



Dear Sir / Madam,

I am currently studying towards a Masters of Occupational Therapy. I am of course not eligible for Austudy or Newstart with the course I am studying and did appeal to Centerlink along with a friend of mine who is currently studying the same course. We believe that our situation warrants special consideration for assistance for several reasons:

- 1.** This course is not a traditional masters based on research. We graduate with the same knowledge and eligibility to practice that the undergraduates do, however this course enables us to fast track our career as we all have undertaken previous related degrees.
- 2.** There are no scholarships that we have been made aware of that can assist us through this course
- 3.** This course is more intensive, taking up more time than the undergraduate course and we have to complete the same 1000 hours of prac in 2 years instead of 4. This leaves little time for work. Consequently most have had to move home or live on the poverty line.
- 4.** The students in our course would be happy to graduate with a Diploma as long as we could practice if it meant that we could get assistance. This course is difficult enough without the added burden of worrying where we are going to get money to survive.

We simply cannot understand the logic behind not supporting us through this degree when we are working towards entering a profession that is currently understaffed and in need. As mature aged students we are all dedicated to this career and, with the current funding situation the way that it is, this is the only thing that keeps us all studying.

I have taken this matter to the guild and our local member but have been informed that students last year have already attempted to enact change, without success. My understanding from this is that the law would have to change and despite wanting to take it further I simply do not have the time between university, prac, work and home duties.

If I had of known about this forum earlier I would have forwarded the details to all the Masters OT students and the Physio students who I understand suffer the fate. I am happy for you to use this email for appropriate purposes concerning this matter and would appreciate contact to inform me if it has been received and if you are going to use it.

Kind Regards

Sarah Thomas
Masters Occupational Therapy Student