

Submitted by: **KIRSTI PURSS, parent in Regional NSW.**

**Re: CHANGES TO YOUTH ALLOWANCE DISADVANTAGE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS.**

I write as the parent of 5 children, 4 of whom will almost certainly want to attend University.

Marita A. Purss : 2<sup>nd</sup> year Nutrition & Dietetics & Human Movement at QUT and wishing to return to practice in Regional Australia.)

Tiare M Purss : Currently undertaking a Gap year and intending to Study Speech Pathology at Newcastle University in 2010, and plans subsequently to return to Regional Australia to practice.

Josiah B Purss Year 11, Savana Y Purss Year 9, Elijah S Purss Year 4.

- 1) **The changes in Youth Allowance are particularly unfair to those students who have already chosen to take a Gap year in 2009** in order to prove their independence. The change in criteria announced in the budget, essentially ensure that this entire group of students will be unable to qualify next year. Many will therefore lose their deferred courses places at Uni because they will necessarily have to complete another year of work in order to be able to qualify. My daughter Tiare is one of these students, who is working 3 jobs in order to qualify for the original criteria of \$19,000 in an 18month period.
- 2) **A requirement of 30 hours average per week for at least 18months will mean that most Regional & Rural students cannot possibly go to Uni without working for 2 years first.** Full-time jobs for this large number of prospective students are not available in Rural or Regional centres. Most of my daughter's friends who are taking a Gap year are working at least 2 jobs, for a low hourly rate, in order to succeed. They take little or no time off in order that the family may be able to afford to pay accommodation costs in the city as well as living expenses. When families, like ours have more than one child wishing to go on to Tertiary Education, the Youth Allowance is essential.
- 3) **Rural & Regional Students are more likely to return to these centres when they have completed their degrees. Country areas have ongoing issues attracting professionals, especially in the Medical and Allied health fields.** Why are we, as a Nation, making access to university more difficult for capable Rural students who are already educationally disadvantaged compared to their urban peers. Courses such as Speech Pathology, Architecture, Medicine, Physiotherapy will require almost all rural students to leave their homes in order to study. By making the Youth Allowance less accessible, we will lose candidates well suited to returning to work in rural and remote areas. 'It is well known that staff recruitment and retention in rural and remote areas is often difficult. Unfamiliarity with the local geographical environment and potential geographical isolation are often major barriers.' (a)(b)
- 4) **It seems that the so called 'extra' scholarships will not be of any advantage to Regional Students.** The existing Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship (worth \$4324 per annum) has been replaced with a diminished 'Relocation Scholarship', which is only worth \$4000 in the first year, and \$1000 in subsequent years, and is also dependent on being in receipt of Youth Allowance in the first place. Obviously, the university/your landlord doesn't reduce your rent just because you've been living there for a year.
- 5) **Making it harder for our youth to go to away to university will not help our Regional community or indeed our entire economy either now, or in the future.**

I ask you to reconsider your intention to make changes to the Youth Allowance. Please consider the impact you are having on many prospective Rural students and particularly the unfair impact your changes will have on the students who chose to take a Gap year in 2009.

### **References**

- (a) Larson A, Playford D, and Wheatland B. Going country: rural student placement factors associated with future rural employment in nursing and allied health. *Australian Journal of Rural Health* 2006; 14 (1); 14-19
- (b) Schoo AM, McNamara KP and Stagnitt KE. Clinical placement and rurality of career commencement: a pilot study. *Rural and Remote Health* 2008; 964 (8); 1-10.