

To Whom It May Concern

I am 35 years old with 3 daughters (ages 3, 4 and 7). I have lived in Burketown for the majority of my life with the exception of attending boarding school, University and working in the mines for a couple of years. Burketown is a small town with approximately 250 residents, 1 servo/mechanical workshop/convenience store, 1 convenience store/post office, 1 pub, 1 state school, 1 kindergarten, a cafe and a health clinic.

Burketown is a very remote community who is very self sufficient and does not receive many of the essential services that other towns and surrounding cities have. In order to access services such as a doctor, dentist, midwife or specialist services residents have to make a gruelling 6hr drive (one way) to Mount Isa generally at their own expense and having to take a minimum 3 days leave to make the trip.

We currently have a State School which includes students from Prep to Grade 6. In grade 7 students must travel to towns/cities such as Charters Towers, Townsville and Rockhampton to complete their secondary education. This generally comes at a large cost to parents with boarding school fees being anywhere from \$7,000.00 to \$10,000.00 per term as opposed to families in urban areas who can send their kids to state schools at a minimal cost. For families with multiple children in boarding school this is a massive blow to the already basic household income with most people earning from 30-55k per annum less tax.

Day-care services are non existent in Burketown which makes it very hard for mothers to return to the workforce and also has an effect on the household budget.

Employment and skill sets required to fulfil desired positions within the Community is scarce due to lack of accommodation and lack of training. Individuals are unable to upskill or complete the training required in order to develop careers without moving to another town. In order to get trainers to Burketown to perform basic training such as first aid is a large financial burden on businesses and the community. Some of the training can cost from 10-\$15,000 depending on the length of their stay and training provided. We not only pay for the actual training itself but also the travel component, accommodation and meals whilst in town.

Housing is a major issue in Burketown. Due to lack of trade services and astronomical freight prices within the region residence are unable to afford to build their own homes or conduct adequate maintenance on existing properties. This then in turn puts a heavy reliance on local businesses and Local Government entities to provide accommodation for their employees. So on top of overheads - wages, maintenance, freight and utilities they are also absorbing accommodation costs which make it very hard to keep their heads afloat.

The cost of living in Burketown comes at a large expense whilst income remains basic. For example I am in a supervisory role within local government. My husband is unable to gain fulltime employment as he must stay home and look after our children due to no childcare services. My take home pay each fortnight is \$2,100.00. Below is an example of our budget:

Electricity \$200.00 per fortnight (electricity is high due to having to run extra fridges /freezers in preparation for wet season where Burketown can be isolated for up to 3 months at a time so storage of dry and frozen goods is essential)

Rent \$430.00 per fortnight (employer provided)

Food \$600.00 per fortnight (Examples of prices 2 ltr Milk \$5.80, 1 loaf of Bread \$5.50, 1kg thin Sausages \$11.15)

Vehicle/Registration/Fuel and general maintenance - \$200.00 per fortnight (Fuel prices – Diesel \$1.84 as opposed to \$1.47 in Brisbane)

Insurance - \$75.00 per fortnight

Phone/Internet - \$50 per fortnight

TOTAL \$1555.00

If you deduct the \$1,555.00 (this is the basic income required to survive) from my take home income each fortnight this leaves me with \$545.00. Any savings which can be salvaged will be spent on clothing, medical expenses, gas (\$210 per 45kg household bottle) or kept for an emergency which means no recreational activities or savings.

I think a review of the remote area tax concession will be highly effective. Not only will it allow for improvement in communities whether it be in professional development, essential services or providing people with the ability to own their own homes, see more opportunity for the youth it will also elevate some of the burden off funding bodies and government services. It will also improve morale, mental health and give individuals a sense of pride and self worth.