

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

NORTHERN TERRITORY STATE COUNCIL INCORPORATED

ABN: 19 744 602 697
PO Box 8346
Alice Springs NT 0871

Secretary: Sally Sullivan
Email: NTSecretary@icpa.com.au

The Northern Territory Isolated Children's Parents' Association (NTICPA) is a volunteer organisation of parents and individuals 'working together for the equality of access to education for all students who live in rural and remote areas of the Northern Territory'.

The NTICPA firmly believe that changing Youth Allowance will have a negative impact on the majority of our Year 12 students entering tertiary education.

The changes to the criteria to prove independence to qualify for the Youth Allowance will disadvantage our rural and regional young people. Without access to the Youth Allowance (or similar), tertiary study will become impossible for many rural young people.

These criteria are inequitable for rural and regional young people for the following reasons:

1. Obtaining full time employment is problematic in rural and remote towns.
2. Relocating to obtain full time employment involves significant up-front costs, which may not be readily available.
3. Deferment of a university course for two years is not allowed at most universities.
4. Statistics show that even a one-year deferment results in significant numbers of young people not entering university, so a two-year gap will only increase these numbers.
5. For rural students to attend universities, they have to leave home and incur travel and accommodation costs, as they do not have homes nearby like many of their city counterparts.

At the present time, many of our Year 12 graduates defer for a year and work in order to qualify for the Youth Allowance. Even with this payment, most families still find it a struggle to pay travel, rent, books, general living costs, fees etc, but it is a help. Most students still have to get part-time work in the city they are studying at and that is highly competitive and cannot be considered a guaranteed source of income. If the criteria are changed and/or the youth allowance is reduced, it would not be exaggerating to say the tertiary/TAFE education interstate would be out of the question for some of our students. It would probably be even more prohibitive for rural and remote families who are even more remote than town-based residents.

In particular the requirement to work 30 hrs a week for 18 months after leaving school is of concern. This means kids will need to work for 2 years before they can go to university. (as compared with earning the \$18,000 in a 12 month period after leaving school as is the case now - Even then they would not receive youth allowance until 18 months after they had left school so 6 months studying without any assistance.)

In reality this really excludes all regional kids from attending university as only those that can live at home will be able to afford to attend. I believe this is a huge barrier for remote kids continuing their education, especially if they live a distance from a town or employment region.

Surely young people from rural and regional areas can demonstrate genuine self support due to the fact that they need to relocate away from family and community support networks. They need to find accommodation and pay for boarding fees, rent, food, travel and other living expenses.

We urge you to reconsider this policy decision. A fairer system would be for all rural and remote students to automatically receive full Youth Allowance. The barriers against country students are already considerable and with this budget the Government has introduced criteria that will further disadvantage them.

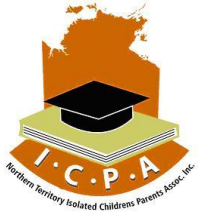
For a detailed study of current costs and an equitable proposal please refer to "A new funding system for Tertiary Students from Rural and Regional areas" by Rowan Ramsey. This can be located at www.rowanramsey.com.au



"Access to Quality Education that meets the needs of rural and remote Territory students"

Website: www.icpa.com.au

Kindly supported by NTDET and the Connellan Trust.



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This submission is based on input and concerns from NTICPA members.



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