

There are some areas of vital concern to me outlined below in this review:

The Review should take account of the failure of Zone Allowance to be relevant today's cost of living and of benefit to remote Australians – even if it is not of any value to city or coastal people. The extra Zone Allowance given to fly in – fly out workers is obscene when they enjoy all the benefits of city life, have airfares that are tax deductions and spend nothing in remote areas. It creates such a huge disadvantage to people who live out here permanently and receive less benefit.

HECS Allowance/ Deductions: Medical people are the only ones who benefit from this at present for each year of service in remote areas. It is discriminatory against other poorly paid professionals (e.g., community workers or teachers). In the strong mining environment, where accommodation is expensive, other professionals/graduates have little opportunity to be encouraged to come here, stay for longer periods and the community benefit from their experiences. I am strongly against the idea proposed at the 2020 Summit that community service performed in cities would qualify as well. We will never gain experienced people to come to the bush and stay here if there are no real incentives given.

Bonus Payments: Any incentive we offer at present to people to come to remote areas is taxed heavily – for single people in particular. A bonus one off payment for working for a year here, accommodation subsidy, car or electricity allowances or use of such for free are all subject to a whole range of taxes that make it difficult to offer any incentive of substance. In a remote city with expensive travel costs to depart or arrive here and with no local bus or travel provided for citizens any incentive payments, of which almost always half is paid in tax, is of little benefit to the recipient or employer. In particular for charity workers and educationalist or workers in poorly paid industries (e.g., childcare) this is even more so when one competes with the multinationals in the mining industry.

Diesel: The recent rebate given to pastoralists does nothing to help community development and other workers who live in remote areas and suffer from the same high prices for fuel that those who were given rebates are offered. There is an immediate response to the vocal elements in our society. What about poor Indigenous workers or the underemployed or the Church people who give their time so freely in remote areas and have so little voice in our society for their rights.

I realise there are few voters here in remote areas but if the future of Australia and of Indigenous people is to be realised there is a need to be affirmative and decisive in action for these areas to become more attractive for permanent residents.

More information is available on request but I presume others are more eloquent and able to put in highly paid and well crafted submissions to show their need.

I thank the Government for the opportunity to make this small submission on issues vital to country living.

Fr. Michael Lowcock