

Situation

We live in Geraldton WA. Our son, Courteny Sheriff has graduated with a TEE score of 74 in 2008. He has been accepted to Curtin University to study Coastal Management but has deferred for 1 year.

For 15 years we have been contributing to a scholarship fund which we can only defer for 1 year. For regional kids going to university it has been de rigeur

- to take gap year to earn \$15,000 in 18 months;
- gain independence,
- get Ausstudy or equivalent
- attend university in the city
- Offset fees after 6 months initially at uni
- Work part time at uni

With the changes to the qualification for income support, our son will be disadvantaged considerably. .We may scrape just into income support but the costs of up to \$20,000 per annum for living and study in Perth will be beyond us.

Courteny has an intense desire to gain independence to pursue his own life, yet is frustrated by the rule change which deems him the responsibility of his parents until the age of 22 unless he proves his work of 30 hours per week for 2 years. The rules have been changed too quickly and he will be substantially disadvantaged.

Current reality

The independence qualification rules have been changed to stop rorting of the system by rich people to get deemed independence by paying upfront for children to gain independence.

Qualifications for independence and Austudy

We are happy to see the inclusion of so many candidates for university

Regional students without family support in the city will still struggle

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

The changes will probably prevent our son from attending university in Perth in 2010, causing him to lose scholarship funds. As well, there will be significant financial impact to be borne by us, his parents.

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

The alternatives in Geraldton are Nursing or teaching at Off-campus sites

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

The changes to independence qualification will prevent many of the current cohort

of regional rural university seekers being able to qualify for independence in a timely way and thus achieve income support.

- d. the short- and long-term impact of current and proposed government policies on regional university and TAFE college enrolments;

short term impact will be significant as plans have been laid for some time for the current crop of university seekers. Changing the goal posts without warning will cause some hardship and may prevent university entrance for some

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

Uni has always been a struggle for rent and food let alone study. The new measures will address some of the imbalance. Qualification for independence and income support will be difficult with many unis only allowing deferment

- f. the educational needs of rural and regional students;

same as the city kids but these country students may have never caught a bus or train, been to a large complex (apart from school). Loneliness and homesickness and city stress are other factors which impinge on education. Anecdotally I know of many Geraldton kids who just could not cope with city/uni life and lasted only a year or less.

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

- h. other related matters.