

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

To Whom it May Concern

Re: Youth Allowance For country Students

Our daughter finished year 12 in 2008 and is currently working before, hopefully, going to University in 2010. She got her first preference at a university 200kms from where she lives.

Like many, many other country students who have to move to the Metropolitan area to attend university, she decided to work during her 'gap year' in order to save money to help fund her education, as well as qualify for independence and apply for Youth Allowance.

The proposed changes to qualify for Youth Allowance and the Commonwealth Scholarships are unfair to the current 'gap year' students, who decided in good faith that this was their best option.

The new criteria is very restrictive and out of reach for most students in this economic climate. Our daughter is in 'full time' work but does not get 30 hours per week for each weekly roster. Moving to the city, starting university, getting a job and working at that job for 30 hours per week for 6 months in order to qualify for the new criteria for youth allowance is hugely restrictive.

Our closest University in our area does not offer the course our daughter wishes to study (our son had to relocate for the same reason). She has no other choice than to relocate to the metropolitan area. This university will not allow her to defer for another 6 months.

If the new changes to Youth Allowance are approved, fewer students will pursue higher education and these are the very students who usually return to rural and regional areas with their new skills once graduated. All regional and rural areas need professionals to sustain health, finance, law enforcement, education, etc.

Country students are being unfairly disadvantaged compared to their city counterparts. These students are able to live at home and therefore there is a huge housing, amenities, and living cost discrepancy.

If our daughter does go to University, we will have to support her for accommodation as well as living costs. This is going to put a huge financial strain on us. We are currently helping our son financially, even though he receives Youth Allowance and has a part time job.

Yours faithfully

Ron & Robyn Pescud
22nd July 2009