

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

Re Youth Allowance

Dear Secretary,

I write to register my objection to two aspects of the proposed changes to Youth Allowance eligibility in accordance with terms of reference (c) *the implications of current and proposed government measures on prospective students living in rural and regional areas*; (e) *the adequacy of government measures to provide for students who are required to leave home for secondary or post secondary study*; and (g) *the impact of government measures and proposals on rural and regional communities*.

1. Commencing the changes as of 1st January 2010. This change is, in effect, a retrospective change for the many young people who have deferred studies for one year to qualify for 'Independent Status' in order to apply for Youth Allowance.
2. Requiring two years of work to qualify for 'Independent Status' in order to apply for Youth Allowance.

These changes further disadvantage students from rural areas who must leave home in order to undertake their university studies; unlike their urban counterparts who can live at home. From personal experience I can inform you that just accommodation and food for a student in Melbourne costs in the order of \$18,000 per year. In addition, with a two year absence from studies there is a greater risk that young people may remain in the workforce and not seek higher education; an undesirable outcome.

By providing the appropriate levels of support and reducing the financial burdens, regional students will be encouraged to undertake tertiary studies which will provide benefits to their local communities when they return as qualified professionals. The capacity of these communities would be far greater than if the young people of the area were prevented from attending university and were not afforded the opportunity to provide essential skills and services to their local communities in the future.

I request that the Standing Committee recommend that these particular changes be abolished, to give country kids and communities a fair go.

Yours sincerely,


Peter Jennings

