



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

Scholarships Must Prioritise Bush Kids

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The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA Aust) calls for greater access to tertiary education for rural and remote students. Rural and remote families across the country are fighting for their children's right to attend university after recent federal budget announcements indicate a significant rise in the cost of tertiary education is imminent.

ICPA seeks assurance from the government that its member's children will be recognised as disadvantaged under the terms of the proposed Commonwealth Scholarship scheme and the Higher Education Equity Program. Considering the low participation levels and excessive costs involved in a university education for students from rural and remote areas, ICPA believes a proportion of these proposed scholarships should be quarantined for these applicants. Without this assurance, a university education will become little more than a pipe dream for an already heavily under-represented group.

Federal President of ICPA, Mrs Judy Newton said, "The national Tertiary Access Research Survey conducted amongst members in May last year showed that 93% of members found the cost of tertiary education for their children a huge challenge, especially when over half of those families were living 500 to 2000km from the nearest university offering their required course."

Mrs Newton also revealed, "Many rural students were unable to access Youth Allowance and two thirds of families surveyed had three or more children, which meant they were paying secondary school boarding fees as well as trying to relocate, establish and maintain a child at university. It is understandable then that under this kind of pressure, 34% of potential students were deferring their studies for financial reasons, with nearly one quarter of those not returning to study in the following year."

Inland Australians are used to doing battle to survive. They are constantly fighting fires, floods and droughts and dealing with isolation and a lack of medical services and facilities, but this latest battle surrounding access to an education for their children, is one of their most important contests yet. Education equals the future and all kids deserve the best future possible for themselves and their communities.

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