



The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales Inc.

Secretary: Mrs Lindy Kitto,

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

6th October 2015

community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

RE: SOCIAL SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MORE GENEROUS MEANS TESTING FOR YOUR PAYMENTS) BILL 2015

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales (ICPA-NSW) is a voluntary parent body dedicated to ensuring all geographically isolated students have equity of access to education. It encompasses the education of children from early childhood through to tertiary. Member families of the Association reside in rural and remote NSW and all share a common goal of access to education for their children and the provision of services to achieve this.

Rural and remote students continue to be under-represented in tertiary studies. Generally speaking they are financially disadvantaged being located such huge distances from their choice of tertiary institution. Unfortunately there are still many who do not qualify for the Federal Government assistance and this can mean that university simply isn't an option.

ICPA-NSW commends the Government's initiative of the Regional High Education Forums held around regional Australia in August which gave local students, parents, teachers and other interested community members a much needed opportunity to put forward their ideas on how Government can better support students to gain a university degree.

Any assistance to alleviate the prohibitive expense of tertiary study for rural and remote students is welcomed and ICPA-NSW certainly supports the announcement by the Government in their 2015 Federal Budget to amend the Social Security Act 1991 to

- remove the family assets test and the family actual means test from the youth allowance parental means test arrangements;
- align parental income test exemptions for youth allowance with existing arrangements for family tax benefit (FTB) Part A;
- and provide that, where a family has a dependent child who receives an individual youth payment that is parentally income-tested and younger siblings who qualify for FTB, the family pool for the youth parental income test will include all FTB children.

ICPA-NSW genuinely welcomes these positive changes. All of the above will have a significant benefit for families with children seeking Youth Allowance.

Currently a huge number of families are ineligible under the assets criteria to receive Youth Allowance even though they possibly have no income or negative income. The fact that these changes will mean farming families **will not** have farm assets counted toward the test for their children accessing youth allowance will be of huge advantage to a large number of our members and rural families.

ICPA-NSW will continue to lobby for further reforms to Youth Allowance and, more importantly, scrutiny surrounding the criteria for independence which students use to qualify for this allowance.

ICPA-NSW once again would like to thank the Government for these very supportive initiatives.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs.Lindy Kitto
ICPA-NSW Secretary