

To: The Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport.

I am writing to express my concern at the recent changes to the Youth Allowance, in particular the changes to the criteria to access support. As I understand it, prospective students will now have to work for two years to access the allowance. I am a parent of two daughters. The oldest worked her gap year and qualified for the allowance, and has recently completed her studies. Even with the allowance we had to subsidise her living expenses at \$150 per week for three years just so she could make ends meet. My youngest daughter, currently doing year 12 is discouraged that she will have to now work for two years to access the same level of support that her sister received.

The point that should be made here is that the changes directly penalise country kids trying to access higher education. If they lived in a capital city they could continue to live at home and go straight to university after year 12. Nobody wins here – Our kids have to take a gap year to access the allowance, and we as parents still have to provide additional support, and in the end they have a HECS debt as well. We were prepared to wear all that, but now we find the government has shifted the goalposts again. We are not trying to rot the system; we just want our kids to have the same access to education that their city counterparts enjoy.

Sincerely,



Michael Mack

