



**OFFICE OF THE HON BILL SHORTEN MP  
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS  
MINISTER FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND SUPERANNUATION**

Our Ref MC13-002503

Ms Susan Wight  
Coordinator  
Home Education Network Victoria  
[wighthouse@southernphone.com.au](mailto:wighthouse@southernphone.com.au)

Dear Ms Wight

Thank you for email of 27 February 2013 to the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations concerning the Newstart Allowance rate for home schooling parents. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Eligibility for the higher rate of Newstart Allowance for home schoolers, currently \$683.50 per fortnight is based on being the single principal carer of a dependent child. The definition of a principal carer in the *Social Security Act 1991* is as follows: a person is the principal carer of a child if:

- the child is a dependent child of the person
- the child has not turned sixteen years.

However, single carers who have a dependent child aged over 16 and up to 21 years of age may still be eligible for the 'with child' rate of Newstart Allowance which is currently \$537.80 per fortnight.

Parents on Newstart Allowance who have school-aged children are also eligible to receive the Schoolkids Bonus which provides upfront financial support to help eligible families to meet the costs of schooling. In addition, from March 2013 a new Income Support Bonus will also be paid to recipients of Newstart Allowance and similar payments to help plan expenditure and build a buffer against unexpected costs. The amount of Income Support Bonus will be \$210 each year for a person who is single (paid in two instalments of \$105 in March and September). The Income Support Bonus is tax-free and is not means-tested.

The Australian Government committed to significant improvements in financial assistance for families with teenagers in secondary school or undertaking an equivalent vocational qualification. From 1 January 2012, the maximum fortnightly rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A increased by around \$160 for teenagers aged 16 to 19 years who are studying full-time for their Year 12 certificate or an equivalent qualification. This rate is the same as the 13 to 15 year old rate, recognising that the costs of teenage children do not go down as they get older.

Over the next few years, the families of around 590 000 teenagers are expected to benefit from up to \$4200 in additional family assistance while their children finish school. Families may also be eligible for Family Tax Benefit Part B and Rent Assistance for their older teenage children.

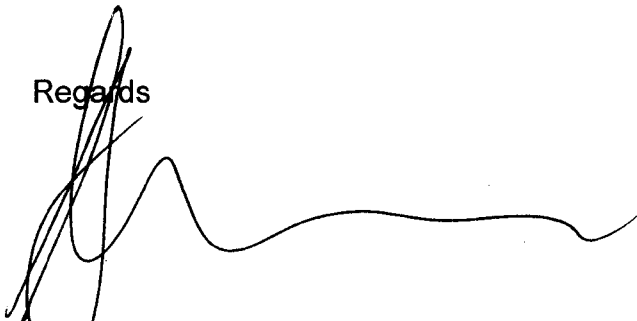
Since 1 January 2012, family assistance is the primary form of Government support for children until they finish secondary education. Youth Allowance continues to be available to teenagers aged under 18 years who are independent, eligible for an 'away from home rate' or not in full-time secondary study, or who meet other eligibility criteria.

In recognition that the previous participation arrangements for parents did not always provide adequate scope for all parents to balance their participation requirements with their family and caring responsibilities, the Government has implemented a number of changes to the participation arrangements for parents. These changes are designed to provide parents with greater flexibility in meeting their requirements and to make the rules more responsive to individual family circumstances.

Since 1 July 2010, parents have had access to more flexible arrangements over the long school holidays as well as better access to exemptions from participation requirements when their circumstances prevent them from effectively participating in work or study, such as home schooling responsibilities. Under these provisions, home schoolers of pupils aged 16–18 years registered with the relevant state/territory authority are exempt from the normal activity requirements for a Newstart Allowance recipient.

I trust that this information is helpful and thank you for bringing your concerns to the Minister's attention.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Michelson', written over the word 'Regards'.

Mr Steve Michelson  
Adviser

18 APR 2013