

Youth Allowance Changes

Dear Prime Minister

I wish to relay to you the impact of the most recent changes to the Youth Allowance has upon my son Brad who has just completed Year 12. Brad lives with his parents just west of Busselton and has a younger brother who is aged 14 years.

Being a regional based student, the Youth Allowance is an important piece of the puzzle that allowed Brad to move to Perth and to study at the only Universities in W.A. that catered for the course he wishes to study. Country students who wish to study at Perth based Universities are financially disadvantaged when compared with their city cousins due to having to find their own accommodation in the city. The Youth Allowance was one way country students were able to offset some of the cost of relocating to undertake tertiary education.

As Brad is classified as residing in the Inner Regional Area he is unable to qualify for the Youth Allowance under the same criteria as students living the Outer Regional Area, even though the actual distances from Perth are only marginally different.

Under the Outer Regional Area criteria, Brad could have qualified for the allowance if he earned approximately \$19,500 during his gap year (and applied mid way through the next) allowing him to commence his tertiary studies in 2012.

These latest changes have created of maze of complicated rules and conditions which appear to make the whole issue from more complex and rather than helping students to undertake tertiary study, they are hindering them.

If Brad now wishes to qualify for the Youth Allowance he must defer his studies for 18 to 24 months (depending if the University has a mid year intake for a course) and then work 30 hours a week over an 18 month period. I'm not sure how these criteria were developed, but they have made attending University much more difficult for Brad now, than was the case previous. Indeed, providing 30 hours a week work for a 17 year old person who intends only working for a period of 18 months is not what an employer normally advertises for.

Even if Brad achieves his independent status under the new rules his tertiary studies will take 18 to 24 months longer finish than if he and his parents both resided in the city and Brad was able to commence University in 2011.

I think that there is a need to revisit this issue to in order to make tertiary education more equitable for country educated students and a compassionate Government would address this in balance.

Yours faithfully

Valentine Erceg