

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary Access Allowance

Engaging in tertiary education should be an option for all Australian students regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location. The ability to access an equitable education is one of the key considerations in determining whether a rural and remote student can choose this expensive, restricted pathway. Geographically isolated students continue to be under-represented in tertiary education.

ICPA's Tertiary Access Research (May 2013) <https://www.icpa.com.au/page/attachment/85/tertiary-research-2013> found that the huge financial cost of relocation and travel distance were the major barriers in a rural and remote student's ability to access a tertiary education. Financial assistance is imperative to increase the engagement of rural and remote students at tertiary level.

To further their education rural and remote students must, by definition, leave home to access tertiary studies. The greatest barrier rural students face when accessing higher education is the lack of adequate financial means to fund this access. The logistics for rural and remote students to journey to an institution offering tertiary studies include: the high up-front costs of relocation from the family home including accessing and paying for accommodation, travel to access their place of study, along with the ongoing cost of living away from home and often involves expenditure often beyond their financial means. These all impact on rural and remote student access and contributes to the under-representation of this cohort at tertiary level. 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.

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 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 financial assistance to get to their chosen tertiary institution. Some students cannot defer their studies in order to meet the workforce criteria for gaining Youth Allowance as an independent. Students in receipt of Youth Allowance as an independent, receive financial support for day-to-day living but all rural and remote students who must relocate from the family home, still require financial assistance with the relocation needed to access their tertiary establishment.

While the costs associated with relocating have been recognised through the provision of Relocation Scholarships, only students receiving Youth Allowance as a dependent, have benefited from this payment.

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.

- Be equivalent to the Relocation Scholarship (\$4553 in the first year in which you are required to live away from home to undertake full time study in an approved scholarship course, \$2278 in the second and third years and \$1138 in the fourth or subsequent years).
- Not be received in addition to a Relocation Scholarship.

The Youth Allowance (YA) parental income limit for dependent students (\$53,728 for the 2017-18 tax year - value used for current year) needs reviewing and an immediate increase given to reflect the cost of funding/supporting a dependent student at a tertiary institution, especially when there are other dependent students still in the compulsory education system to support.

The YA Parental Income Test for independent students should be removed from eligibility criteria for rural and remote students qualifying under the independent YA workforce participation criteria to recognise that the student has proved their independence from their parents.

Students isolated from tertiary education due to location, must be recognised as a separate disadvantaged group when assessing for Youth Allowance to address the distinctly unique requirements of rural and remote students. Those students, who must relocate to access a tertiary education should be able to access income support in their own right and must be considered independent of their parents for the purpose of accessing financial assistance once they commence their tertiary studies.