

To whom it may concern,

I understand this Senate Inquiry is examining the impact of the proposed changes to Independent Youth Allowance criteria. I write to you from the perspective of student, from a Rural area, who had no choice but to leave home and study in a major centre university. At present I am in my 3rd Year of a Dental Degree at Griffith University and I receive Independent Youth Allowance. Initially I qualified for Dependent YA, when I started my degree. After great financial struggles, nervous breakdown material and estrangement from my family (who could not afford to fund my study) because of this, I am now in receipt of Independent YA. With absolute honesty I can say I would not be at University if I did not have the support of Independent YA. I also qualify for the Commonwealth Accomm. Scholarship. Even with these 2 support mechanisms life is no easy street! With a part time job, that folded earlier this year with GFC, I manage. I accept that it is part of a student's lot to be below the poverty line. I also accept the fact I will have a large HECS debt to pay back. However I cannot accept that the Gov't wants to bail out on Rural/Regional students who have no choice but to leave home to attend large Metropolitan Universities because Regional Universities do not offer the same range/quality of courses.

When I complete my study I was hoping to return to a Rural/Regional area, but if these proposed changes (workforce participation criteria) go ahead I would seriously need to rethink that option. Not because I could not afford to send my children to City Unis but because Regional/Rural areas will slowly die over time. All types of people make up a vibrant community, which provides competition and growth. Gradually as people come to realise how much it will cost to send their children away to University they will not stay and others won't relocate when they do the math. So you see a Rural/Regional will not be a good choice even if that is where your heart lies. This may take 10-15 years to eventuate with almost irreversible ramifications. As it is these areas struggle to keep Doctors and Professionals in their towns.

Maybe the Gov't needs to reform the criteria for those students who live at home and receive Independent YA. If you need to travel more than 3 hours a day to get to Uni, then you need to live closer. Students who have no choice, but to leave home to study, are at a great disadvantage not only financially but they lose their safe, support structures of home and are really on their own. Take it from me, I had many dark, desperate times in my first year at Uni and without the support of Independent YA I would not be on the path to becoming a useful member of society. Without the support of Independent YA I would probably be on Unemployment Benefits. Which is the most cost effective in the long run?

Yours Truly