

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities

To Whom It May Concern

We thank Hon. Darren Chester, Federal Member for GIPPSLAND for keeping us informed. We are writing as Grandparents of three boys brought up in Esperance, WA who are now either in the process of completing their secondary education in Perth, at University in Perth or in the middle of a gap year. The last is actually working to achieve independence through a youth allowance following local employment to achieve a sum of \$19,400 to go to University there in 2010. It is very important to the family that the support remains in place.

We understand that a new system has been mooted in the May Budget which severely impact on rural families whose children want to gain higher qualifications in the mainstream universities of the nation.

It is particularly hard on those particular students who left school in 2008 on an understanding from their career advisors that if they earn sufficient capital in a gap year that the Youth Allowance will enable them to attend university of their choice and are now in that process. Retrospective legislation is always harsh and unfair in such cases.

Our son says that it costs the family some \$15,000 per year each to maintain them in Perth.

If the new proposal is to extend the gap year to two years to gain a larger capital sum, then motivation for an academic career may be lost as the gap is too long.

Main points:

- 1) **Serious disadvantage imposed on country children relative to those from the main cities;**
- 2) **Retrospective legislation - children who have started a gap year under the old system may have wasted their efforts;**
- 3) **There is nothing in place to help country families educate their children in cities;**
- 4) **The current Youth Allowance does not cover all the costs of supporting children who have to move to the city but it is a great help.**

In closing, we believe that the Government must be doing more to assist regional youth to reach their full potential both for the nation and for themselves.

Yours faithfully,

J Hall

Joan Hall and Michael Hall

