

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to voice my alarm at the Labor Government's decision to change the Youth Allowance criteria.

The introduced requirement of 18 months of employment for a minimum of 30 hours per week may be aimed at addressing misuse of the Youth Allowance by potential students in city areas, but the effect on potential rural students is catastrophic due to:

- Availability of work for unskilled school leavers in rural areas.
- High living costs if students move to capital cities seeking employment.
- Many tertiary courses do not commence mid-year.

Unless the government is in a position to guarantee rural school leavers work positions that fulfill their work criteria and not require relocation to capital cities and ensure that the courses they wish to enroll in have an option for mid-year commencements, I consider that the changes are going to be severely prejudicial to rural youth and their desire to be part of the Labor Education Revolution.

I have two children currently completing full time tertiary education in Sydney. Enrollment in the courses of their choice meant that they had to move to Sydney, which is quite an expensive place to live. Both children hold down two part-time jobs to generate enough income to cover living expenses. The youth allowance they receive is vital in this equation.

To impose any further financial obstacles on rural students such as my two children will see a significant reduction in the number of rural school leavers pursuing tertiary education.

I consider the net the Government wants to cast is going to create an imbalance in education opportunities for our youth and should be revisited to ensure geographic equality for Australia's youth.

Yours sincerely,
Greg McCann

28/7/09