

I hereby submit a submission into the Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

My husband and I have two daughters one who completed year 12 at the end of 2008. Unfortunately we were not in the financial position to send Hannah, directly to University for the start of 2009, so she has committed to taking a GAP year this year and undertaken full time employment at the Australind/Eaton Medical Centre in Bunbury, so as to earn the required funds to qualify her for Youth Allowance at the beginning of 2010. Hannah has been accepted into the University of Western Australia to study Commerce/Economics and has deferred her place until 2010, she is unable to defer her place for another year, so if she does not take up her place in 2010, she will loose her place altogether.

With the proposed changes to Youth Allowance legislation Hannah will no longer qualify for **any** Government assistance at all not even a Relocation Scholarship or a Start up Scholarship, to help her through University for the duration of her course. Being a family who lives, and runs a Small Business, in Regional W.A. we are doing our best to provide employment for local people, and supporting our local community by sponsoring sporting clubs and not for profit organizations where ever possible. Unfortunately we feel we are not getting any support from our current Government so we can continue to do what we do, but also offer our children the Education they deserve, as every young Australian deserves. We were delighted that Hannah managed to secure her place at UWA, but very aware that she would be unable to live at home and attend University, she would have to relocate to Perth and apply for accommodation at one of the University Colleges. Hannah's accommodation and food for one year at Trinity College will cost us in excess of \$12,000.00 this does not include any other living costs at all i.e. Phone, transport, books, clothing or entertainment. As a family we have planned and budgeted the cost of giving Hannah a University Education very much with Youth Allowance in the equation. If we have to remove the Youth Allowance from our Budget it is very likely that Hannah could have to forgo a University Education and try to find a full time job, with no qualifications, in a climate where jobs are just not easy to find. We know of many, many families who are in a very similar situation and feel that changing the rules half way through the game is totally unfair on the players and totally unethical.

We strongly urge you to reconsider these changes and give our future leaders, who happen to live in Rural and Regional Australia, an opportunity of a University education.

Yours sincerely,

**Renee` Thomson**