



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor to seek amendment to Youth Allowance changes

The Independent Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor, is confident that the decision by the Government in the recent Budget to change the Youth Allowance workforce participation criteria affecting country students living independently of their parents can be changed.

Mr Windsor said he would raise the issue with Independent Senators and the Leader of the Greens, Senator Bob Brown, when Parliament resumes next week.

“I am very confident that the issue of the changing of the rules for students currently working during a ‘gap’ year before commencing university studies will be addressed by way of an amendment in the Senate,” Mr Windsor said.

“That would mean those who made decisions in good faith to go into the workforce to earn money to attend university and become eligible for independent Youth Allowance would not be penalised.

“Changing the Government’s proposal in the longer term for students still at school will be more difficult but nonetheless still achievable and will be one of the key issues to be debated.

“The fact that young people from regional backgrounds will be further disadvantaged in regard to tertiary education needs to be addressed, particularly given the fact that in most cases country students have to live away from home to achieve at university.

“Perhaps the whole issue of country children’s education and accommodation at university needs to be reviewed as it is becoming blatantly obvious that a system based on proving ‘financial independence’ is not working to reduce costs for country children’s education.”

Mr Windsor also said that universities would have to readdress the guidelines for students who defer their studies after the HSC.

“Currently, only one university, the University of New England, allows for deferment for two years prior to commencement of studies. The other universities only allow for a one year deferment,” Mr Windsor said

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“Given that student who can’t attend university unless they qualify for the independent rate of Youth Allowance will have to work for two years to achieve that status, what will that mean in terms of the entry to university?”

“Will universities wait for two years to enrol a student who has deferred when a full fee payer could fill that spot immediately after school or after a gap year?” Mr Windsor asked.