



Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia

Working together for equity of access to education for all students who live in rural & remote Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

TERTIARY EDUCATION OUT OF REACH FOR COUNTRY KIDS

Tuesday 4th March, 2014

The hope of a tertiary education for Australia's rural and remote students grows more unattainable each year under the government's existing Youth Allowance provisions.

A recent survey commissioned by the Federal Council of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) examining the key factors limiting rural and remote youth from accessing tertiary education, cited the financial cost of moving away from home to study as their main obstacle.

With a total of 53% of young people from rural and remote areas living between 501 to 2,000km from the nearest tertiary education centre, the cost of relocating students to access tertiary education was a significant concern for 88% of members surveyed.

Nationally, ICPA believes the current government measure for student income support - Youth Allowance - does not adequately recognise the extra costs incurred by most rural and remote students in comparison with their urban counterparts.

A hefty 93% of members said meeting the ongoing costs of living away from home, found by the study to be more than \$350 per week, was proving a huge challenge.

Only 26% of members have been able to meet these costs without government financial support and of those needing government assistance, only 15% reported being unaffected by the government's onerous and unrealistic Family Assets Test. Compounding the situation, the ICPA Australia survey showed that 62% of members had three or more children, meaning families were paying boarding school fees on top of supporting their tertiary students.

With only 4.5% of very remote school leavers continuing on to higher education, ICPA's Federal President, Mrs Judy Newton said the message was clear. "Government must recognise the toxic level of service exclusion that exists outside of urban and metropolitan Australia, and greater financial assistance must apply if regional families are to gain access to the educational opportunities that will allow these young Australians to reach their full potential."

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