

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



2022 FEDERAL CONFERENCE TERTIARY PORTFOLIO MOTIONS

A53. Kindon Branch (QLD)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) lobbies all relevant Federal Government Ministers to significantly increase the Dependent Youth Allowance parental income limit to reflect the actual cost for rural and remote families who support dependent students at a tertiary level.”

Explanation:

The current parental income limit to access Dependent Youth Allowance is far too low. Rural and remote students have no other choice than to move away from home to access university due to distance and the cost for families supporting these students is high. The parental income limit at its current level means that many rural and remote students are denied access to Dependent Youth Allowance.

A54. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Federal Government to change the criteria for gaining Independent Youth Allowance, so that rural and remote students who have to leave home to study at tertiary level and are not eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance, are eligible for Independent Youth Allowance as soon as they commence the tertiary course of their choice.”

Explanation:

Students who are unable to access Youth Allowance due to the Parental Means Test are having to support themselves until they prove they are independent. The Parental Means Test is not indicative of what income is available to support the family. Commodity prices and sale of stock due to drought can exaggerate figures. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that most income goes back into the running of the farm or into Farm Management Deposits for restocking and/or taxation reasons because of the forced sale of stock. We are not wanting to include students moving out of home because they feel like moving. The students we represent move hundreds of kilometres to major regional centres or cities and pay inflated rent and utilities for accommodation near their university. Moving so far away from the family home to set up a second home is a fair indication that these students are the very ones that should be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance. These students should be focusing on studying their chosen degree. It is great if they find part time employment, however finding a job in a new environment and supporting themselves is a major concern. It leads to high dropout rates and increased stress and anxiety on individuals.

A55. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Federal Government to change the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance, so that those rural and remote students who choose to save or invest their earnings during the working period prior to attending university, are not disadvantaged by the Liquid Assets criteria.”

Explanation:

Students who choose to save their earnings during their gap year should not be deemed ineligible or disadvantaged due to the Liquid Asset Waiting Period. Many students work hard to save their earnings but instead must use their savings to support themselves and pay rent while attending university.

The Liquid Asset Waiting Period applies if the applicant has more than \$5500 in liquid assets prior to application for Youth Allowance and means waiting a number of weeks based on the amount of liquid assets. It tapers from \$5500 to \$11,500 meaning there may be a maximum 13 week waiting period before Youth Allowance payments begin.

Fellow students who earn the amount required to be considered eligible for Independent Youth Allowance but spend everything they earn, are eligible for the allowance straight away but those who have saved and have money in the bank are not eligible for the allowance until after the required waiting period, and therefore not eligible for Rent Assistance either until payments begin.

A56. Katherine Branch (NT)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates for the removal of the parental threshold from the Independent Youth Allowance for students applying under rural and remote work criteria.”

Explanation:

Rural and remote students can be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance before they turn 22 if (i) their parental home is in an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area (ii) they need to move away from the parental home to study and (iii) they have worked since leaving secondary school.

Students also need to have either: earned 75% or more of the National Training Wage Schedule rate in any 14-month period or worked at least 15 hours a week for at least 2 years. The current parental threshold is \$160,000 reducing by \$10,000 for other dependent siblings.

Parental income should not enter into Independent Youth Allowance criteria at all. Rural incomes are so fickle, even being given three financial years of parental income to choose from cannot always give these students a fair assessment of the ability of this family to support a tertiary or training student. These students clearly demonstrate independence through working for a least a year and leaving home to study. They take a gap year because they need to be financially independent but that can also place them at risk of being one of the statistics: students who take gap years are less likely to continue to further education. Any hurdles to these rural and remote students qualifying for Independent Youth Allowance, such as parental income thresholds, threatens their tertiary education.

A57. Louth Branch (NSW)**CARRIED**

“That ICPA (Aust) advocates the Minister for Social Services to increase Centrelink rent assist payments for rural and remote students who need to relocate from home to access their chosen pathway.”

Explanation:

Regional, remote and very remote children need to factor in rent to their study plans. Rent is the biggest component of a student’s costs. For example, to study in a larger city this may mean that a student has to work so much that their course suffers.

Fortnightly:

If a student is over 18 years of age, has no children and is single, Youth Allowance is \$304.60. Rent Assist varies according to your rent. If a student is paying \$124.60 in rent, they will receive a maximum of \$93.07 Rent Assist.

Approximate average fortnightly costs based on single basic room:

- Charles Sturt University Orange - \$400 without board
- Port Macquarie's Charles Sturt University -\$480 without board
- Coffs Harbour Southern Cross University -\$400 without board
- Women's College Sydney University- \$1200 with board
- University of New England-\$350 without board
- Sydney rented share accommodation - \$600 without board
- Larger regional NSW town/city rented share accommodation- \$320 without board.

A58. Lakes District Branch (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to review the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to include all students from geographically isolated areas who must relocate for the purpose of undertaking a university pathway and who do not qualify for Dependent Youth Allowance; and for this to be a standalone allowance."

Explanation:

Currently, the Relocation Scholarship is only for a tertiary student who is in receipt of Dependent Youth Allowance. A significant number of students from rural, regional and remote areas in Australia are deemed ineligible for Dependent Youth Allowance as they do not meet all of the guidelines to claim this allowance under the current criteria.

To continue their chosen academic pathway students must assume the cost of relocation expenses and the ongoing cost of accommodation. This is an expensive exercise when moving long distances and should not be a barrier to pursuing further education due to geographical location. Rural and remote students deserve to be given equal support and opportunities to excel. Distance should not mean disadvantage.

A59. Walgett Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the relevant Ministers to change the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to include all students from regional or remote areas relocating who do not qualify for Dependent Youth Allowance."

Explanation:

Dependent adults need financial help in relocating to university. In some instances, students have not had an opportunity to work and earn an income due to the isolation of their family home. These students are moving from remote or very remote areas like Walgett to the city or possibly even interstate and this is a substantial burden on the financial circumstances of their family.

The Relocation Allowance would give them the opportunity and time to move, settle and commence studies before having to seek employment to subsidise their cost of living away from home.

A60. Bourke Branch (NSW)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) advocates the relevant Federal Ministers to change the criteria of the Relocation Scholarship so that tertiary students from remote and rural areas, who are not eligible to receive other student allowances, still receive the Relocation Scholarship if they are leaving home to study the year after completing Year 12."

Explanation:

Tertiary students who are eligible for Dependent Youth Allowance are also able to apply for the Relocation Scholarship which is a welcome injection of funds for any student having to leave the principal place of residence and set up a new place to live to attend tertiary studies. However, it is not

available to students who are deemed independent or not eligible for any other allowance. The meaning of relocate is 'to move or to establish in a new place'. Regardless of whether a student is eligible to receive certain student allowances, they are still relocating. This scholarship was established to ensure students who had to undergo a process of relocation would not have the unfair financial burden of a move compared to those who are able to live and study from their family home. It would appear less, as they are not only unable to access Youth Allowance but are also ineligible for the Relocation Scholarship.

A61. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government review the criteria for the Relocation Scholarship to ensure all geographically isolated students who must relocate from their usual place of residence for the purpose of undertaking post-compulsory studies are eligible."

Explanation:

In the primary school years assistance for access to education is offered through the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Distance Education Allowance and a conveyance allowance to access a school bus service or drive directly to school. In the secondary years, the AIC – Boarding and Second Home Allowances assist with the significant financial cost incurred when children are living away from their primary residence to access education. Yet, for many of these families when their children commence tertiary studies there is no assistance unless the child qualifies for Youth Allowance, which is very few.

It is recognised across all levels of government that geographically isolated children face barriers in accessing an appropriate education, and to overcome these barriers involves significant financial contribution. But when it comes to post-compulsory tertiary education our children are not sufficiently catered for.

Having incurred the initial cost of relocating, the ongoing costs associated with living away from home can become unmanageable for many families. Rental properties in Western Australia are at a premium and it is extremely difficult to find any shared accommodation below \$200 per week plus utilities. This equates to \$13,000 per annum urban-based students do not have to fund. Students often seek employment to supplement the cost of living, which can become difficult to navigate with university timetabling, and as a result of the financial burden, many rural and remote students fail to complete their studies.

The requirement for a student to be receiving Youth Allowance to access the Relocation Scholarship is disadvantaging rural and remote students. Receipt of the AIC should also be deemed a component of the qualifying eligibility criteria.

A62. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) seeks clarification from the Federal Government and Services Australia to confirm that to be eligible for Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) the qualifying course can start either Semester 1 or Semester 2 in the study year immediately following year 12 and for this information to be clearly visible on the website."

Explanation:

The Tertiary Access Payment commenced on 1 January 2021 and is available to eligible students who meet the eligibility criteria. One of these criteria is:

- studying a tertiary course at Certificate IV or above *in the next available study period after year 12 with no gap year.*

Discussions with Services Australia have confirmed that a six-month bridging course does not qualify for the TAP; the course is required to have a duration of at least one academic year. A student who then commences a qualifying course in Term 2 should be eligible for the TAP as they have not taken a gap year. Although technically it is not *in the next available study period after year 12*, without the TAP applying to Semester 2 the criteria immediately discriminates against those students who do not meet the entry requirements for their chosen course and are required to complete a bridging course or other necessary qualification in order to be accepted into their course of choice.

Clarity is extremely important to avoid confusion based upon whom you speak to at Services Australia.

A63. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government and Services Australia include the *words* ‘with a minimum duration of one academic year’ to the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) study rules students need to meet on the Services Australia website.”

Explanation:

Currently on the Services Australia website to get the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) students must be studying one of the following:

- university course
- Vocational Educational and Training (VET) course
- other higher education course.

Discussions with Services Australia have confirmed that to receive the payment a person must be studying one of the above courses with a duration of at least one academic year. This is a Services Australia internal ruling that is not advertised on the public website.

This is an important factor that families should be made aware of before applying for the TAP and we feel it would be beneficial under the **Study rules you need to meet** section of the website for it to read:

To get the TAP payment you must be studying one of the following:

- *university course*
- *Vocational Educational and Training (VET) course*
- *other higher education course*

with a minimum duration of one academic year.

A64. Lakes District Branch (WA)

CARRIED

“That ICPA (Aust) requests the Federal Government to review the criteria of the Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) for all rural and remote tertiary students.”

Explanation:

The Tertiary Access Payment commenced on 1 January 2021 and is available to eligible students who meet all of the following:

- an Australian resident
- meeting study rules
- from an inner regional, outer regional, remote or very remote area
- moving to study at a tertiary education provider that’s more than 90 minutes away from your family home by public transport
- have completed year 12 or equivalent

- studying a tertiary course at certificate IV or above in the next available study period after year 12 with no gap year
- 22 or younger on the day you start your tertiary course
- have parents or guardians whose income is under the current combined parental income limit of \$250,000.

Our branch is very appreciative of the establishment of this allowance but strongly feels the need for some amendments to the criteria:

- That the criteria *'studying a tertiary course at certificate IV or above in the next available study period after year 12 with no gap year'* be amended to allow students who commence study in semester two to be deemed eligible. Students who complete a bridging course or Certificate IV course in semester one prior to the commencement of their chosen course are deemed ineligible for this payment.

A65. Western Australia State Council (WA)

CARRIED

"That ICPA (Aust) lobbies the Federal Government to ensure regional universities are included in the proposed improvements as mentioned in the *'Your Education Policy - A stronger university system'*."

Explanation:

The Labor Government announced pre-election that their *"Future Made in Australia Skills Plan will also deliver up to 20,000 new university places"* and that *"places will also be prioritised for universities offering more opportunities for under-represented groups such as people in regional, remote and outer-suburban areas, those who are the first in their family to study at university, and First Nations Australians"*.

For many students from rural, regional and remote areas who have faced varying disruptions and challenges in accessing an education over the past three years, the prospect of continuing to be distanced from their families is influencing their decision to continue with their post-compulsory education.

Statistically, rural and remote students are underrepresented in post-compulsory education. Increasing places at regional universities would offer students the ability to study within the regions, remain connected to their communities and help to improve the academic outcomes for this cohort.