

2nd August 2009

The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on
Rural & Regional Affairs & Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern

RE: INDEPENDENT YOUTH ALLOWANCE CRITERIA

As a parent of four children we have always encouraged our children to work hard at school thereby widening their choices for which universities they could attend. The financial and emotional costs associated with achieving this goal of moving away to study, without the availability of youth allowance, is enormous. Hence, I wish to add my voice to those in opposition to the proposed Rudd Government's changes to the Independent Youth Allowance criteria.

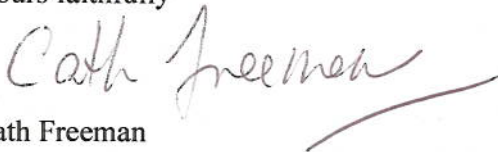
Our family lives in Port Macquarie. We currently have one son studying away at university - he has been fortunate enough to obtain youth allowance. To achieve this eligibility he had to relocate to Coffs Harbour as there wasn't enough work in Port Macquarie. With him away studying and three other children attending school at the time he commenced his studies, if we had to pay accommodation, course and living costs for him at university, as well as, associated costs with the other children at school in Port Macquarie the burden would be extremely high.

My concerns for the changes are based on the following:

- Parental/Carer wages earned in regional areas are not as high as those in city areas. If regional children go to a city university their living and associated costs are a lot higher. Regional parents still have to pay the high city living costs for their student children.
- Most regional children have to move away from home to further their studies. It is hoped that in the future these regional children will return to the country and bring with them their skills- but first they need to be given the opportunity to study away.
- Regional students who have high face-to-face hours at university, do not need the extra pressure of finding part-time work to help finance their living away from home costs – whilst city counterparts do not have this pressure.
- The financial and emotional strain can upset the family life balance - forcing both, or one, of the parents/carers to work longer hours. The implications of this is a break down of family life for some of those families.
- How can you ask students to defer their studies for two years to become eligible for future assistance? This makes is difficult again for both the young people and parents/carers.

Perhaps the Rudd government can work with a committee of students, parents/carers, tertiary and government representatives from both country and city areas to reach a more balanced outcome.

Yours faithfully



Cath Freeman

