



## David Littleproud MP

Federal Member for Maranoa

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# Media Statement

February 21, 2018

### **New Centrelink independence rules now in effect to help bush kids through tertiary study**

STUDENTS from the bush are under-represented in our universities and to help stem this inequality, the Coalition Federal Government has made it easier for our kids to access government financial support, Maranoa MP David Littleproud said

“Under the new rules, rural and remote students who take a gap year after Year 12 can then use this time to become ‘independent’ for student payments and start university sooner because we’ve dropped the qualifying time from 18 months to 14 months,” Mr Littleproud said.

Year 12 graduates have survived Schoolies and are currently toying with the idea of a gap year, but this time used for self-discovery and employment had previously meant two totally different things for regional and metropolitan students.

“Young people from regional areas defer their enrolment at twice the rate of their metropolitan peers and more than 40% don’t return after having off that gap year so these changes will help to ensure our nation doesn’t miss out on bright country kids reaching their potential through further studies,” Mr Littleproud said.

“Many young people use a gap year break to seek employment, earning enough money to be classified ‘independent’ from their parents in order to access government support – like Youth Allowance – to fund their education under their own steam.

“For regional kids, leaving home to attend university is a daunting task – emotionally and financially as they often have to pack-up and physically move hundreds-of-kilometres away to continue their education.

“These changes take into consideration the unique position of regional students and their families – meaning our young people will now only need to defer university for one year rather than two.

“Young people are Maranoa’s future and just because we live in a rural or remote community shouldn’t mean the dreams of our kids should be put on hold because tertiary education is too financially difficult – that’s why these changes are so important.”

#### **Fast facts:**

- To qualify ‘independent’ for Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY Living Allowance, students from regional or remote areas must earn at least \$24,836 before commencing further study.

- The Coalition Government has reduced the time – from 18 months to 14 months – regional and remote students must spend earning an income, enabling them to study with financial support one year after leaving high school.
- Previously, students had to wait 18 months after leaving school before qualifying for independent payments, putting them out of studies for 1.5 to two academic years.
- For more information about student payments and independence rules, visit [www.humanservices.gov.au/students](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/students)

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