

Tertiary Education Tertiary Access Allowance

Engaging in tertiary education should be an option for all Australian students. Ability to access education is one of the key considerations in determining whether a student can take up this option. Equity of educational access for rural and remote students is restricted and they continue to be under-represented in tertiary education.

ICPA's Tertiary Access Research (May 2013) found that travel distance and the huge financial cost of relocation were the major hurdles in a student's ability to access tertiary education. Fifty-three per cent of young people from rural and remote areas live between 501 to 2 000 kms from the nearest university offering their required course. These students residing in rural and remote Australia require financial assistance to access their place of study. This assistance should not be dependent upon being a recipient of student income support payments such as Youth Allowance (YA). While the costs associated with relocating have been recognised through the provision of Relocation Scholarships, only students receiving dependent Youth Allowance have benefited from this change.

The logistics for rural and remote students to journey to an institution offering tertiary studies involve expenditure often beyond their financial means. The high up-front costs of accessing and paying for accommodation, travel to access their place of study, along with the cost of living away from home, all impact on rural and remote student access. ICPA considers it vital for the Federal Government to create an allowance that will enable these students to have the equivalent access to tertiary education that is available to most students living in the urban areas of Australia.

To further their education rural students must, by definition, leave home to access tertiary studies. The support mechanisms of Youth Allowance, and part-time work that many students undertake, contribute to supplementing the living costs of students once they can actually access their chosen tertiary institution. The greatest barrier rural students face when accessing higher education is the lack of adequate financial means to fund this access. The current measures for student income support, (Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY), do not adequately recognise the extra costs incurred by all rural and remote students attempting to access tertiary education.

Students, who wish to commence tertiary studies immediately following completion of their secondary education, invariably require assistance to get to their chosen tertiary institution. They have limited funds to assist in accessing their place of study and some students cannot defer their studies in order to meet the workforce criteria for gaining independent Youth Allowance and hence receive financial support for day-to-day living. Students receiving independent Youth Allowance, who must relocate from the family home, still require financial assistance with the relocation needed to access their tertiary establishment.

ICPA requests that the Federal Government introduce a Tertiary Access Allowance as financial assistance to rural and remote students who must live away from home to access tertiary education.

The Tertiary Access Allowance advocated by ICPA will enable rural and remote students to access their place of study including securing their place of accommodation, assisting with relocation expenses, travelling to their institution for enrolment to commence study and facilitating travel home during the year.

This allowance should:

- Not be reliant on students receiving income support payments such as Youth Allowance.
- Be an annual payment for the duration of the student's full-time course.
- Will be \$4459 in the first year in which you are required to live away from home to undertake full time study in an approved scholarship course, \$2231 in the second and third years and \$1115 in the fourth or subsequent years.
- Not be received in addition to a Relocation Scholarship.

The dependent Youth Allowance (YA) parental income limit also needs revisiting- \$52,706 (2016-17 tax year-value used for current year).

The independent YA parental income limit for rural and remote students is \$150,000. If rural and remote students are classified independent, their parental income should not be taken into account.