



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

Dear Sir/Madam

I write concerning the proposed changes to Youth Allowance. I would like to outline my son's position to illustrate what I believe to be the unfairness of these changes.

Jake completed Year 12 at Macintyre High in Inverell in 2008. His UAI allowed him to gain entry to Radiography at Charles Sturt University. He deferred this offer so that he could work for a year. His goal was to gain some life experience, have a break from study and to qualify for Youth Allowance in May 2010.

He has been working as a cleaner/housekeeper at a number of resorts and enjoying most of the experience. He has been home to visit on a couple of occasions and he has certainly become more independent during his time in the workforce although his cleaning skills seem to be reserved for the workplace.

He began this year with the understanding that if he followed the rules he would be able to receive some assistance from the government to undertake his course. It seems very unfair that these changes will in all likelihood mean that he will be ineligible for financial assistance. In his case the new legislation will be retrospective.

I am a careers Adviser at Macintyre High School and have witnessed the growth in the number of students taking GAP Years in order to qualify for Youth Allowance. My strong feeling is that this has been a very positive experience for them and for the Inverell community. Many of the students stay in Inverell and add to the economy and perform valuable services. Traditionally they have worked in the service industries that can be hard to staff. The other advantage is that they then go off to University with a greater knowledge of themselves and the world of work which can only make them more likely to be successful at the tertiary level.

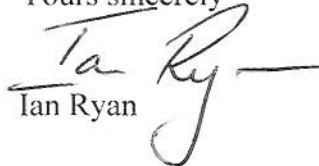
My daughter is currently studying Art/Law at the University of Newcastle. This is a 5 year course and academically quite rigorous (that's what she tells me anyway). She completed a GAP Year in 2007 and receives Youth Allowance. This is a great help to her but the following facts are worth considering; she is working extremely hard to achieve her strong results. If you were looking to hire someone and pay them approximately \$10000 per year (Youth Allowance) and ask them to work the number of hours that she is

putting in I don't think you'd get many applicants. I think all the applicants would disappear if you were going to charge them \$7000 (HECS) per year. She also must pay for her accommodation and travel to and from home. She is by no means receiving a free education.

In summary, the changes are extremely unfair for students who completed their HSC in 2008. The changes are very unfair for students from the country areas as they have added expense and have no option of staying at home and completing a University degree. And finally, my perception as someone who has worked very closely with students for many years is that the GAP Year is a very positive experience but most students will not take advantage of it if it does not help them qualify for Youth Allowance.

I am happy to talk about any of the issues mentioned and can be contacted on the numbers above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ian Ryan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name "Ian Ryan".

Ian Ryan