

4th August, 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

I have grave concerns for the ability of rural students to gain an education equal to those of their city counterparts if the proposed changes to Independent Youth Allowance are implemented. Below are some points I believe the inquiry panel needs to address before making any decisions on IYA changes.

- There should be no retrospective dating on the eligibility criteria of IYA. The HSC students of 2008 have acted in good faith on the advice given to them by school counsellors, Centrelink and Universities. They have done nothing other than follow the existing Govt. guidelines to change the rules halfway through the year in most unfair.
- In order to meet the new IYA criteria students will need to work 30 hours a week on average for 18 months out of two years. How are rural students to do this? There are not enough jobs available in rural areas to meet the demand; especially on a rising unemployment market and with the affects the drought has had on rural businesses. To gain employment rural students need to have a vehicle and leave home. City students do not have to bear these costs.
- As students can only defer for 12 months many will have to work for 30 hours a week for the first 6-12months of their degree. How are students to manage 30 hours a week on top of a study load of 30 –50 hours a week? This expectation will be detrimental to student's studies and will no doubt result in many students failing courses or leaving university.
- Universities do not intend letting students defer for longer than 12 months so students must either take up their place or loose it.
- The aim of the changes is to remove YA from the 36% of recipients who live at home and whose parents earn > \$100 000. There has to be a better system than the blanket approach that Ms. Gillard has applied. A system that used postcodes or distance would be much fairer.

Yours faithfully,
Justin and Linda O'Brien