

Mrs Jennifer Ferguson

5 August 2009

The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References  
Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir or Madam

I write as a concerned parent of a student currently attending a Regional Secondary School completing her Higher School Certificate this year.

The proposed changes to the Youth Allowance will affect my daughter's opportunities to attain a tertiary education, as I am sure it will for many rural and regional students.

Currently students can receive independent Young Allowance if they earn at least \$19,532 in an eighteen month period (since leaving school). This enables students, like my daughter to further their studies at university, without this assistance many families like mine cannot afford the expenses that these students incur.

As well as the usual student costs of textbooks, computers, etc, the high cost of rent and food while living away from home is way out of the reach of ordinary families. My husband and I earn over the threshold which would allow our daughter to obtain Youth Allowance but we certainly do not earn enough to support her for three or four years while she studies and lives away at university.

The proposed changes to the Youth Allowance are unfair to rural and regional students because these students do not have a choice but to leave home to further their studies.

The proposed changes of working for 30 hours per week for eighteen months over a two year period will force rural and regional students to defer their studies for two years or work full time while studying, which is most cases

would be impossible to do.

Firstly, finding 30 hours per week employment for an eighteen month period in rural and regional areas is very difficult, if not impossible, as most of the work available to these young people is part time and seasonal.

Secondly universities only allow deferment of their courses for a one year period, which means that students would not be able to apply for university when they first leave school, they would need to apply two years after finishing school. I am sure that this will lead to many students never attending university at all. This will impact on rural and regional communities, as many rural and regional students return to these areas once they have completed their studies as Doctors, Nurses, Lawyers and many other professionals.

I urge the Government to look carefully at these changes and ensure that all young Australians have the opportunity to have a tertiary education no matter where they live, as I am sure these changes will have a long and lasting impact not only on the students and families in rural and regional areas but also on the communities we live in.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Ferguson.