

Submission to The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

Dear Committee Members,

I am very upset by the Budget night announcement of the Rudd Government to change the Youth Allowance qualification requirements, effective from 1 January 2010.

What this means effectively is that my Daughter and the majority of her friends have wasted 2009, their Gap Year which was set aside to earn the \$18,850 previously required to qualify for the Independent Youth Allowance prior to the Budget Night announcements.

My daughter, along with many other young people from Rural and Regional Australia was flabbergasted that they could have had the rug so comprehensively pulled out from beneath them.

Does the Rudd Government not understand how difficult financially and personally it is for rural and regional families to send their children away to University in the capital cities. Our children are being penalised for wanting to go to a University offering the course of their choice, rather than just accepting any old course at a local university.

Does the Rudd Government understand how expensive it is to fund accommodation and living expenses for Rural Kids heading to capital cities, we are looking at over \$20,000 per year, which is \$20,000 we don't have, after you take out our own mortgage, transport, health, food and sibling education costs.

My daughter was looking forward to striking out on her own as an independent being in 2010. She has secured a number of jobs (none > 30hrs/wk) in an effort to earn the required \$18,850 amount within the stipulated 18 months, now thanks to The Rudd Governments non-family friendly youth allowance policy, that vision is looking as though it will not happen.

The Rudd Government by changing the rules mid-stream has set a very poor example to these young people just starting out on their adult life journey. Surely, the Rudd Government could have introduced a lead in time for these amendments so that the current crop of Gap Yearers were not caught in a bureaucratic mess, not of their own making. I could guarantee that none of those who designed this new regime live in rural and regional Australia otherwise they would not have designed such a patently anti Rural and Regional Australian policy.

I wish the Committee every success in attempting to get the Rudd Government to see sense over the folly of its hasty introduction of the revised Youth Allowance qualification requirements and I hope that the problem can be fixed prior to the end of 2009 or otherwise there will be a lot fewer than the already too few, Rural and Regional students going away to be educated at the University of their choice in 2010.

Yours sincerely,



Hugh Dunchue
Talgarno, Victoria.