

Hello,

As parents of three sons and living in rural Western Australia, we are interested in the Youth Allowance and ways we could have some input into the guidelines relating to this allowance.

We have one son currently studying in his second year at the University of WA in Nedlands, one son is just about to sit his TEE at Hale School and our third son is in year 10 at Hale School.

We live in Dalwallinu which is 254km North East of Perth and we have a local Junior High School which is considered as a hard to staff school. The numbers are so small in years 8 to 10 that the local school offers only the basic curriculum and we believe our boys, all being fairly academic, would benefit from a wider subject choice and continuity of teaching staff and consistency in discipline, which we believe were not available locally. Therefore, they have all been attending Hale School since year 8.

Whilst in years 8 to 10, we received no assistance with the educational or boarding costs associated with our decision. However, once in year 11 and 12, we then became eligible for the isolated children's allowance to assist with our boarding costs.

Then once again, when they reach University, that they cannot attend whilst living in Dalwallinu, we are entitled to no assistance what so ever. These children have no choice but to live in Perth, usually in rental accommodation where they are responsible not only for attending their chosen courses, but also looking after themselves totally, in that they have to cook, clean, wash, etc. for themselves. They do not have the luxury of their city counterparts that can go home to their family each evening and share the household workload.

With my eldest son, we have him living in accommodation in Joondalup, north of Perth, he commutes to UWA to attend his lectures and tutorials, he has to cook for himself, do his own washing and keep the house clean and tidy. We decided that this was enough for a young 17 year old boy to take on and suggested that he didn't get a part time job on top of everything else has to do. He has friends who are in the same boat and have got part time jobs, but their studying is suffering and they are struggling and thinking of dropping their studies.

Our eldest son has even suggested to our second son that he take a gap year to earn some cash to help through University so he doesn't have to "sponge" off us, his parents. We are afraid if he takes a year off to earn money to prove independence, in order to get the youth allowance, then he may decide to not return to study at all and that is a serious issue for the future of our economy.

If there was some assistance for these children who are from Rural areas that have to live in Perth to study it would be a lot less stressful for them and their parents and we may see an increase in the number of rural students applying for University courses.

We would be happy to provide you with any other details you require to assist in this matter.

Regards,

Wendy Sawyer