

Ashlan Harris

Dear whom it may concern,

Many students, those living outside of the big cities in particular, are heavily dependent on Youth Allowance to support them while studying to achieve a university education. According to the previous youth allowance eligibility, I could work and earn a certain amount of money over eighteen months to qualify – I was able to work for twelve months, and support myself at university for three months, before receiving the amount that could allow me to cover rent and food for my time studying.

The changes to the eligibility for youth allowance have meant that me, and other students like me, will have to work thirty hours a week, for eighteen months prior to university. The problem is, that almost all universities (the only Western Australian exemption being Curtin University of Technology), only allow students to defer for one year, before they lose their place. This leaves us with very few options.

I either face losing my hard earned place, finding some way for my parents or myself to support me, or not go at all. My parents, like many, are already under financial pressure due to today's economic situation, and simply could not afford to support me as well as themselves. And full time work while studying is simply not a possibility.

Being a country student, aspiring to achieve a university education and career as a Secondary School Teacher, it seems near impossible for me to reach these aspirations. Considering the government is in desperate shortage of nurses, teachers and other university qualified workers, it's no wonder that students find it easier and more rewarding to take up apprenticeships and traineeships in sectors such as mining. While these are worthy occupations, the country is still in dire need of people with university qualifications, and the new youth allowance eligibility has made it that much difficult for many.

I hope, and pray, that the government realises the impact of the changes to youth allowance, and the effect it will have on those attempting to gain a university education.

Ashlan Harris