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To whom it may concern

I fully support the proposed review of the Zone Tax Offset by the Productivity Commission. I lived in Karratha WA in the late 1980's and have resided in Carnarvon WA for the last 31 years. The cost of living in both these WA northwest towns has been, and still is, expensive compared to that of the city.

I recall that in 1980 the cost of a lettuce was \$2 as compared to the city price at the time of 30c. I believe some remote communities are still paying more than the \$2 today, a prohibitive factor for purchasing healthy food such as fruit and vegetables.

This contributes to the unhealthy eating habits and poor health that, combined with lack of medical services in regional and remote communities, has led to earlier death rates than our city cousins.

When added to the cost of travel to, and accommodation when in Major Cities, to attend medical appointments, the regional and remote citizens miss out again. Carnarvon is situated 1000Kms from Perth, the capital city and has one airline that links it to Perth.

The cost of travel on this airline is prohibitive to the ordinary resident in town. Most have to travel either by bus or their own vehicle the 10+ hours to get there.

In the current economic climate Carnarvon has experienced hardship caused by closures of shops, taverns and services with the result that the cost of living in the town has increased.

Families have been forced, not by choice, to leave the town because of the lack of services and the cost of living in the Regions.

We have been through drought, cyclones, floods and fires and now have to pay exorbitant Insurance premiums (if the Insurers will insure you).

We regional and remote residents cannot readily attend social and work commitments that come up from time to time, without much planning and expense, that is taken for granted by those in the city.

Depression and suicide are commonplace due to the isolation.

I note that the original submission was in three parts – that of the removal of the Zone Tax Rebate in some centres that the population has grown, (i.e. Darwin) has been legislated. The second consideration that HELP fees for professionals working in remote and regional areas could be offset is being looked at currently. I believe it is now time to increase the Zone Tax Offset.

The people in the Regional and Remote towns should be entitled to receive an increased amount of Zone Tax rebate to be equitable with those in the large population centres of Australia, which I believe was the original purpose of the offset.

As Paul Keating said in 1993 "if you're not in Sydney, you're just camping out."

Yours faithfully

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