

Submission to the Senate

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 2) Bill 2014

- provide for 26-week waiting periods and non-payment periods from 1 January 2015

Dear Senators

I am writing to you to express my concern for amendments to Youth Allowance and Newstart for people under thirty, specifically related to non-payment period of six months. While I disagree with most amendments to Social Services being put forward, this one is surely the cruellest and will see an increase in homeless youth and crime. While the following is a real example of what is likely to happen to my son's friend, many thousands of youth across Australia will be in the same situation. Even the thought that we would treat our young people in this manner sickens me and I cannot understand how any government could even consider forcing young people to live on nothing for six months at a time.

My son's friend, who I shall refer to as S, may be one of the young people left without Youth Allowance as of 1st January 2015, should the amendments be passed. This young woman has just turned 18 and is currently unemployed. S does not have family support. Her mother left her to fend for herself last year, and has been doing this on and off for the past five years. If S cannot find employment or a course to study, she will become homeless. This is not a might or maybe – it is definite.

At the moment she is sharing accommodation with 2 people in their 20's but they have given S a month's notice to find other accommodation because they fear she will not be able to pay her rent. Imagine what this will be like in January if the new rules are put into action? S does not have family to go to. I could have her here for a short while but I do not have a room for her - she will have to share with my son (the bed as well as there is no room for another bed). I am also not in the position to feed and provide for her over a long period.

It is not as though there are plenty of permanent jobs available with employers calling out for workers. In fact in many areas there are 60 to 200 applicants per job and many jobs are only casual without enough hours to earn a liveable wage. Completing courses, if you can get into one, is also no guarantee of employment afterwards as many employers want at least one or two years of experience, so even someone who has committed to a few years study could still find themselves cut off benefits.

There are many young people in the same situation as S, and I fear not only for S's safety but that of all young people. Also if they are not receiving payments, cannot eat and are homeless, how will they be able to look for work? How many of these young people will turn to crime and prostitution as a means of survival.

Senators, I know you are all decent people, and many of you are parents, grandparents or aunts and uncles, so I implore you not to allow this amendment to Youth Allowance and Newstart for those under thirty go through. To do so would be a move that does not fit with Australian values.