



30th July 2009

*The Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport,
PO Box 6100,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA ACT 2600*

Dear Sir,

Independent Youth Allowance and Accommodation Scholarship

Having successfully completed Year 12 in 2008, and being offered a university placement for 2009, my daughter deferred her studies for a year to complete a 12 month traineeship, working 35 hours a week for a trainee wage, with the aim of qualifying for Independent Youth Allowance, which would then enable her to attend University in 2010, or so we thought.

Ideally, she would have liked to attend university this year, but my husband and I were unable to offer her the financial support required, which meant she needed to take this gap year to raise money and qualify for Government assistance. As we live in a small rural community, which is severely affected by drought, money is tight. The nearest university is over 2 hours away, and therefore the opportunity to live at home while attending university is not an option.

However, now the Government is saying 'bad luck, we feel that we need to change the rules'. This is not fair.

The change in criteria obviously has a far greater affect on students from rural communities who have to leave home to attend university.

The reduction in the accommodation scholarship is just another low blow, and of course it is students from rural communities who will once again be greatest affected by this funding reduction.

It certainly appears that the Government is suggesting that it is less important for rural students to continue with further studies than their city counterparts.

I am greatly concerned about these changes, as it could mean the difference between a student being able or unable to continue with further studies.

I hope that the Senate inquiry will listen to our concerns and understand the impact these changes will have on the ability of many children to attend university, and not allow this legislation, which will radically affect Independent Youth Allowance, to be passed.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Conn". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large loop at the beginning of the first name.

Julie Conn