

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

Dear Parliamentarians.

I wish to voice my concern and dismay in regard to the changes in the Youth Allowance. The reasons for this are :

- 1) ***It severely disadvantages people from rural and remote areas.*** My wife and I live in Esperance which is 720 km from our nearest University. We are wage and salary earners (Teacher, Agricultural Scientist) and do not qualify for Family tax benefits A or B. We have three sons all of whom have the ability to attend University and whose tertiary courses will require them to relocate to Perth. The current cost of supporting a child in Perth is \$15,000 pa. ***This is not a cost borne by our city cousins.***

Our Eldest son took a gap year and qualified for the Youth Allowance. The Youth Allowance has been a godsend for those of us living in remote areas as it has made tertiary education for our children affordable. The Youth Allowance does not cover all the costs of relocation and we are certainly prepared to make a fair contribution. Given that it is likely that all three of our boys will be attending University in Perth at one time the total cost for us per annum would be (3x\$15,000 less 1 Youth Allowance) = \$35,000. This is a huge sum especially for wage and salary earners.

- 2) ***The youth allowance changes have been made retrospective.*** Our middle has taken a gap year and is working to attain the \$19,500 which would have enabled him to qualify for the youth allowance. He now feels that he has wasted a year and is bitter towards a government which changes the rules with out the slightest regard to those it affects. As a seventeen year old who has come into a job marked during a major recession jobs are hard to find. Packing meat in an abattoir for \$12/hr for 50 hrs/week requires dedication, focus and knowledge that it is a means to an end. Changes to the Youth Allowance have shattered our sons faith in politicians.
- 3) ***It is not in Australia's interests.*** It is well established that tertiary trained people who originate from rural and remote regions are far more likely to return to these areas. It is not Australia's interests to start disadvantaging those who have the greatest potential to help develop and further the growth of areas. Furthermore, I am sure that Australia does not need tertiary trained people to feel that moving to rural and remote areas will be a death sentence to their children's tertiary aspirations.

As a family who chooses to live and work in remote (as classified by the ATO) regions of Australia we ask that the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance be scrapped or an improved system for mitigating the financial burden for educating students from rural and remote regions. If the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance proceed then our family will be forced to move to Perth for our boys tertiary education. This is not what we want.

Yours sincerely

David Hall (Agricultural Scientist)

Julie Hall (Secondary Teacher)

Lindsay Hall (Studying Physiotherapy)

Alistair Hall (Proposing to study Science-Biochemistry University of WA in 2010)

Andrew Hall (Yr 10 Student)

5th August 2009.
