

To the Committee Secretary,  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

Submission for Independent Youth Allowance Inquiry

My daughter, Kate McNamara is 17 years old and completed year 12 in 2008. Kate applied to Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane to study for a degree in Applied Science. This was her first preference and receiving an OP of 3, she was accepted into this University.

Kate chose to defer her studies until 2010 for a number of reasons.

1. As she does not turn 18 until September this year, my husband and I felt that she was too young to move to Brisbane without family. We felt Kate would benefit from another year to mature before starting university.
2. We would find it financially difficult to support Kate away from home.

When Kate made the decision to take a gap year, the Independent Youth Allowance, under the existing rules, would have been available to her in 2010. It now seems the guidelines have changed mid year. Under the proposed changes Kate will not be eligible for Independent Youth Allowance in 2010.

If we were aware of the change at the end of 2008 when Kate completed year 12, she would most likely have chosen a different degree and instead would have put CQ University as her first preference. This would have allowed her to live at home and she could have started university this year, 2009.

I feel that with a mid year policy change, Kate and many of her senior year have been disadvantaged. She has chosen the university and course under one system and has now found the ground rules changed. As per university guidelines, Kate's deferment is for one year only and she must then either study at QUT in 2010 or withdraw altogether. Without Independent Youth Allowance we will find it extremely difficult to support Kate in Brisbane. To change universities Kate would need to apply through QTAC with no guarantee of a position. Also, the degree of her choice is not offered in CQ University in Rockhampton.

I feel that the proposed changes to independent youth allowance greatly disadvantages rural and regional students, and many including my daughter, may no be able to pursue their career of choice. I believe that all regional and rural students will be disadvantaged but none more so than the current gap year students, and provision must be made to assist them.

