

The Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
Po Box 6100  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
Canberra ACT 2600



August 9<sup>th</sup> 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

We are writing in relation to the Senate Inquiry into Rural and Regional access to Secondary and Tertiary Education opportunities, particularly Tertiary education opportunities.

We understand that a Senate inquiry has been launched to investigate support for regional students and their access to ongoing educational opportunities. More specifically to assess the impact of the proposed Federal Government changes to the Independent Youth Allowance.

We are concerned about the proposed changes as they have been made known.

Students from rural and regional areas already face many difficulties as it is if they wish to continue on to tertiary education. This opportunity should be equally accessible to any young person irrespective of where they live. Our communities and our nation will benefit in the long run. However, for various reasons access is not always as easy for rural youth as it is for metropolitan youth. One of the main reasons being the need to move away from home to study in order to pursue their course of choice. This is a major hurdle for them to surmount.

The proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance will only create further difficulties and financial barriers that can discourage and even actually prevent young people from continuing their education.

Preventing or making access more difficult to tertiary education for regional young people is not fair and not just. It will be detrimental to regional communities as young people are not able to provide the essential skills and services back to their communities in the future. Regional and rural young people are more likely to return to rural/regional areas to work in the future. This in turn will be detrimental even to the future of our nation.

We live in a rural location and so our children are immediately faced with the necessity of moving away from home to continue their education after secondary school. Staying home while they study is not an option, so in addition to starting a university course and all the new experiences and learning this brings, they also have to cope with living away from home and adjusting to that as well as finding ways to survive financially.

We have four children two of whom have completed or almost completed a tertiary education. Both had leave home to do so but received Independent Youth Allowance which made the move much more manageable and affordable. We still had to assist them financially from time to time. So with a combination of our support, government help and any part time work they could find and fit in they were able to survive and complete their degrees.

Our other two children are in Years 11 and 12 and also wish to continue with a tertiary education. However, under the proposed changes to the Independent Youth Allowance they will no longer qualify for any assistance whatsoever. As we don't want to deny our children the opportunity to further their education and embarking on the career of their choice we face the prospect of supporting them financially much more than we have been doing in the past. Given that we can expect the average cost for students living away from home to be \$20 000 p.a. it will place an enormous burden on us financially. This is made more difficult by the fact that for some of the time we will have two children studying and living away from home at the same time.

Furthermore we do find it hard to believe that the Federal Government has made this decision in the "best interests" of regional students when the new arrangements will force young people into Independent Youth Allowance **two** year deferments so they can work for the required number of hours to even try to qualify for the Independent Youth Allowance. This will only discourage regional young people from undertaking tertiary studies which, as previously mentioned, will make our nation a poorer nation

We would urge our Federal Government to reconsider these proposed changes. We believe the government must be doing more to protect and nurture the regional young people who will provide the platform that will launch the future of Australia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard and Jenny Boonstra', written in a cursive style.

Richard and Jenny Boonstra