



More opportunities for regional students: Tertiary Access Payment

Overview

As part of its response to the Naphthine Review, the Australian Government is committing \$159.1 million over four years to encourage and assist outer regional and remote students to access tertiary study immediately following school (Year 12) through the establishment of the Tertiary Access Payment.

The Tertiary Access Payment (TAP) is a one-off, non-indexed, means-tested payment of \$5000 to school-leavers from outer regional or remote areas who relocate more than 90 minutes from their home to undertake full-time, higher-level tertiary education (Certificate IV or above).

The payment is intended to assist students with the additional costs associated with relocating to undertake tertiary study.

This new means-tested payment supports the Government's broader agenda to strengthen tertiary education in regional and remote Australia and responds to Recommendation 2, Action 7 of the Naphthine Review, to "introduce a new tertiary education access payment of \$5000 available to all school leavers that relocate from an outer regional or remote location to undertake full-time, higher-level tertiary education."

The TAP aims to encourage individuals in outer regional and remote Australia to access high-level tertiary study (Certificate IV or above) in the year immediately following Year 12, rather than taking a gap year. The Naphthine Review highlighted that taking a gap year, or years, can contribute to lower tertiary education attainment rates.

The TAP is also expected to contribute to the Government's *Closing the Gap* targets, by improving participation rates of Indigenous students from outer regional and remote areas through providing improved financial support for further study.

Frequently asked questions

Why is the Tertiary Access Payment being introduced?

Upfront costs associated with tertiary study can deter students and create additional pressures for them and their families. The Naphthine Review found that the cost of regional and remote students undertaking a tertiary education can be \$25,000 to \$30,000 more than for a metropolitan student.

The TAP will provide a contribution toward these costs and assist students during their first year, while they establish themselves in a new location.

Regional and remote students are twice as likely to take a gap year than their metropolitan counterparts, which research indicates leads to higher rates of non-completion. The TAP will provide an incentive for students to begin tertiary study immediately after completing secondary school, rather than taking a gap year in order to save money or qualify for other types of income support.

How much funding has been committed by Government to the Tertiary Access Payment?

The Australian Government is providing \$159.1 million over four years to implement the TAP, with more than 8000 students expected to receive this payment in 2021.

Who is eligible to apply for the TAP?

The TAP will be available for students who are:

- from an outer-regional, remote or very remote area (as per the ASGS remoteness classifications),
- enrolled in a Certificate IV or above qualification, with duration of at least one year,
- relocating to study at an institution at least 90 minutes by public transport from their home (either in another regional location or a metropolitan location),
- enrolled in at least 75 per cent of a fulltime study load over a 12 month period, and
- accessing tertiary study in the year immediately following their completion of Year 12 or equivalent (or the first available semester of their chosen course if the course has a mid-year start).

This payment will be means-tested. Students will need to be below a parental income threshold of \$250,000 to receive this payment.

- This income cut-off is significantly higher than the means test applied to other student support payments such as Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY. However, the \$250,000 cut-off is the same means test that applies to Carer Allowance and will enable students with two working parents to qualify for the payment.

How can I apply for the Tertiary Access Payment?

The TAP will be administered by Services Australia. Further details on how to apply will be released later in 2020.

How do I receive the payment?

The TAP will be made in two instalments – a \$3000 payment toward the beginning of the year, to assist with upfront costs, and a \$2000 payment toward the end of the first year. Exact timing of payments will depend on institutions' census dates.

This payment will only be available in the student's first year of study – no further payments are made in the second year of study or beyond.

What can the money be used for?

There are no restrictions on what the TAP money is used for – students are able to spend the payment as they wish. The TAP can be used to cover costs associated with study including, but not restricted to:

- bond for accommodation
- assistance with rent and other household bills
- groceries
- textbooks and other study supplies.

I am eligible for Youth Allowance/ABSTUDY. Am I also eligible for the Tertiary Access Payment?

Yes. For those outer regional and remote students also receiving Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY, they can also receive the TAP, as long as they meet all other eligibility criteria. For these students, this payment will provide additional support to recognise the extra challenges faced by students from low-income families.

Students who are eligible for the Relocation Scholarship linked to Youth Allowance/ABSTUDY payments are also able to receive the TAP.

Why is this payment limited to students from outer regional and remote areas?

The Napthine Review explicitly recommended this payment be targeted at outer regional and remote students who are relocating more than 90 minutes from their home (Recommendation 2, Action 7).

Individuals in outer regional and remote areas have substantially less access to tertiary education providers than those living in metropolitan and inner regional areas. In addition, while tertiary attainment rates are lower in all regional and remote areas, compared with metropolitan areas, the Napthine Review highlighted that this disparity increases the further away from metropolitan areas a person resides and is more pronounced at the university level.