

## **To whom it may concern,**

My name is Steffie Robinson. I am 19 years old and live in the country town of Inverell NSW. Last year when I left school I had to make some very large decisions about what to do with my life. I chose to take a gap year in the faith that when I had completed it, I would be eligible for youth allowance.

I received my letter of acceptance to the University of the Sunshine Coast into the course Paramedical Science (which is only currently offered at three Australian universities). Knowing that I would have to move more than eight hours away from my home to study was a little scary, but I knew I would be able to receive my youth allowance, and therefore be able to survive at university.

As the year went on I quickly discovered that the promise that had been made to me by the seemingly generous and trustworthy labour government was to be taken away from me. I was halfway through a program which would benefit me greatly and allow a regional student the opportunity to study at university, when it was taken away without any notice, or any sense of guilt.

If I had known this was going to happen I would not have taken a gap year? I could not believe this government, who had done so much for the Australian community could so quickly and fiercely crush my dreams and hopes in the one blow! I do not come from an area where I can just live at home, receive a home cooked meal, or having my washing done for me while I study! I have to move far away from my home, where I will have to finance every aspect of my life! Not only have these changes crushed my dreams for what seemed like a bright and hopeful future, I have lost faith in a government I saw and had hoped had real potential.

There are so many students, like myself who undertook the gap year, knowing that a promise was made to us so we could have a bright future. I fear, along with many other young kids from my town that my place at university will be forfeited. Most universities only allow you to defer courses for a maximum of one year! And even if they do allow students to defer longer, do you really think that with the sudden influx of new students next year they will be able to hold a place for all of the gap students from this year as well?

Myself and my parents are not the only one's who are suffering from this sudden shock change to policy. My employer has been severely disadvantaged by this. I was taken on as a trainee for twelve months, he will be forced to now 'sack' me instead of me leaving at the end of my time, and I will lose my job and be forced to find another for six months (which I will tell you is not easy in a country town).

The government needs to think of the promise that these kids thought would stand, and therefore undertook their gap year because of it. I do not disagree with the new changes, as kids are aware and are able to make their choice based on that. But when I made my choice I was obviously being deceived and led blind into a window opportunity that turned out to be a dead end.

Please, hear the pleas and the regional and remote kids who need this youth allowance, who trusted the government to keep their promise and who just want an education that can be delivered fairly and honestly!

**Steffie Robinson**

**Fearful and frightened gap year student**