

**The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600**

Dear Secretary,

I would like to respond to the concerns of the changes being proposed for the Independent Youth Allowance. I am a parent who lives in an isolated community (200km from Adelaide at Halidon) in the Murray Mallee region of South Australia. I have three children, with the oldest child completing her Year 12 schooling this year in a country school and is looking to go to University to study Physiotherapy. We are from a farming background and I work as well to supplement our farming income. I would like to respond to the following:

*a. the financial impact on rural and regional students who are attending metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE;*

Because my husband and I have a combined income over the proposed \$42,000, my daughter will not be entitled to any youth allowance whilst she is studying at university. The physiotherapy course is very intensive and does not allow time for her to study and earn income at the same time. Therefore we would have to supply her money for living away from home (board/rent, food, clothing, travel). This would be fine if our child was able to live at home whilst she was studying. We have no choice but have to find her accommodation because it is too far for her to travel. I estimate that this would possible cost us around \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year. This is a huge cost where there is no choice in the matter and possibly one that we and most other rural and regional families can not afford. On a \$60,000 combined salary, this is approx 30% plus of our income after tax. We can not afford the ongoing expenses of running a farm and paying for our children's living away from home expenses. In the past, students were able to take a gap year, earn their \$18,000 and then take up their deferred university course using the money that they saved and also the Independent Youth Allowance.

*b. the education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas;*

There are no education alternatives for rural and regional students wanting to study in regional areas in South Australia for physiotherapists and most other courses. Whyalla offers nursing (I think), but that only helps Whyalla regional students.

*c. the implications of current and proposed government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas;*

The implication of current and proposed government measures for prospective students are that it does not give rural and regional students an equal opportunity with their city counterparts for access to furthering their education in a career of their choice. University and TAFE will become an opportunity for city children and wealthy rural children. Where is the equity? We do not have a choice on whether our children get to live at home or not, and therefore our children would possibly be deprived of the education that should be a human right in today's society. Having to work 30 hours per week for 18 months

means that students can not take up their university course that they have deferred for 12 months. They would then have to reapply again and could possibly miss out. After waiting two years for their university position, students are more than likely to forget about furthering their education.

e. the adequacy of government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post-secondary study;

I understand that from the study of Independent Youth Allowance, 36% of students were living at home with parents on high income. I agree that these students should not be entitled to Independent Youth Allowance because they are not independently living away from their parents and therefore the ruling needs to be changed. To alter this ruling so that the genuine students that do live away from home (and not by choice) with probably parents who do not get such a high income should not be penalized. No consideration or thought has gone into the students in this category. Amendments should be made that youth in full time study that live a certain distance from the university/TAFE and are required to leave home to take up their education are considered for Youth Allowance if parents are receiving Family Tax Benefit A.

f. the educational needs of rural and regional students;

The educational needs of rural and regional students in comparison to their city counterparts has never been fair or equitable. Students in small rural schools are forced to learn some subjects by Open Access, which certainly is a disadvantage compared to face to face. In secondary they are frequently faced with teachers who are not qualified in curriculum fields to be teaching them. They do not have the same resources available to them as well.

g. the impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities; and

Country students would be put off taking up university placements after being away from study for two years to gain the independent youth allowance. Research already shows that 30% of students that take gap year do not actually take up their tertiary study. Therefore the professional occupations will be taken up by city students. Usually people continue to live within the environment that they are brought up in. This will mean that there will be a shortage of professional people wanting to live in the rural and regional communities. We already see this with a shortage of doctors and teachers willing to live within these communities. Another example of lack of equity between rural and city communities.

Regards,  
Krystina Durdin