

# *Pastoralists' Association*

*of West Darling*

INDUSTRIAL UNION OF EMPLOYERS

Registered under the Workplace Relations Act and the NSW Industrial Relations Act.

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## Submission

7 August 2009

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport-Standing Committee

## Independent Youth Allowance

The Pastoralists' Association of West Darling represents people living and operating isolated properties in the far west of New South Wales. One of the main reasons for people leaving the bush is lack of educational access and opportunity for their children. This is a prime concern for the Association

The prospect of students living on isolated properties gaining a tertiary education become very much more difficult following the announcement in the May Federal Budget of a single criteria for qualification of Independent Youth Allowance of 30 hours per week of work for at least 18 months over a 2 year period. This will have a huge impact on the ability of these isolated students to gain access to a tertiary education. The changes to come into effect January next year makes it very difficult for students who have deferred this year with the aim of receiving the Independent Allowance with prior arrangement to commence studies starting in 2010.

Students living in remote and isolated areas have no option but to move away from home to obtain tertiary studies. Consequently being able to defer for a year and become eligible for the Independent Allowance allowed these students access to further education. Most families owning and operating isolated properties are asset rich and cash poor, hence their ability to fund their children's living away from home expenses to attend a tertiary institution is extremely limited.

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The 15 hours per week part-time employment under the old criteria was often very difficult to obtain in isolated areas. The new proposal of 30 hours per week for at least 18 months over a 2 year period will be almost impossible. By that time if the student is lucky enough to obtain employment, he or she will have most likely lost interest in pursuing tertiary studies as they would be then part of the full time workforce and most probably working towards promotion and a career.

The Pastoralists' Association appreciates that the Government is trying to catch middle and upper class urban families whom they perceive may be rorting the system. However, in doing so they have caught a group of students who have no option but to board away from home to obtain a tertiary education, and whose families have limited financial ability to cover the associated living away from costs.

I ask the committee to seriously consider the plight of isolated students and their ability to obtain a tertiary education and remind the committee that these students currently have the lowest participation rate for tertiary studies in Australia, this policy change will compound this figure further.

Compiled by:

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