

The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural,
Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

7 July 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Rural Tertiary Student Disadvantages

As a father of 6 children 3 of whom have attended tertiary studies in Melbourne I feel that I have something to add to the current debate regarding the changes to the Youth Allowance.

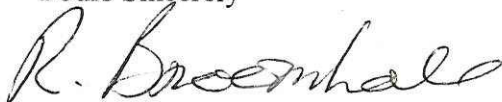
Firstly it should be said that this system has always disadvantaged rural students who are unable to live at home due to distance. This is not new and I am staggered that Governments of all persuasions have consistently failed to recognise this fact. The great cost of students who are unable to live at home during their post secondary studies is NOT the education it is the living away from home expenses. In my experience it costs a MINIMUM of \$350 per week per child for food, lodging and transport.

I have read the changes proposed for the Youth Allowance scheme (distributed by the Deputy Prime Ministers Office) and whilst many of the proposed changes will be most helpful it fails to address the key issue, the costs associated with housing, feeding and transporting rural students when away from home.

The new proposed legislation also exacerbates an existing problem by making all students (rural & urban) work for much longer to be able to claim independent status. In urban areas there is far greater opportunity to find a range of job options than there is in rural communities. I live close to moderate rural centre (Bairnsdale) and it may be possible to find enough work to satisfy the work criteria but there are lots of rural students who do not have this possibility. How much work would be available in say Bonang?

I think there is a relatively simple solution to this dilemma; students requiring to study more than 1 hour from their normal place of residence should become eligible for the Youth Allowance at the next intake of their chosen tertiary institution.

Yours Sincerely



Russell Broomhall