seasonal due to the tourist nature of the town. For example, over the summer holiday period work may be obtained for well over 30 hours per week, however during the quieter winter months, work availability is greatly reduced meaning often 30 hours per week would not be achievable.

Secondly, having to work for a period of 18 months means the student must either defer their university place for two years or be lucky enough to have chosen a course that has a mid-year intake. Tessa's first preference of Medicine does not have a mid-year intake meaning she would have to have a two year break before commencing university.

3. Country student vs City student.

Country students have an immediate disadvantage due to there being limited universities within a reasonable distance. If there is a university within a reasonable distance often the

courses available are very limited. This means that many country students have no option other than to move out of home and relocate hundreds of kilometres from home to attend university. Relocating can be a very expensive exercise with university college boarding fees being upwards of \$14000 per year. The cost to rent privately is in many cases more expensive. Most city students have the option to stay at home whilst studying with financial and emotional support provided. This is not available to many country students.

We would love to be in a position to support our children financially to attend university 260km away from home, however to do this will create enormous stress and financial debt we would not have had if we had stayed in Perth. When we moved to Busselton 12 years ago, for employment reasons, we did not expect to have our children disadvantaged because of our move. Since we have lived in Busselton it has been the norm that country children need to have a 'gap year'. This 'gap year' enabled them to work for 12 months, earn money to support themselves while at university and qualify for Youth Allowance to help pay for living costs while away from home. The Governments current criteria make it even more difficult for country students to be eligible for Youth Allowance.

We feel this is unacceptable and request the Government to review their position on Youth Allowance and criteria for eligibility so that it does not disadvantage country students, especially 'inner regional' students.

Yours sincerely

Steven and Tracey Parry